

7th JUNE 2010

Members' local code of conduct - complaints form

Important: Please read attached guidance notes before completing this form.

1. Your details

Title:* Mr

First name:* Steve

Last name:* Wagner

Address line 1:* [REDACTED]

Address line 2:* [REDACTED]

Town:* [REDACTED]

County:* [REDACTED]

Postcode:* [REDACTED]

Daytime telephone: 1753875262

Evening telephone: [REDACTED]

Mobile number: [REDACTED]

Your address and contact details will not usually be released unless necessary or to deal with your complaint.

However, we will tell the following people that you have made this complaint:

- * the Monitoring Officer of the authority
- * the parish clerk (only if the complaint concerns a Parish Councillor)

We will tell them your name and give them a summary of your complaint. We will give them full details of your complaint where necessary or appropriate to be able to deal with it.

2. Please tell us which complainant type best describes you: Other council officer or authority employee

3. Equalities monitoring

It would be helpful for us to know about your background so we can check that we are meeting the needs of the whole community. Please do complete the equalities monitoring section further down.

4. Making your complaint

Please provide us with the name of the Member(s) you believe have breached the Code of Conduct and the name of their authority:

First name [REDACTED]

Last name Dhillon

Council or authority name [REDACTED]

First name [REDACTED]

Last name [REDACTED]

Council or authority name [REDACTED]

First name [REDACTED]

Last name [REDACTED]

Council or authority name [REDACTED]

First name [REDACTED]

Last name [REDACTED]

Council or authority name [REDACTED]

5. Please explain in this section what the Member has done that you believe breaches the Code of Conduct. If you are complaining about more than one member you should clearly explain what each individual person has done that you believe breaches the Code of Conduct.

It is important that you provide all the information you wish to have taken into account by the Standards (Assessment) Sub-Committee when it decides whether to take any action on your complaint. For example:

- * You should be specific, wherever possible, about exactly what you are alleging the Member said or did. For instance, instead of writing that the Member insulted you, you should state what it was they said
- * You should provide the dates of the alleged incidents wherever possible. If you cannot provide exact dates it is important to give a general timeframe
- * You should confirm whether there are any witnesses to the alleged conduct and provide their names and contact details if possible
- * You should provide any relevant background information

Please provide us with the details of your complaint:*

On 26/05/10 at around 17:45 Cllr Dhillon called me to discuss 2 cases that he has expressed an interest in. One of these cases is not in his ward. Cllr Dhillon has spoken to various different team members about these cases but because he was not happy with

the answers he was given, then tried another officer. On this occasion I was trying to explain the process and system we work to but he was not interested. He kept cutting me short and at one point said that he did not understand my grammar. I asked him to explain what he meant as I did not know whether he was referring to the written form or perhaps my diction/accent. I have some difficulty understanding Cllr Dhillon's accent sometimes but always asked him to repeat or explain what he means respectfully. After refusing to hasten the works that he requested due to our procedures he then got very irate and said to me that Manju Dhar (my line manager) was the only nice person in the team. This I took as a direct insult at me and the rest of the team. Because of this and his raising of his voice I told him that I was putting the phone down and did. At the time of the call there were two officers (not in my team), sitting across the gangway who did appear to have heard the call. I do not know their names but I can get them if required.

Additional Help

6. Complaints must be submitted in writing. This includes fax and electronic submissions. However, in line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2000, we can make reasonable adjustments to assist you if you have a disability that prevents you from making your complaint in writing.

We can also help if English is not your first language.

If you need any help in completing this form, please contact June Cook, Member Services Manager, 01753 875019 or email: CouncillorComplaints@slough.gov.uk.

Equalities monitoring form

It would be helpful for us to know about your background so we can check that we are meeting the needs of the whole community. If you feel that the group you identify with is not listed, please feel free to write this in.

Gender:

Age:

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?:

Religion and Belief:

If other, please specify:

Your ethnic background/origin

White:

If other, please specify:

Mixed:

If other, please specify:

Asian or British Asian:

If other, please specify:

Black or Black British:

If other, please specify:

Chinese or other ethnic group:

If other, please specify:

I do not wish to give this information:

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT (SBC 2010/23)

1. **Complainant:** Mr Steve Wagner
2. **Subject Matter:** Councillor B Dhillon
3. **Date(s) of Alleged Breach:** 26th May 2010
4. **Précis of the Complaint:**

The allegations stated in the Complainant's complaint form which was received electronically on 7th June 2010 appear to be as follows:-

A telephone call by the Subject Matter to the Complainant to discuss two cases the Subject Matter was interested in. The Subject became irate, raised his voice and was offensive and insulting to the Complainant.

