

Witness Statement by Geoffrey Wells

Colin Bennett v Brighton & Hove City Council

CLAIM No 5BN03502

My name is Geoffrey Wells and I have been a Councillor for the Woodingdean Ward in Brighton since 1993. I sit on the Housing Committee, the Housing management Sub Committee and the Planning Committee. These Committees meet in the Council Chamber at Hove Town Hall as do some of the full Council meetings.

I have a hearing problem. I was issued with two NHS hearing aids to counter my being hard of hearing. The induction loop, which I understand had been installed in Hove Council Chamber, has been of no use to me whatsoever. My hearing aids both have the 'T' setting which enables me to access an induction loop system. I have been very frustrated by the fact that although I have these hearing aids I can hear no better than before in that Council Chamber. I dispensed with the use of these hearing aids. Later I discovered that the induction loop system in Hove Council Chamber had completely broken down and I believe it did not function throughout 2005. The normal public address system there also appears to be a little hit-and-miss to say the least.

As an elected member of a Council that prides itself on its 'equalities' policy, it is disappointing that they appear to be lacking in provision for hard of hearing people. On many occasions I have to put the loudspeaker part of the audio equipment on my desk to my ear in order to follow proceedings. I point out that I am able to use my hearing aids with the 'T' setting turned on to access meetings in venues that have functioning induction loops.

Geoffrey Wells