

Attendance Note

For Corporate Director of Governance

Matter reference: 000849
Matter name: Standards Complaint - Cllr Chris France - 2011
Attended by: Chris Moister
Attendance with: Cllr Chris France (accompanied by Cllr Peter Wilson)
Attendance on: 25 October 2011
Recorded on: 03 November 2011
Subject: Standards Investigation

CM – reconfirmed the process and purpose of the interview.

CM – restated the complaints made

1. That in a leaflet “campaign special” issued in or around mid August Cllr France had misrepresented information taken from a confidential document by stating that land had been allocated for housing when it was not, and by overstating the potential effect of the proposals on house numbers to be built (stated by Cllr France as 165)
2. That Cllr France had disclosed an extract from a confidential document by attaching it to a letter sent to residents at the end of August.

CM – What was your understanding of the papers you received in June? Did you view them as confidential?

Cllr France – Yes they were clearly confidential.

I understood that they were to enable members to discuss the possible site allocations and provide us with an opportunity to make representations on the allocations at the council meeting in July.

When I issued the leaflet I believed that the sites were still allocated for housing as per the document issued in June and that the Council meeting had not changed these allocations.

The content of the leaflet was a mistake. Cllr France misunderstood the content of the information concerning sites CS0043, CS0030 and CH0169. He believed at the time the leaflet was issued that it was the intention of CBC to allocate these sites for housing.

Cllr France states that as soon as he became aware of his mistake he issued the letter which corrected his position.

CM – This was the letter which contained the extract of the confidential document?

Cllr France – Yes. I had cross referenced this document with the document published on-line and it was substantially the same, only the boundaries (not site boundaries but area boundaries on the illustrative plans) were different.

There had been a considerable period of time elapsed from receipt of the confidential document (received some time in June) and the date of both the leaflet and the letter. This coupled with the publication of substantially the same information lead Cllr France to believe that the document and/or its content was no longer confidential.

In any event, there was a public interest in disclosing this document.

Appendix A (4)

The conservative group had published a response to the initial leaflet which had accused Cllr France of misleading the public as to the intentions of the Council concerning the 3 sites. To the best of his recollection he was accused of lying with "deliberate and malicious intent".

Cllr France felt that this misrepresented the Council's position as these site were considered and the confidential document he disclosed demonstrated this.

CM – But you were mistaken as to the effect of that document?

Cllr France - Yes CS0030 – accept that it was not proposed to allocate this site for housing
CS 0043 – accept that this site was already allocated for housing
CH0169 – accept that this site was already allocated for housing and employment use but that the proposal was to allocate for employment land only.

CM – How did the disclosure of the document serve the public interest?

Cllr France – It showed that these sites were being considered and therefore demonstrated that the conservatives were seeking to mislead the public with their response and that I wasn't lying. Although accept was in error as to its content, I wasn't lying I just made a mistake.

CM – Had you discussed the confidential document with officers?

Cllr France I met with officers with Cllr Edgerley and made objections to the allocations at that time. I also made written objections to the allocations at the meeting in July.

CM - Did you discuss the leaflet or letter with anyone?

Cllr France – I discussed it with David Snape (who has acted as an Election Agent for the Labour Group)