The complaint is within jurisdiction. The Subject Member was a Member of the Council at the time of the alleged breach.

5. **Other relevant information/documentation**

The Complainant does not particularise the breach(es) of the Local Code of Conduct but the conduct might be considered to be a breach of paragraph 3(1) (treat others with respect), or paragraph 5 (bringing his office or the Council into disrepute).

6. **Supporting Papers**

Complaint form received 7th June 2010.

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS (ASSESSMENT) SUB-COMMITTEE

DECISION NOTICE

Reference: 2010/SBC23

1. Complaint

On 13th July 2010 the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee of this Council considered a complaint from Mr Steve Wagner, a Council employee, concerning the alleged conduct of Cllr Balwinder Dhillon, a Member of this Authority.

A general summary of the complaint is set out below:

During a telephone call by Cllr Dhillon to the Complainant to discuss two cases he was interested in Councillor Dhillon became irate, raised his voice and was offensive and insulting to the Mr Wagner.

2. Decision

In accordance with Section 57A(2) of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended, the Assessment Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee decided to refer the allegation to the Monitoring Officer for investigation.

I identified below the paragraphs of the Local Code of Conduct which may apply to the alleged conduct:

- (a) failing to treat others with respect and
- (b) bullying

The investigator will determine which paragraphs are relevant during the course of the investigation.

3. What happens now?

Please see the attached guide on the investigations process.

4. Terms of Reference

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 amends the Local Government Act 2000, which now provides for the local assessment of new complaints that members of relevant authorities may have breached the Code of Conduct. The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 relate to the conduct of authority members and requirements for dealing with this.

The regulations set out the framework for the operation of a locally based system for the assessment, referral and investigation of complaints of misconduct by members of authorities. They amend and re-enact existing provisions in both the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001, as amended, and the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003, as amended.

5. Additional Help

If you need additional support in relation to this or future contact with us, please let us know as soon as possible by contacting June Cook, Member Services Manager on (01753) 875019 or by e-mail at june.cook@slough.gov.uk.

Signed:

Maria Memoli, Interim Monitoring Officer for and on behalf of the Sub-Committee

Date: 22nd July 2010

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL - STANDARDS INVESTIGATION

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF: Steve Wagner

AGE OF WITNESS: Over 21
(if over 21, enter "over 21")

POSITION HELD: Grants Renewals Manager

**ADDRESS: Slough Borough Council, Town Hall, Bath Road, Slough,
Berkshire SL1 3UQ**

This witness statement is in respect of the Standards Investigation regarding a Code of Conduct matter in the case of Councillor Dhillon - Compliant reference SBC23 in relation to an allegation that Councillor Dhillon breached the Code of Conduct during a telephone conversation with me at proximately 17:30 on 26 May 2010.

1. The background to the telephone conversation is that the telephone rang on that evening after 5pm and I answered it. The caller introduced himself as Councillor Dhillon and asked to speak to Manju Dhar, the Manager of Private Sector Housing and my Line Manager. I explained I was the only one in the office and asked if I could help him.
2. Councillor Dhillon asked me to explain who I was, which I did. He queried why the Grants Team had not made any further progress with a disabled facilities grant for a Client at [redacted] I was aware of this grant application, however before I had an opportunity to explain, he proceeded to tell me what my job was and what I needed to do to move it along. My impression of what Councillor Dhillon was saying was that he wanted me to escalate the process for him.
3. The Client of [redacted] had been referred by the Occupational Health team for adaptation which meant that a level access shower needed to be installed. If a Client wants to build their own extension or in this case convert an existing garage, then funds are provided for the adaptation works only but it means the Client has to arrange the building and planning applications etc.

