



Case Study:

ST ALBANS LOCAL AND GENERAL ELECTIONS



PRINCIPAL
SECURITY CONSULTANTS Ltd





The Client



Principal Security Consultants Ltd.

Project

Pulling Station Security

Location

Over 20 polling stations across St Albans

Dates

July 2015 - present

The Background

Both local and general elections are crucial democratic processes, giving UK citizens the chance to have their say in which political party will represent them in both local and national government.

The elections are held across multiple venues across St Albans City and its districts, including Batchwood Sports Centre which is where votes are counted after the election.

Large numbers of voters are attracted from across the region, to place their votes at various polling stations. Ensuring the integrity of the democratic process, as well as the safety and security of the public and local politicians is paramount.

St Albans City and District Council turned to GuardTec Security(GTC), known for their security expertise and multi-faceted approach, to provide comprehensive security services ensuring the election process is smooth, safe, and free of disruptions.

We have now provided security services to the council for both local and general elections over the past ten years. This includes PSC securing the ballot boxes throughout the election to ensure the integrity of the election cannot be questioned and electoral tampering cannot take place.



The Objectives

The primary objectives for GuardTec Security in managing the security for elections were:

- ▶ **Crowd Control and Management:** Ensuring the smooth flow of voters while maintaining order at polling stations. This was especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic where GTC also had to ensure compliance with Social Distancing Guidelines and COVID Legislation
- ▶ **Access Control and Perimeter Security:** Safeguarding the venues by controlling access to restricted areas and preventing unauthorised individuals from entering secure zones, which could affect the integrity of the election and ballot paper count.
- ▶ **Prevention of Disruptions and Fraud:** Securing the election process against any potential threats, including political disruptions, protest action or illegal activities.
- ▶ **Protestors, Terrorism and Threat to Life:** The murder of Jo Cox, a British Labour MP in 2016, shocked the UK and led to an outpouring of grief and condemnation. The incident was widely seen as an attack on democracy and showing that political violence was no longer something we saw on American news, but that extremism had become a serious threat to the UK's political and election system.

As the security provider for the elections that year, we implemented new measures to protect both the public casting their votes and the politicians campaigning throughout the area over the election. These measures included deploying mobile response teams in marked security cars, moving between sites as a visual deterrent to criminal activity or attacks and available to attend any site quickly in the event of a major incident. To co-ordinate security operations throughout the city and over 20 polling stations, we set up a control centre and issued digital radios to allow communication with the officers on each site and the mobile response team.

All staff deployed, completed refresher training of the government anti-terrorism training called ACT. A risk assessment was undertaken for each site to identify exit routes and safe zones which could be used for cover by the public in the event of a major terrorist incident. Evacuation and Invacuation processes were designed for each site and included within the assessment.

Finally staffed were briefed to maintain constant vigilance, scanning for suspicious behaviour and reporting any suspicious activity to both the police and security controllers.

- ▶ **Emergency Response Preparedness:** Establishing clear protocols for any potential emergencies, from medical incidents to civil disturbances.
- ▶ **Collaboration with Local Authorities:** Ensuring seamless coordination with local authorities and emergency services for a rapid and effective response to any incidents.



Approach

► Comprehensive Risk Assessment

GTC began their involvement by conducting a detailed risk assessment across all locations. This included:

- **Venue Analysis:** GTC reviewed the layout and entry/exit points of all venues to identify any vulnerabilities. This was crucial in understanding crowd flow and potential choke points that could create security risks.
- **Risk Identification:** GTC evaluated external factors, such as political tensions, public behaviour patterns, and potential threats of civil disturbance or electoral fraud.
- **Collaboration with Authorities:** GTC worked closely with St Albans City Council, local authorities and the police to understand any specific concerns related to these polling stations, including recent historical incidents or local threats.

From this thorough analysis, GTC created a security plan designed to prevent disruptions and maintain a secure environment throughout the election process.

► Crowd Control and Voter Management

Ensuring smooth movement of voters at both polling locations was a critical focus for GTC. With large numbers of voters expected to attend throughout the day, GTC implemented a comprehensive crowd management strategy that included:

- **Clear Signage and Directional Flow:** GTC installed clear, visible signage at strategic points around both venues to direct voters and reduce confusion. This included guidance for entrance and exit paths, as well as instructions for social distancing and safety protocols.

- ▶ **Staff Deployment at Access Points:** Security personnel were deployed at key entry points to manage voter flow, ensure only registered individuals accessed the premises, and prevent overcrowding.
- ▶ **Queue Management:** For both locations, GTC set up designated areas for queues, equipped with barriers to maintain orderly lines and avoid congestion. This ensured that voters could enter the polling stations efficiently while maintaining physical distancing protocols.

