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COMPLAINT AGAINST COUNCILLOR PAUL BARTLETT

Accountable Officer and Author: Mark Jones - Head of Legal and Property Services –
MK252962

1. Purpose

1.1 To consider whether to investigate a complaint against a Councillor for breach of the National or Local Codes of Conduct for Members of the Council.

2. Summary

2.1 A complaint has been received against the named councillor. The Standards Committee needs to decide whether the complaint should be investigated and if so how the investigation should be conducted.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the Committee decides whether, and if so how, it wishes to deal with the complaint against Councillor Bartlett.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 On 9 September 1998, a member of the public wrote to Councillor N Miles to complain about comments made about Roman Catholics by Councillor P Bartlett in a letter which appeared in the Milton Keynes on Sunday on 23 August 1998. A copy of the letter of complaint (**Annex A**) and the letter published in the newspaper (**Annex B**) are attached. Also attached is a subsequent letter from Councillor Bartlett published in the newspaper (**Annex C**).

At its meeting on 24 September 1998, the Committee agreed not to take any action until the Committee had clarified the process it would adopt for dealing with complaints and was clear whether or not Councillor Bartlett faced any legal action over his letter of the 23 August 1998.

5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 This complaint was made before the Standards Committee had agreed what its Local Code of Conduct should be. The Local Code was implemented in May 1999. The complaint was also made before the Committee had decided what procedures to follow in dealing with complaints under the National and the Local Codes.
- 5.2 At its meeting on 24 September 1998 (Minute reference ST6/99), the Committee decided that all complaints of suspected misconduct be initially referred in writing to the Council's Monitoring Officer. The Committee also decided to devise a procedure for dealing with complaints. Unfortunately the procedure took much longer to agree than was originally envisaged.
- 5.3 This complaint does not meet the basic requirements of the adopted procedures in that it does not identify which paragraph of the National or Local Codes Councillor Bartlett is said to have breached. It would be unfair to apply the Local Code to this incident since the incident took place well before the Code was adopted. There is nothing in the National Code which appears to cover the incident complained of.

6. **Implications**

- 6.1 Environmental

None.

- 6.2 Equalities

This case demonstrates the need to be particularly careful about peoples' religious sensitivities.

- 6.3 Financial

None.

- 6.4 Legal

None.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 The Committee will need to decide whether it is appropriate to investigate this complaint and, if so, how to deal with the investigation.

Background Papers: None