

Details of representations received from

Kevin Hind (Bury Town Council Councillor)

St. Olave's Ward is a two-member ward but unlike other two-member wards in the town it only has one polling station: at the New Bury Community Centre on St. Olave's Road. By contrast, Minden Ward has two polling stations as well as Risbygate and Westgate Wards. Eastgate Ward returns only one member but has two polling stations. The electorate of Eastgate Ward was 1,892 in 2011. In St. Olave's the electorate in that year was 3,293. I find it absurd that the ward with the lower population should have two polling stations.

Unfortunately, the Borough Council's attitude towards this whole issue in the past has been most unhelpful. At the County Council by-election in 2010 residents were informed that New Bury CC would not be available for polling and that the polling station would be moved to Northumberland Avenue Methodist Church. This was actually a mistake and complaints were made because of the effect on turnout. Rather unnecessarily I thought, the response to the complaints (attached) ended by comparing the turnout at New Bury CC in historic elections with turnouts at other polling stations. By implication, it sounded as though St Eds were saying that because St. Olave's has had an historic low turnout it would not have had any impact on voting. I found this argument counter-intuitive: surely if you have more polling stations which are closer to where people live, they are more accessible so more people vote? Of course, it is up to candidates and political parties to encourage people to vote on polling day, and if they choose not to that is their prerogative. However, the local authority should at least play its part by having suitable numbers of polling stations for voters to go to. Democracy costs money and it does not bode well for it if people are disenfranchised because of cost-effectiveness, especially when there is a smaller ward with a lower population which has more than one polling station!

Therefore, I think that St. Olave's currently does not have 'such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances'. It only has one polling station whereas other two-member wards (and indeed the single-member ward referred to) have two polling places. Apart from New Bury CC and the Methodist Church there are other facilities which could be used for polling and this would spread the facilities more evenly across the ward. St. Olave's Ward includes part of Gloucester Road and Prince Charles Avenue: surely it makes more sense for residents in those areas of the ward to vote at the Methodist Church rather than New Bury CC? There is also a requirement that polling places be accessible to all electors. As far as I am aware, there is step-free access at the Christian Resource Centre and the Jehovah's Kingdom Hall on Oakes Road. I think these locations should be considered as well as the Methodist Church.

Furthermore, New Bury CC is dead centre of the ward, whereas the other two-member wards have two polling stations spread at equal distances from the centre of the ward so (theoretically) residents only have half as far to walk (e.g. in Minden Ward one polling station is on Park Road at All Saints Church

while the other polling station is on the Westley Estate at Westbury Community Centre). Of course, people drive to polling stations if they are voting on their way home from work, so parking provision also needs to be considered. There is currently ample parking at New Bury CC which is helpful in this situation. However, with only one polling station the parking facilities at New Bury CC risk becoming more crowded whereas an additional polling place would relieve this pressure.

Councillor Paul Hopfensberger – (St Olaves Ward Member)

I just wanted to point out again (this has been raised before) that St Olaves Ward contains ALL of The Howard Estate but only PART of The Mildenhall Estate. As a semi-turf war exists there, some people who live on the Mildenhall Road Estate will not travel onto The Howard Estate to vote at the Newbury Community Centre. It would be beneficial if residents of the Mildenhall Estate could vote at the Anselm Centre. This may help to raise the low voting numbers on the ward.

Councillor David Nettleton – (Suffolk County Councillor for Tower Division)

There are currently two polling districts in the Risbygate ward. There are 1015 electors in Risbygate 1 and 2605 electors in Risbygate 2. The total number of electors is 3620. The Risbygate 1 polling station is in Fornham Road and the Risbygate 2 polling station is in St John's Street. Although the former Railway Mission Church in Fornham Road is rather small and the entrance is at the back of the building, it is reasonably situated opposite Tesco and close by the train station. Fornham Road is the main traffic route in this area and easy to reach by road.

Currently, electors living on Station Hill vote at the Friends Meeting House in St John's Street. Given it's close proximity to Fornham Road, I think the 87 electors here should be transferred to Risbygate 1. As a further 28 electors live on the northern side of Tayfen Road – 13 in Tayfen Terrace, 15 in Tayfen Road – it seems sensible to add all 115 electors living in this triangle to Risbygate 1. This would take the total to 1130.

Even with this transfer, there would still be 2490 electors entitled to vote at the polling station in St John's Street. There are two issues here: accessibility from the Queen's/York area in particular, and the occasional congestion in the Friends Meeting House at peak times. With the local election due on the same day as the general election in 2015, even the use of two rooms may not be enough.

I suggest a third polling district and polling station in the Risbygate ward. West Road Church on the northern corner of Queen's Road and West Road is an excellent building and an ideal polling station. Risbygate 3 would be bounded by the blue line along the middle of Albert Crescent and Albert Street, east into Out Risbygate, but instead of continuing along Risbygate Street, turn north along the middle of Spring Lane until the bend just past King Edward's. From there, the line should turn west to follow the pedestrian and cycle path

out towards Beetons Way and the ward boundary. Although Spring Lane isn't wide, it is a strong polling district boundary as the vast majority of electors line on the eastern side of the road. There is a small apartment block of 3 on the corner with Out Risbygate, one house set back from the road but attached to properties in Out Risbygate, and the caretaker's bungalow in the grounds of the upper school.

The split would be 1470 in Risbygate 2 and 1020 electors in the newly-formed Risbygate 3.

APPENDIX B