▶ Access Control and Perimeter Security

Given the sensitive nature of the elections, ensuring restricted areas were protected was crucial. GTC took the following measures:

- ▶ **Manned Security Stations:** Security personnel were stationed at all access points to the polling venues, checking IDs and preventing unauthorised access to staff-only areas or voting booths.
- ▶ **Mobile Response Teams:** Mobile security officers were instructed to undertake sweeps of each site and surrounding area, when performing their site visits. This included sweeps of local roads or areas, which could potentially be used as a staging area for an attack or protestor action.
- ▶ **Perimeter Security:** In addition to manned access points, security barriers and fences were set up around the venues to secure the perimeter and prevent any external interference.

▶ Prevention of Disruptions and Fraud

As the integrity of the election process was of utmost importance, GTC implemented several measures to minimize the risk of disruptions or fraudulent activity:

- ▶ **Monitoring for Suspicious Activity:** GTC's security staff were trained to identify and report any suspicious behaviour or signs of



electoral fraud. This included ensuring that only eligible voters entered the premises and monitoring for any attempts to influence the election unlawfully.

- ▶ **Proactive Disruption Mitigation:** GTC implemented procedures to manage any political protests or other disruptions that might arise during the voting process. In case of such incidents, security personnel were trained in conflict de-escalation techniques, ensuring any issues were resolved swiftly and peacefully.
- ▶ **Collaboration with the Police and Emergency Services:** GTC worked in close contact with local police and other emergency services to ensure that any disruption was handled promptly, and the integrity of the election was maintained.

- ▶ **Emergency Response Preparedness**

While the primary focus was on maintaining order and preventing disruptions, GTC ensured all potential emergencies were prepared for:

- ▶ **Medical Assistance:** First aid stations were set up at both polling locations, staffed with trained medical personnel ready to respond to any health-related emergencies.
- ▶ **Evacuation and Invacuation Plans:** In the unlikely event of an emergency that required an evacuation or invacuation, GTC ensured that clear plans established, with security personnel assigned to guide voters safely and efficiently in such events.
- ▶ **Incident Command Structure:** GTC developed an incident command system to allow for quick, organised decision-making in case of emergencies. A designated security lead was present at each location, in direct communication with local authorities for immediate coordination.

► Collaboration with Local Authorities

GTC worked in close partnership with St Albans City Council, local authorities and the police to ensure a unified security approach:

- **Pre-event Coordination:** GTC held meetings with council representatives, police, and other local authorities to discuss security concerns, review venue layouts, and develop an integrated security strategy.
- **Real-Time Coordination:** During the event, GTC maintained constant communication with local authorities to ensure a swift response to any issues that arose. This collaborative approach helped ensure that the election ran smoothly without delays or disruptions.
- **Post-event Review:** After the election, GTC conduct a debrief with the council and local authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of the security plan. This review provides valuable insights for future events, ensuring continuous improvement of security practices.





Results and Impact

The security strategy implemented by GuardTec Security proved to be highly effective in maintaining the integrity and safety of the elections held by St Albans City Council over the past 10 year:

- ▶ **Zero Major Incidents:** Thanks to GTC's thorough planning and proactive security measures, there has never been a major security incident or disruption at any of the sites we have secured. Any minor issues are addressed quickly and efficiently.
- ▶ **Smooth Voter Flow:** All polling locations experience smooth crowd movement with minimal wait times, thanks to GTC's effective queue management and crowd control strategies.
- ▶ **Positive Feedback from Voters and Authorities:** Voters and polling staff alike commend GTC's professionalism and the visible security presence, which has contributed to a safe and reassuring environment. Local authorities also praise GTC for their seamless coordination and attention to detail.
- ▶ **Recognition from Local Police:** The local police force acknowledged GTC's role in maintaining order and ensuring the election process is secure, always highlighting our expertise in handling sensitive events.

The Conclusion

The St Albans Elections have been a resounding success, with GuardTec Security playing a vital role in ensuring the safety, integrity, and smooth operation of each election over a number of years. Through a combination of comprehensive risk assessments, detailed planning, efficient crowd management, and effective collaboration with local authorities, GTC delivers a secure environment for voters and staff. The successful execution of this project further solidifies GTC's reputation as a trusted leader in providing top-tier security solutions for high-profile public events.





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This work was undertaken by Total Security and Cleaning Services Ltd, who changed their name to GuardTec Security and Patrol UK Ltd from January 2026.