

Date of interview: 21st May 2007

Attendees: Debbie Warren, Senior Solicitor
Thelma Warwick, Investigating Officer

Purpose: to discuss the investigation of SBE 16030.06 and verify the policy regarding when local investigation reports may enter the public domain.

Meeting notes recorded by Thelma Warwick

The following points were discussed:

1. Debbie Warren confirmed that she was the Investigating Officer for Local Investigation SBE 16030.06.
2. Debbie pointed out that when Andrew Burton (previous Head of Legal & Democratic Services) left the Council's employment both Debbie and Claire Felton (current Head of Legal & Democratic Services) were new to carrying out local investigations.
3. Whilst carrying out investigation SBE 16030.06 Debbie was aware that there would be a point when the report would enter the public domain. Debbie believed that this would be at the final report stage.
4. It was confirmed that the investigation and reporting process was as follows:
 - a. Debbie carried out the investigation and wrote the draft report.
 - b. The draft report was sent for comment to the Cllr who made the allegation, the Cllr who was the subject of the allegation and anyone else who had a significant impact on the investigation.
 - c. Once comments were received, the report was reviewed by Debbie.
 - d. The final report was sent to relevant individuals and was attached to the Standards Committee papers for the meeting when the outcome was determined by Members.
5. Debbie perceives that the press interest in the investigation forced the issue of reviewing the policy, that is, in relation to when information regarding the allegation, investigation and report could enter the public domain. It was at this point that Claire clarified that the decision as to when information would enter the public domain would be made by the Standards Committee having obtained advice from the Standards Board for England.
6. Debbie pointed out that conflicting statements may have been given to Councillors at the beginning of the investigation. That is, at the start of the investigation Councillors may have been under the impression that the report would enter the public domain once it was finalised whereas during the course of the investigation it was confirmed that the decision as to when the report would enter the public domain was to be taken by the Standards Committee.
7. Cllr Peters contacted Debbie by letter on Friday 22.12.06. The purpose of the letter was to inform Debbie of the telephone call that Cllr Peters had received from Peter Lammas of the Bromsgrove Advertiser. Debbie was not in the office when the letter arrived as she job

Reference: Local Investigation SBE 17438.07

shares and works the beginning of the week. Monday to Wednesday of the following week the office was closed for the Christmas period and, therefore, Debbie e-mailed Claire Felton with details of Cllr Peters' letter when she was back in the office, that is, Friday 29.12.06. On the same day Debbie wrote to Cllr Peters saying that she has referred his letter to Claire.

Debbie confirmed that at this stage the investigation was at draft report stage and, therefore, was definitely confidential.

- 8. Debbie perceives that her formal role and involvement in the investigation ended when the final report went to the Monitoring Officer (Claire). The final report was issued 19.01.07.
- 9. When Cllr Duddy was sent a copy of the final report it was accompanied by a letter from Claire Felton stating that she understood that there had been press interest and requesting that Cllr Duddy ensure that the report did not enter the public domain.
- 10. The Standards Committee that was scheduled for 08.02.07 was postponed due to the snow.
- 11. At the time it occurred, Debbie was not aware of the second referral to the press.
- 12. Debbie confirmed that Standards Committee meetings are open to the public in the interest of openness and transparency. The Committee may decide to
 - a. exclude the public for sensitive material; and/or
 - b. release the name of the councillor but not details of the allegation.
- 13. Debbie confirmed that the details of the investigation entered the public domain at the Standards Committee hearing on 21.03.07.
- 14. As far as Debbie is aware, all correspondence with relevant councillors in relation to the investigation was marked 'Private and Confidential'.

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Debbie Warren

Dated:

[ORIGINAL DOCUMENT SIGNED BY DEBBIE WARREN ON 3RD JULY 2007]