

From: "Colin B. Bennett" <colinbbennett@onetel.com>
To: Heather.Jones@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Subject: Re: letter dated 7 February
Date: Thu, Feb 17, 2005, 3:14 PM

Dear Heather Jones

Thanks for this prompt response. I have replied to Mr McCarthy's letter by email below.

Dear Mr McCarthy

Thank you for your letter of 7 February 2005.

First of all I will deal with the perceived errors of fact which have crept in and which I feel you have adduced in good faith. They are not crucial and I just want to clear the decks for the main issue.

1. I have been active for some years in seeking to ensure that the Council's properties are accessible for people with disabilities. I have concentrated on provision for people with some, but defective, hearing as this is the least "sexy" area. My main vehicles have been DAAG (the Council's Disability Access Advisory Group), the Council's "City News", the Argus, BBC radio and television and Meridian Television.

The most progress has been made in the installation of a good-quality PA and induction loop system (with some 78 microphones) in the Council Chamber at Hove Town Hall. There are still problems there as are made evident at the Planning Sub-Committee and DAAG meetings held there. I shall deal with those another day.

2 I have always had good co-operation with the "coal-face" Council staff dealing with the induction loop question. I am referring to Martin Hillson, David Bond, Matthew the electrician and, formerly, with Peter Vine.

3. I have not met any of these people at Bn TH CC to discuss the arrangements there. I did offer to meet them there before 2 Feb., when the third Falmer PI began) but although Barbara Bay was keen, Heather Jones was not and so I was not used. I point out at this juncture that I come very cheap—a cup of coffee sufficing.

4. I met Martin H, David B and Matthew at King's House on Thursday, 3 Feb. We discussed the acoustic arrangements in CR 3 at Hove Town Hall for the St James's Place "hearing" on 9 Feb. We agreed to meet there on 7 Feb. We did and what happened there and in CR 2, where the hearing actually took place is another matter which I will address another day.

we touched on Bn TH and I refer to those points as Points 1 and 2 below.

5. I have been campaigning on the issue of access to PIs for some years and have been in communication with PINS at Bristol for a few years. I am interested in the national picture but have attended a few PIs in Sussex. The new Falmer PI gives me the chance to "sort out" Bn TH CC once and for all.

6. I think BB and I see completely eye to eye on the universal access criterion but this is not yet true vis a vis Baljeet Mann, the "disability officer" at PINS.

The main issue is that there is no provision for HI people in the PG at Bn TH CC I was told (Point 1) that there IS an IL there but that it interferes with or is interfered by CR 1 below. This could easily be demonstrated to me, if so. I have attended hundreds of meetings in CR 1 and the putative IL there

is of WMD standard of credibility.

It is easy to solve such a problem. The IL can be moved or an infra-red system installed. Lewisham Council had a similar problem which they solved. You might wish to get in touch with them-not only on that technical matter but on the wider one of meeting DDA standards for HI people.

The stark fact is that "our" PG is not accessible for HI people and it MUST be made so. It is an open-and- shut case and there is no chance of our Council defeating a legal challenge on the matter.

I have been in touch with the RNID and they are keen to support me as it is an important case.

As to the microphone minor problem, BB told me that the Inspector was seated and that the barristers stood whereas the microphones were static on the table. There are easy solutions there!

Also, Matthew told me (Point 2) that the barristers were not keeping their rustling papers away from the microphones.

As before, I implore you to address the major problem and to choose the "bloodless" way.

Yours sincerely

Colin Bennett

Colin Bennett, Hove

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