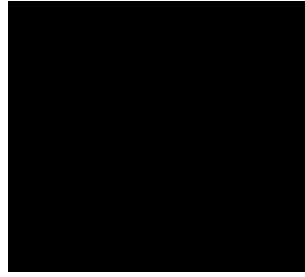


Geoff Lilley (Cllr)



19 08 2010

Review Officer (Hartlepool)

LGBCE,

Layden House,

London

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Hartlepool Electoral Review; Personal comments on the size of Hartlepool Council

As a sitting Councillor on Hartlepool Borough Council it is my personal view that the number of Councillors should be reduced by **at least** one third. Hartlepool has 47 councillors (plus the elected Mayor).

One only has to look at the evidence regarding current Councillors involvement in the work of the Council to realise that over one third of the current Councillors attendance at meetings is well below 50%. I believe this is for two distinct reasons, firstly, apathy and laziness and secondly, a lack of any meaningful work to do.

Hartlepool operates on a Mayoral system the majority of decisions other than those of Planning and Licensing are taken by the Mayor and his Cabinet. This leaves two opportunities for elected Members to partake in the democratic process; Scrutiny Committees and Neighbourhood Forums.

In my opinion the Scrutiny process in Hartlepool is far too large and only exists to promote itself and supply Special Responsibility Allowance for a few. I have conservatively estimated that the cost of Scrutiny in Hartlepool to be well in excess of £330,000. To compare and contrast the Hartlepool Borough Council Scrutiny process with that of Hertfordshire County Council <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=12787560>

This shows a leaner more cost effective use of both Councillors time and public money and should be in place in Hartlepool. This would allow for greater flexibility of both Officer and Councillor time and commitment.

Hartlepool Council was one of the first local authorities to develop Neighbourhood Forums. When one examines Councillors lack of commitment to these forums - by looking at attendance records - it is plain to see that the majority of Councillors actually fail to attend these forums. Public attendance is also very low and the reality is backed up by the minutes of the three Neighbourhood Forums over many years, it is the same handful of people attending, again this is a waste of public money.

I'm sure the majority of Councillors in Hartlepool would argue that their days are full dealing with Ward issues again I see little evidence of this. It tends to be one or two Councillors in a ward who do the majority of the casework in acting on behalf of their constituents. Commitment to Ward Surgeries is generally poor and again left to one or two Councillor within a Ward - if that.

Under the current system Hartlepool has local elections ever year (HBC is currently elected by thirds, the forth year being a Mayoral election); it is both costly and confusing for the electorate. Reducing the number of Councillors to two per ward would mean elections once every two years which if combined with the Mayoral election would reduce by 50% the cost of holding elections in Hartlepool.

Therefore in conclusion, by reducing the number of Councillors in H.B.C. the people of Hartlepool would have a clearer understanding of who their Councillor is and a greater expectation of that Councillor. It would save money by removing the need for yearly elections and a reduced number of Councillors would encourage a more interactive relationship between Councillors the electorate and Council.

Geoff Lilley