

INVESTIGATION SBE 17438.07
SUPPLEMENTAL FINAL REPORT
6 NOVEMBER 2007

Investigation conducted under section 66 of the Local Government Act 2000 by Thelma Warwick, Auditor, into an allegation concerning Councillor James Duddy, Member of Bromsgrove District Council – Supplemental Report

Councillor Peters has supplied additional information in that he has provided copies of a letter that he wrote to the Editor of the Bromsgrove Advertiser (Alan Wallcroft) together with Mr. Wallcroft's response, copies of which are attached. This information does not alter the conclusion reached in my report. However, I feel that it should be made available to the Committee.

Dated: 6 November 2007

Signed: Thelma Warwick

Mr Alan Wallcroft
Editor
Bromsgrove Advertiser

3 October 2007

Dear Mr Wallcroft,

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Re: Bromsgrove District Council - Standards Committee Hearings

I am writing to you, in confidence, in order to investigate the train of events during late 2006 and early 2007, leading up to my appearing before the Standards Committee on a charge of failing to observe the Council's Code of Conduct.

On the afternoon of Friday 15 December 2006 I received an unexpected telephone call from your Chief Reporter, Mr Peter Lammas. He told me that he had received information (I believe it was some sort of document) from an un-named person giving details about the investigation into my conduct which had been the subject of a confidential report to the Standards Committee held on the previous day, 14 December 2006. At this stage, my identity had not been revealed to anyone, not even the Committee members, and yet the information in the possession of Mr Lammas gave full details of the allegation against me. I confirmed the information Mr Lammas read out to me and I told him that the matter was confidential and that he should not publish anything that might prejudice the subsequent hearing. I believe he honoured my request.

I received another telephone call from Mr Lammas on the morning of Thursday 1 February 2007 concerning new briefing information that he had received from an un-named source, concerning the agenda for the Standards Committee to be held on the following Thursday, 8 February 2007. Again, at this stage my identity had not been made known to the committee or the public and I again stressed to Mr Lammas that the matter was still confidential and that he should not publish anything that might prejudice the hearing. I believe he honoured this request too.

What I am seeking from you is confirmation that Mr Lammas did indeed receive the information I have outlined and did telephone me to discuss the matter on the two occasions. I understand that a Council officer has broached the subject informally with him and he denies having any recollection or records of the incidents. I am sure you must keep written records and diaries concerning contacts and enquiries, and possibly have evidence of telephone calls made to and from your office.

I would ask you to investigate this for me, without disclosing any identities of persons involved, simply to confirm what I have stated. You will know that disclosure of confidential information concerning elected Councillors is taken very seriously by the Council and if anyone has broken the Code of Conduct this may be a matter for referral to the Standards Board for England. Any subsequent investigation by the Standards Board would be obstructed if the information I allege existed was denied by persons who had received it and it might become a matter for the Press Complaints Commission to look into.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Stephen Peters

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Cllr Stephen Peters
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October 31, 2007

Dear Councillor Peters,

First of all apologies for taking a while to respond to your letter of October 3 but life is somewhat busier now that I have two extra newspaper titles to look after and work out of three different offices. Also I have been on holiday and so has Pete Lammas, who is mentioned in your letter, so our paths haven't crossed for a while in person, although we have spoken on the 'phone.

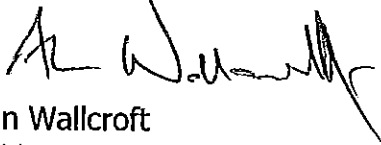
Your letter refers to events of late 2006 and early 2007 regarding the Standards Committee and yourself, information allegedly in the hands of this newspaper, and subsequent phone calls to you.

I have spoken to Pete, who is our chief reporter, who tells me he can't really recall with great clarity the various events surrounding this matter and the telephone calls you say he made to you. He says he doesn't dispute that he would have called you on the matter in question, but there are so many calls made by him to various councillors each week he simply cannot recall exactly what may have been said and when, as it was quite a time ago.

We haven't any written records/diaries concerning contacts and enquiries we make on a daily basis, or evidence to hand of all our 'phone calls - incoming or outgoing. Reporters do have appointment diaries, but do not record every person they contact or conversation they have with them. They do keep their interview/story notebooks for a time but these are normally binned after six months.

All I can confirm is that Pete Lammas recalls he was probably checking out information which had come to him, from what source I couldn't say, and would have been following the normal practice of verifying matters. This would not necessarily have been for publication, but if there was a story we had wished to pursue he would have been seeking to ensure it was a balanced report.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Wallcroft', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alan Wallcroft
Editor