4. There are inevitable delays when the Client wants to undertake the works. It is not possible for example to do the specification of works until we have sight of the plans. But before all of this the client had to have a financial assessment to establish if they meet the qualification criteria for a grant.
5. With this application the first referral was on 1 November 2007. The client was placed on a waiting list at 109. A further referral was made on 3 December 2009 as the Client's needs had changed. A financial assessment was confirmed on 25 January 2010. From this point the case then is referred to the Surveyors and generally works are completed within six months. However if there are queries raised or any misunderstandings by the Client about things as was the case here, then the case can take a little longer. Generally as the Manager I aim to have the case completed in six months.
6. I was aware that Councillor Dhillon had already made a complaint to Manju Dhar about the length of time taken to carry out the process and that she was dealing with his complaint.
7. Every time I tried to explain the process or the stage at which the case was at he kept on cutting me off mid sentence. I was surprised with his attitude as I have always got on very well with Councillor enquiries in the past and really I was just trying to help him. I was trying to get my point across to him that I had not yet received a response from the Client about accepting the conditions I had set out in my letter of 20 May 2010. At this point he raised his voice and he said he did not understand my grammar. I asked him what he meant by this but he would not elaborate.
8. During the telephone conversation Councillor Dhillon had a general lack of understanding what the Agency's process was and would not allow me to explain what is necessary. He kept stating that it was a simple case but I was trying to explain the Council's obligations to make sure all the relevant specifications and plans and building regulation notices are followed to ensure the safety of the adaptation and future use. In an email from Councillor Dhillon on 18 May 2010 to myself and Manju, he actually states that "...it is a straightforward plumbing and draining job only with window in the front side..". This confirms to me that he did not understand the process and formalities.
9. He insisted that I process the grant immediately. I consider that this was an abuse of his elected position. There is a process in place which cannot and should not be short circuited on the say so of an elected Member. I felt that I was able to deal with his attitude as a

Senior Manager but I am convinced that a junior member of staff may have felt bullied by his attitude.

10. I fully understand the responsibilities of an elected Member to represent and make enquiries on behalf of the member of the public but I am concerned about the manner in which he approached me about the case. I felt Councillor Dhillon was very disrespectful. His language was at times difficult to understand. He has a strong accent and I think that I asked him to repeat things to me as I could not make out what he was saying. The tone of his voice was aggressive. It continued in that tone throughout, indeed this aggressive tone had commenced almost immediately during my conversation with him. I wear hearing aids and they are automatic and need no adjustments. I can detect anger in a voice easily as I am fully aware of what a normal conversation sounds like to me. I was deeply offended by Councillor Dhillon's comment that the only nice person in the team was Manju Dhar. This was an insult to me and my team. At this point I advised Councillor Dhillon that I was not prepared to discuss it with him anymore and would be putting the telephone down, which is what I did. In the last 10 years I have had a lot of experience with members face to face, verbally and in writing. I also respond directly to enquiries from Fiona Mactaggart MP. I have never had an incident such as this before, and in the past have been praised for the service and response provided.
11. Before I left the office that evening I wrote to Manju explaining what had happened and that in view of Councillor Dhillon's "total lack of respect for me and the agency and how we work" I was no longer prepared "to talk to him again under these conditions". Subsequently I made a formal complaint to the Monitoring Officer.

I hereby declare that this a true and accurate record of the interview on 3 November 2010 and this is an agreed record of that interview. There are 3 pages. I confirm that I have been advised that the investigation is subject to rules of confidentiality and disclosure under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. The record is being provided to me solely to confirm the accuracy of the interview and it will not be disclosed or used by me for any other purpose. I consent for any details of the interview to be used for this investigation.

Signed:

Date:

Channa Kuldip

From: Wagner Steve
Sent: 03 November 2010 17:13
To: Channa Kuldip
Subject: FW: Mr
Hi Kuldip

FYI

Regards

Steve Wagner TMIET
Manager & Senior Home Improvement Surveyor

Slough Home Improvement Agency
2008 Home Improvement Agency of the Year

From: B Dhillon [mailto:balwinderdhillon@hotmail.com]
Sent: 18 May 2010 13:22
To: Wagner Steve; Dhar Manju
Subject: FW:

Mr Steve Wagner/Ms Manju Dhar
Manager Private Sector Housing
Slough Borough Council

Ref;

Hi Mr Steve Wagner and Ms Manju Dhar

I have been contacted by

I have been informed by the family that he has been assessed by OT team and they have offered them the lift facilities and for other reasons and safety of young children family doesn't wish to have lift facilities at all and instead they would like to convert their Garage into bedroom with other DFG for Shower, toilet and washing facilities and window etc

For your information they already have built up garage next to their house and it will be a straight forward plumbing and draining job only with window in the front side

