

WITNESS STATEMENT BY ROY PENNINGTON
Claim No. 5BN03502 Bennett v. Brighton & Hove City Council

I have been asked by Colin Bennett to give my account of the difficulties that Councillors and the members of the public experience when they go to public meetings in Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

I personally do not have impaired hearing, but my experience of the rooms at which the meetings are held give me a good understanding of what the issues are. I had a hearing test over 4 years ago which did not indicate a need for a hearing aid. I cannot make any comments on the fact that an induction loop may or may not be working. I do notice when the audio equipment works in both Brighton and Hove Town Halls. I have had a mobility difficulty since my stroke nearly 4 years ago.

Committee Rooms 2 & 3 in Brighton Town Hall: I can well understand that a hearing-impaired person would find it very difficult to follow the proceedings of the meeting. The arrangements in the public area (Room 2) in that part of Committee Rooms 2 & 3 make it very difficult to hear Councillors and officers speak. I have sat in that part of the room on some occasions and always have to “cup my ear” (on purpose) to hear what the speakers say, but mainly I sit at the tables which form the meeting itself (Room 3).

The situation on the 10 March 2005 in Brighton Council Chamber I can well remember. I found it embarrassing on behalf of the Council that the public were invited to sit in the main part of the chamber (as opposed to the Public Gallery) on the basis that it was impossible to hear what was being discussed on that particular day. I was also angry that the Council had not developed its own induction loop and public address system such that we had to disrupt the proceedings in that way.

Roy Pennington

Cllr Roy Pennington
Labour
Regency