

THE SOUTHPORT PARTY
C/O 2D BIBBY RD
SOUTHPORT
LANCS
PR9 7PT
23 July 2006

TO JAN ASHTON
SECRETARIAL MANAGER
COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE
35, GT Smith St,
London
SW1P 3BQ

EVIDENCE AND COMMENTS ON LOCAL ELECTION

Dear Madam,

Many thanks for your responding letter dated 26th June, on behalf of The Southport Party I have listed some of our concerns with the 2006 election process and also some general suggestions which we feel would further democracy from an independent party aspect.

- 1; We believe that postal votes opened or not should not be handled by candidates or representatives of candidates or their parties. (See enclosed literature from the Southport Lib Dems and the Electoral commission.)
- 2; The electoral commission should be empowered to enforce their rules otherwise they are ineffective. (see enclosed letter from the said body)
- 3; Postal votes should be opened and counted on Election Day.
- 4; Postal votes should not be left open in unlocked boxes for days prior to the count as happens in Sefton M.B.C.
- 4; Identities of voters should be validated at polling stations.
- 5; The returning officer should not be a member of the council holding the election as they could be presiding over candidates who are very critical of the said officer and council.

In general;

- 1; we believe proportional representation should be considered for local elections.
- 2; There should be a limit on the number terms a councillor should serve consecutively, we suggest three, four year terms.
- 3; We believe it is a waste of resources and time and unfair on wards not effected to have all out elections in a borough when there has been a boundary change in perhaps only one ward.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make these comments and observations on a system we believe is inadequate and still open to fraud and malpractice.

Yours truly,
David Cobham
D.C. Cobham

(Councillor Sefton M.B.C 2002/4.)
Political Secretary
THE SOUTHPORT PARTY

Make sure my vote counts!

Return this form before 17 April 2006 to:

**Freepost NWW 4640A
35 Shakespeare Street,
Southport
PR8 5AB**

You may re-use the envelope to return the card/form when you have signed and completed it - no stamp is needed.

- or you may return this card directly to the elections office, Southport Town Hall, before 5.00 pm, Tuesday 18 April 2006.

A stamp here
saves our
campaigning
costs

SIDE 1,

**Application to
vote by post**

Only one person may apply on each form. Anyone who requires more forms should contact your electoral registration office (Southport Town Hall) or visit the website: www.postalvotes.co.uk.

To the Elections Officer, Sefton MBC and Southport Constituency. I wish to vote by post for all elections until further notice. I am the person whose name and address is shown below. Unless I notify you differently in future, please send my ballot paper to my address where I am registered to vote.

**Stanley Cobham
4 North Street
SOUTHPORT
PR9 9HX**

My signature

Each person has to sign their own form. The form will be returned if it is not signed. You can be fined for making a false statement on this form (Maximum fine £5000).

Signature _____

Date _____

Email (if applicable) _____

Daytime telephone or mobile (for any queries) _____

X5	FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	Date received:
975		Date added:

SIDE 2.

The Electoral Commission

Mr. John Lee
8, Westmoreland Road
Southport
Lancashire
PR8 6NX

RECEIVED
27 JUL 2006

(HON TREAS THE SOUTHWEST PARTY)

19 July 2006

Dear Mr. Lee,

Thank you for your letter of 3 July 2006 concerning the local elections of 4 May 2006 and, in particular, the issue of postal votes and the Electoral Commission's code of conduct on postal voting.

Under the legislation by which the Electoral Commission was established it has powers to review the electoral process and to comment and further, to provide advice and guidance to those involved in it. However, it does not have authority to set firm rules, which is the proper role of parliament via legislation, neither does it have any responsibility for running elections, which is the role of the Returning Officer.

It follows therefore that, any guidance or advice it does issue, for example the code of conduct on postal voting, can only be advisory and does not have the force of law. Consequently, whilst the Commission would urge all parties and participants to follow its advice, which we consider to be best practice, there is no sanction against any who do not. With regard to the Liberal Democrats postal vote application form, although there are aspects of it that do not comply with our code of conduct, given the comments above, there is little more to be done.

Your letter mentions other matters on the same subject. Given my comments above, you will see that it would not be possible to ask electors to resubmit their postal vote application forms as there is no legal basis for doing so.

You also mention the checking of postal vote lists. Whilst there is no provision in existing electoral law to specifically check with postal voters, some of the issues you raise would come to light in the course of other electoral procedures. For example, deaths of electors would either come to light during the annual canvass or from the

The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

Democracy matters

An independent body established by Act of the UK Parliament



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Tel 020 7271 0500
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info@electoralcommission.org.uk
www.electoralcommission.org.uk

examination of records of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, which the Electoral Registration Officer is entitled to see.

The electors themselves are likely to inform Electoral Services if they no longer wish to vote by post as once identified as postal voters, they can no longer vote in a polling station.

I hope this answers your enquiry, but if you require any further information, please contact me again.

Yours sincerely

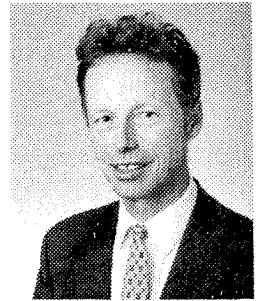


C.G. Farrant
Senior Electoral Practice Advisor
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020-7271-0572



John Pugh MP
35 Shakespeare Street
Southport
PR8 5AB

01704 533555
hq@southportlibdems.com



March 2006

Dear Friends,

Did you know that **every single resident** is now able to vote by post in any election?

This means that whatever the weather, whatever else we busy people have to do with our lives, we can receive our voting papers through the post and make our minds up who to vote for, over several days in the comfort of our own homes.

It is good for democracy too!

In the most recent Sefton Council election, nearly four times as many people who had postal votes used them compared to people who had to go to polling stations to vote.

That is why we have sent you the attached Postal Vote application form(s). It takes only seconds to fill out (one form for each voter) and can be either returned postage-free to our postal vote team (Postal Votes, FREEPOST NWW4640A, Liberal Democrats, 35 Shakespeare St, Southport PR8 5AB) or to the Town Hall directly.

I hope you can take this opportunity to make sure that every vote possible gets cast for the local campaigner who really works for the people of this area.

Yours sincerely,

John Pugh MP

PS. If you have older children who are living away at college for part of the year, they are eligible to vote by post for councillors here in Southport, as long as they are on our local council electoral register. They need to apply for a postal vote as above.

PPS. The main batch of Postal Votes are normally issued to arrive in your homes around 20th April. Anyone who might be away from Southport from then until polling day (May 4th) can still vote - but BY PROXY. If this applies to you, please ring us on 533555 so that we can help arrange this for you.