Family have been told the SB Council may charge 15% handling fees and they like to speed up the process and like to know if they can use their own builder/plumber to complete the job on a very competitive price or they may end up paying unnecessary high charges to any other Council's contractors

I will be very grateful if you could kindly give me any update and speed up the process as Mr G does need these facilities as soon as possible

Thank you and kind regards

Cllr Balwinder S Dhillon

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Get a free e-mail account with Hotmail. [Sign-up now.](#)

Channa Kuldip

From: Wagner Steve
Sent: 03 November 2010 17:06
To: Channa Kuldip
Subject: FW:
Hi Kuldip

See email below where Cllr Dhillon states that I phone him. This is a lie as he phoned me!

Today 26th May 2010 I received a telephone call from Mr Steve Wagner Grants Manager at around 1740hrs to say that he need confirmation from the G family that they agree with their terms and I try to explain to him that your letter dated 20th May 2010 does not suggest or indicate that you are looking to hear from them for any acceptance at all.

Regards

Steve Wagner TMIET
Manager & Senior Home Improvement Surveyor

Slough Home Improvement Agency
2008 Home Improvement Agency of the Year

From: Dhar Manju
Sent: 25 June 2010 09:08
To: Wagner Steve
Subject: FW:

Steve - this is the response to his complaint.

I understand that Maria is intending to call you regarding your complaint and but I don't know the outcome. I'll check and come back to you

Regards

Manju

From: Alder Denise
Sent: 24 June 2010 17:52
To: Heer Charanjit; Dhar Manju
Subject: FW:

fyi

Kind regards,

Denise Alder
Strategic Director the Green and Built Environment
Slough Borough Council
Tel: 01753 875202
www.slough.gov.uk

 Think green! Save paper. Only print this email if you have to.

From: Prendergast Caroline **On Behalf Of** Alder Denise
Sent: 24 June 2010 16:44
To: 'balwinderdhillon@hotmail.com'
Cc: McSweeney Finbar
Subject:

Dear Councillor Dhillon

Ref:

Following your complaint regarding _____ on the 26th May 2010, I have now investigated the situation and can respond to the issues raised in your letter.

1. I understand the reasons for the long wait and the way that the Private Sector Housing team operates its waiting list has been explained to you by Mrs Dhar and also by Mrs Dhar to Charanjit Heer, who I understand has also explained it to you. Unfortunately the Council has to prioritise its resources and this can result in disabled or vulnerable people waiting long times for changes to their homes.
2. Mrs Dhar spoke with you on the 26th May and explained not only the process for DFG's but also explained that it would be a few weeks before the specification would be sent to the client as the Surveyor was on leave. I can confirm that the specification was sent on the 18th June.
3. Despite the fact that you were acting as the agent for Mr G _____, Mr G _____ has also been directly in contact with Mr Wagner and all correspondence has been responded to within the Council guidelines. The e-mail to Mr G _____ explained all his queries and that e-mail response was forwarded to you by Mrs Dhar.
4. Your complaint about Mr Wagner's behaviour has been investigated. Mr Wagner's recall of the conversation is that you did not give him an opportunity to explain or respond to your questions as you were constantly talking over him. He therefore warned you that if you continued that he would put the telephone down. This he then did and raised the matter formally with Mrs Dhar. I also understand that you have contacted the office numerous times and have spoken to a number of staff reporting the same issues. Whilst I can understand your frustration, this is not helpful and it is important that you allow Officers time to answer your queries.

I am sorry that you found the behaviour of any staff member offensive, distressing and intimidating but this was not the intention.

As you will be aware Mr G _____ has now been sent the specification of works and I look forward to receiving the estimates for the works as outlined in the letter to Mr G _____

It would be also be helpful and cause less confusion for the Officers if you could clarify with Mr G _____ if he still wishes for you to act as his agent or to deal with the Council directly.

Yours sincerely

Denise Alder
 Strategic Director the Green and Built Environment
 Slough Borough Council
 Tel: 01753 875202
www.slough.gov.uk

From: B Dhillon [mailto:balwinderdhillon@hotmail.com]
Sent: 26 May 2010 19:14
To: McSweeney Finbar; choudhry; Charanjit Heer2
Subject:

26th May 2010

Mr Finbar McSweeney

Corporate Complaint Department
Chief Executive
Slough Borough Council
Bath Road Slough

Ref;

Dear Finbar

As you may know that I have been approached by Mr [redacted] to chase the Private Sector Housing for their DFG and they have been going through the nightmare from the last two years and still no where near to any end at all.

