

## Attendance Note

For Monitoring Officer

Matter reference: 000849  
Matter name: Standards Complaint - Cllr Chris France - 2011  
Attended by: Chris Moister  
Attendance with: Cllr Alan Cullens

Attendance on: 18 October 2011  
Recorded on: 26 October 2011  
Subject: Standards Complaint – Interview

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The following is a note of a meeting held with Cllr Cullens on 18 October.

Cllr Cullens – The complaint was made because of the pressures placed upon the Planning Team and Contact Centre as a result of a leaflet published by Cllr France. It was not simply that the leaflet was misleading or untrue, but that it caused significant additional work for the Council and concern from the public.

Cllr Cullens – I was made aware of this issue as I was advised of it by Lesley-Ann Fenton in my role as Executive Member for Planning.

Cllr Cullens – I was particularly concerned about the reputational issues for the Council as it was stated in the email that allocations raised had been fixed and this was not the case.

CM – Can you confirm what your complaint is?

Cllr Cullens

Generally that Cllr France had disclosed and misrepresented confidential information in a way that was specifically designed to cause public outcry specifically –

1. That the leaflet circulated by Cllr France made reference to confidential information and that this information was misrepresented by Cllr France.  
In particular
  - Site CH0169 to be allocated for housing – agreed
  - Site CS0043 to be allocated for housing – not agreed option was to retain for employment
  - Site CS0030 to be allocated for housing – not agreed option to protect as public open space
2. The leaflet used confidential illustrative information to “scaremonger” the public buy using the figure of 165 new properties
3. That Cllr France reproduced an extract from a confidential document and circulated it to the public under cover of an undated letter. The confidentiality of this document had not then and has not now been waived.
4. That by his conduct Cllr France has also brought the Council into disrepute.

CM – Can you confirm when the leaflet was produced or distributed?

Cllr Cullens – I became aware of the leaflet on the Weekend 19 – 21 August as it was brought to my attention by the public at that time and I was contacted on the Monday Morning (22<sup>nd</sup> August) by Lesley-Ann Fenton about this matter in my Planning member role.

## Appendix A (3)

On 21 August I had met a member of the public who handed me a copy of the leaflet for information.

Subsequently, with colleagues, a newsletter in response was produced (24 August) which confirmed that only 1 of the 3 sites were in fact proposed for housing and confirmed that this was a proposal that was for public consultation.

Within one week of this newsletter in response (although Cllr C cannot be certain of the date he believes it to be prior to 31 August) Cllr France issued a letter which appended an extract from a document that had been circulated to members in June of this year for consultation purposes. The document was marked confidential on both sides.

Cllr Cullens also takes issue with the letter as it does not seek to step back from the earlier position in the campaign leaflet but infers that the Council have changed their position as a result of Cllr France's actions. Cllr Cullens notes that the letter specifically states that the confidential document has been "published" which again is untrue. It was and remains confidential.

CM – What was your understanding as to why this was confidential?

Cllr Cullens – The document was an options paper and the information contained therein could very easily have been misinterpreted by people who hadn't received the presentations and additional information provided by planning. It was important to maintain confidentiality to prevent this misunderstanding. This was also an options paper for members to consider and was not necessarily the same document that would go into the public domain for consultation. It was important to keep the original document confidential to avoid any public confusion as to what was being consulted on.

CM – What briefings did you/ other councillors receive about the process this document?

Cllr Cullens – I had a number of sessions specific to me but there were a number of briefing sessions for members run by planning (specifically Jenni Moore and Julian Jackson) whose dates they can confirm where the process was explained and the importance of the integrity of the process was stressed.

It would have been concerning one of these briefings that Cllr France received the confidential document.

Cllr Cullens – The actions of Cllr France caused significant public concern. A petition against the alleged proposal was started at Brinscall Post Office and got many signatures before the Post Mistress withdrew her support (and the venue) after she became aware of the truth of the situation.