



Chief Executive: John Mothersole MA

Town Hall · Sheffield · S1 2HH

Tel: 0114 273 4000 · Fax: 0114 273 6844

E.mail: J.Mothersole@sheffield.gov.uk

JM/SC/Corr3156

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Ms D Beckett
President of Student Union
d.beckett@shu.ac.uk

Dear Dani

I am writing in relation to the difficulties that were experienced at a few polling stations in Sheffield yesterday at the election, and in particular the polling station at St Johns/Ranmoor.

At that polling station in particular I am aware that many students were unable to vote as the queues were too long for them to be processed and issued with a ballot before the 10 pm deadline. I have apologised through the media for this situation and I would like to reiterate my apology through you to your student colleagues.

Equally, during the course of what had been a long night, it has been put to me on several occasions via media interviews that the problem was caused by students. I would like you know that at each point I have refuted that point and have stated explicitly that students are not to blame for this situation. I am as keen as anybody for young people to become involved in democracy and to exercise their right to vote, and therefore it deeply saddens me that several first time voters who have had what should have been an exciting experience marred.

Sadly, I can neither turn the clock back nor could I extend voting beyond the 10 pm deadline. This is the point that we checked with Electoral Commission and their advice was clear. The only solution therefore would have been to have dealt with the queues earlier in day, a point that we now need to consider for our future planning.

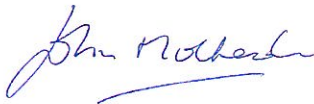
I write to you therefore to apologise to you as a representative of the student body, and also to state that if there is anything we can do as a City Council to help restore the faith of your student colleagues both in the voting process and in us as an institution then I would happily participate in any suggestions you may have.

I recognise that we cannot easily draw a line under this situation for those of your student colleagues who were unable to vote, but I hope by way of this letter I can provide the basis for us moving on.

Please feel free to contact me regarding this issue.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Mothersole", with a horizontal line underneath.

John Mothersole
Chief Executive