Last week on 25th May 2010 I have spoken to Ms Manju Dhar the manager from Private sector Housing about the progress and I have been advised by Ms Manju Dhar that her office will advise the family concerned about the specification will be drawn up by a Slough Home Improvement Surveyor and they will require 3 quotations for the work and the winning contractor will have to demonstrate they have sufficient skills and insurance cover for these types of work.

I also have got a copy of letter sent on 20th May 2010 to Mr [redacted] and the family is still waiting for a specification from them and can't get their drawing amended and can't get any estimate done accordingly

Today 26th May 2010 I received a telephone call from Mr Steve Wagner Grants Manager at around 1740hrs to say that he need confirmation from the G [redacted] family that they agree with their terms and I try to explain to him that your letter dated 20th May 2010 does not suggest or indicate that you are looking to hear from them for any acceptance at all.

I have requested him (Mr Steve Wagner to go ahead and send them your specification and all your requirements need for Disable Facilities Grants etc, so that family can get their drawing amended accordingly and can ask any builder of their own choice to provide them estimate for the required work to satisfy the Private Sector Housing's surveyors as per their specification I further explained to him that I have spoken to one of your lady called Ms Manju Dhar who is very nice and pleasant lady to deal with all the time and I never had any difficulty with Ms Manju Dhar within last several years I have dealt with her.

Mr Steve Wagner found this to be very offensive and he was shouting and screaming at me and put his telephone down.

I personally found this very offensive, distressing and intimidating attitude behaviour from Mr Steve Wagner manager who is dealing with very vonurable members of our communities who are desperately waiting for our assistance for Disabled Facilities Grants

I hope you can help me to understand their letter sent out on 20th May 2010 which I will be sending you as well

Thank you and kind regards

BS Dhillon Upton Ward

Get a free e-mail account with Hotmail. [Sign-up now.](#)

Channa Kuldip

From: Wagner Steve
Sent: 03 November 2010 16:30
To: Channa Kuldip
Subject: Telephone conversation with Cllr Dhillon 26
Attachments: Telephone conversation with Cllr Dhillon 26.doc

Hi Kuldip

FYI

Regards

Steve Wagner TMIET
Manager & Senior Home Improvement Surveyor

Slough Home Improvement Agency
2008 Home Improvement Agency of the Year

Telephone conversation with Cllr Dhillon 26/05/10

I was the last person in the office from our team.

At around 5:30pm I took a call from Councillor Dhillon regarding

He asked me why we had not made further progress with the DFG application. He then proceeded to tell me what my job was and what I should be doing to move the project along. Every time I tried to explain the process he cut me off mid sentence. I was trying to get the point across that I had not been notified that the client had accepted the conditions as stated in my letter to Mr G dated 20/05/10. He raised his voice and told me that he did not understand my grammar. As I understand it grammar refers to the written word and I asked him what part of my grammar he did not understand. However he did not elaborate but kept repeating himself over and over. I asked him to lower his tone and give me a chance to try to make him understand both the current situation and the process, which he ignored. He was not interested and insisted that I process the grant immediately. He went on to say that Manju Dhar was the only nice person in the team. As the manager I found that to be an insult to both me and my team. I told Cllr Dhillon that I was not prepared to discuss the matter with him anymore due to his attitude. I warned him I was putting the phone down and did.

There were 2 other people working at their desks across the gangway from me who I believe did hear my side of the conversation.

Rec'd 9/11/10
from Swager
(Kee)

Date: 25th October 2010

PRIVATE
SECTOR

NOV 2010

HOUSING

Councillor Balwinder Dhillon
67 London Road
Slough
Berkshire
SL3 7RS

Steve Wagner
Home Improvement Agency/Grants Manager
Green & Built Environment
St Martins Place, 51 Bath Rd
Slough
SL1 3UF

Dear Steve

Re: Telephone calls 26th May 17:45pm - 2010

After some considerable reflection I have concluded that I would like to apologise if I caused you any offence or distress. I at no point intended to cause any upset to you or any other members of your team. I acknowledge that I may have approached you in a way which may have caused misunderstanding.

