

Date of meeting: 23rd May 2007

Attendees: Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
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. Claire Felton confirmed that at the time local investigation SBE 16030.06 was being carried out by Debbie Warren she held the role of Legal Officer. Duties included advising the panel of Standards Committee members.
2. Claire was not involved in the actual investigation and when Cllr Duddy and Cllr Peters requested timeline updates it was always made clear that Debbie Warren was the Investigating Officer.
3. Claire confirmed that the Standards Board for England (SBE) provides guidance regarding disclosure of information to the public and when this should happen. Advice from the SBE regarding disclosure was obtained.
4. Claire is clear that all information in relation to an investigation remains confidential and the decision to determine when information may enter the public domain rests with the Standards Committee. All Committee documents, such as agendas and minutes do not name the councillors concerned or details of the allegation.
5. As at 14.12.07 the details of the allegation and the name of the councillor were not in the public domain. Furthermore, the SBE was not aware of the findings of the investigation as the final report was not sent to the SBE until early 2007.
6. The final report was discussed at the Standards Committee held on 21.03.07.
7. Claire remembers a telephone call from Cllr Duddy in which she informed him that he could not divulge any information in relation to a local investigation as he would be compromised if he did.
8. Claire confirmed that:
 - a. The Standards Committee decides whether or not meetings are open to the public.
 - b. Agenda and minutes are published prior to meetings. Such documents do not give details of either the allegation or identities of the councillors concerned.
 - c. It was only on the day of the hearing (21.03.07) that the Standards Committee decided that the hearing was to be in public in the interest of fairness.

Reference: Local Investigation SBE 17438.07

9. When the final report for investigation SBE 16030.06 was issued Claire wrote to Cllr Duddy (letter dated 23.01.07) stating that she understood there had been press interest and requesting that the report did not enter the public domain.