I unreservedly apologise for any of my actions which impacted you in any way. I have agreed to put all queries regarding your department through the Conservative Group Political Officer to prevent any incidents occurring in the future. I hope this is satisfactory to yourself and your colleagues.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Balwinder Dhillon

10 November, 2010

Department:	Law & Corporate Governance
Contact Name:	Kuldip K Channa
Contact No:	01753 875189
FAX:	01753 478642
Email:	kuldip.channa@slough.gov.uk
Our Ref:	KKC/013250
Your Ref:	

Councillor Balwinder S Dhillon,
67 London Road,
Slough,
Berkshire, SL3 7RS

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Councillor Dhillon,

Re: Standards Investigation Complaint Reference SBC23 regarding Code of Conduct matter on 26 May 2010

I note from my investigation file that I have not had a response to my letter of 21 October. I would be grateful if you can kindly contact me to arrange an interview appointment as soon as possible.

On 9 November, it has also been drawn to my attention that on 8 November you tried to contact Mr Wagner by telephone. Furthermore on the same day, Mr Wagner provided me with a copy of a letter of apology which he had received from you. The letter is dated 25 October and it was received in the Private Sector Housing Team on 5 November. The letter was not marked private and confidential and was opened in the ordinary course of business and given to Mr Wagner.

It is of great concern to me as the appointed Standards Investigator that you have failed to contact me about this matter but you have directly approached Mr Wagner. You have been made fully aware of the investigation and as an elected Member you are familiar with the appropriate protocol during an investigation. Any communication from you to a witness or Complainant should in the first instance be referred to the Standards Investigator. This is as much for your protection as it is for the witness or Complainant and the preservation of the independence of the evidence. I advise you in the strongest of possible terms that it is not acceptable for you to contact the Complainant directly when you know that an investigation is taking place. Direct contact with witnesses and the Complainant can be interpreted as your attempts to intimidate them or circumvent the

investigation process. Indeed your failure to contact me to date about this matter would force any independent observer to draw that very conclusion! I would strongly advise you not to contact Mr Wagner or any other witness directly about this matter.

You will also be aware that once an investigation has been commenced then even if the Complainant accepts the apology and withdraws the complaint, the matter still needs to be reported to the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee and it is for them to make a decision about the outcome of the complaint.

Mr Wagner is considering your letter of apology and whether he wishes to withdraw his complaint in the light of that letter. I therefore confirm that at present the investigation is ongoing and I would be grateful if you can provide a response to my letter of 21 October. Please provide a response by 4pm on Wednesday 17 November. If I do not hear from you by that date I will assume that you are unwilling to discuss this matter with the Standards Investigator.

If you have any queries I can be contacted directly on 01753 875189 (or on the main legal telephone line 01753 875031) by e-mailing Kuldip.Channa@slough.gov.uk. Please quote the reference on all correspondence.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kuldip K Channa,
Litigation Solicitor,
On behalf of the Acting Monitoring Officer

Channa Kuldip

From: B Dhillon [balwinderdhillon@hotmail.com]
Sent: 15 November 2010 17:11
To: Channa Kuldip
Subject: FW: SBC23 Written Statement

Date: 15th November 2010

Councillor B Dhillon
67 London Road
Slough
Berkshire
SL3 7RS

Ms Kuldip Chana
Law and Corporate Governance
St Martin's Place
Bath Road
Slough
SL1 3UF

Dear Ms Chana

Re: SBC23 – written statement

In response to your letter dated the 10th November, I apologise for a delay in my response. However I have chosen to make a written statement which you will find below.

On the 26th May 2010 I contacted the Corporate Complaints Officer regarding a casework I was dealing with on behalf of a resident. They had been in the process of applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant through the SBC private sector Housing Team and had experienced difficulty with the number of requests from the department and the length of time it had taken to complete the paperwork (from June 2006 till November 2010 and on-going). Mr G was asked to use a Council contractor who would have charged the family up to £15,000 and a £1,500 handling fees by Private Sector Housing. At the time the family felt this was unreasonable as they wished to use their own contractor.

They provided me with written authority to deal with the case on their behalf to assist them. I then approached SBC Private sector Housing, asking Ms Manju Dhar's office why the family did not have the choice as to whether they could use their own contractor. I was then advised by Ms Dhar that the Council would be happy to consider allowing the family to bring their own contractor, but that they would have to go through the Council's own specification list. In the last 6 years of dealing with Ms Manju Dhar and her office I have always had a satisfactory and professional relationship with any officer I have spoken to.

This specification took some time to prepare given that officers were often un-contactable, not available or on leave, finally they managed to get their specifications by 20th May 2010 (please find email below).

Date: 20/05/10

Department: Green & Built Environment
Section: Private Sector Housing
Contact Name: Steve Wagner
(Contact No: 01753 875262
(Fax: 01753 474109
Email: Steve.wagner@slough.gov.uk
Our Ref: HG 070688/VNE
Your Ref:
Postal Address: Private Sector Housing,

Mr

Green & Built Environment,
 Slough Borough Council,
 Ground Floor West, St Martins Place,
 Slough
 51 Bath Road, Slough,
 Berkshire SL1 3UF

Re:

Dear Mr G

I understand that you are now planning to carry out your own building works that will include facilities as recommended by your Occupational Therapist. I can confirm that we be able to offer you grant funding for the cost of the adaptations deemed necessary to meet your needs.

However I would like to advise you that the grant will also be dependant on the works meeting the following conditions:

- **The specification will be drawn up by a Slough Home Improvement Surveyor.**
- **All planning, building control, legal and architects fees are your responsibility.**
- **No change to the specification whatsoever without consultation with both the surveyor and occupational therapist, and only with their agreement.**
- **We will require 3 quotations for the work and the winning contractor will have to**

demonstrate they have sufficient skills and insurance cover for these types of work.

- **Funding will be for works in direct respect of the adaptations and installation of necessary equipment only, and will only be passed for payment following inspection by the surveyor and occupational therapist.**

If you require further clarity please call me on the number above.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Wagner TMIET

Grants/Renewals Manager

Since then, the family was asked to provide three estimates and the Council would select one of these estimates. They were quite willing to engage in the process, I was merely chasing up the case. On the 26th May 2010 I received a telephone call from Mr Steve Wagner Grants Manager at around 1740hrs to say that he need confirmation from the family that they agree with their terms and I try to explain to him that your letter dated 20th May 2010 does not suggest or indicate that you are looking to hear from them for any acceptance at all.

I provided this confirmation on behalf of the family as I was given permission to act on their behalf quite clearly. However Mr Wager and I disagreed regarding this. I felt disappointed that the department seemed to be inefficient in dealing with residents given that those applying for these grants are vulnerable members of our community and are entitled to whatever help we can give them. Hence we should do our best as a council to smooth their path.

I felt at the time that officers were being uncompromising and slightly un-empathetic to the family concerned given the almost 5 year wait they have had to endure. I felt the process should have been simpler and less complicated as it seemed to have held the family back from completing essential works. I felt that officers were not necessarily being clear with residents. I have pasted in a portion of an email I sent to Denise Alder on the 1st July 2010.

From: balwinderhillon@hotmail.com
To: denise.alder@slough.gov.uk
Subject: FW:
Date: Thu, 1 Jul 2010 06:07:55 +0000

Dear Ms Alder,

Thank you for your email.

I would like to respond to point 4 of your email (highlighted below):

"My complaint about Mr Steve Wagner's behaviour has been investigated. Mr Wagner's recall of the conversation is that I did not give him an opportunity to explain or respond to my questions as I was constantly talking over him."

s is not true. I was simply requesting to Mr Wagner that the e-mail sent out by him on 20 May 2010 to Mr said that "the specification will be drawn up by a Slough Home Improvement Surveyor" (please see the email below).

Date:	20/05/10	Department:	Green & Built Environment
		Section:	Private Sector Housing
		Contact Name:	Steve Wagner
		(Contact No:	01753 875262
		(Fax:	01753 474109
		Email:	Steve.wagner@slough.gov.uk
		Our Ref:	HG 070688/VNE
		Your Ref:	
		Postal Address:	Private Sector Housing, Green & Built Environment, Slough Borough Council,

Mr

Slough

Ground Floor West, St Martins Place,
51 Bath Road, Slough,
Berkshire SL1 3UF

Re:

Dear Mr G

I understand that you are now planning to carry out your own building works that will include facilities as recommended by your Occupational Therapist. I can confirm that we be able to offer you grant funding for the cost of the adaptations deemed necessary to meet your needs.

However I would like to advise you that the grant will also be dependant on the works meeting the following conditions:

- The specification will be drawn up by a Slough Home Improvement Surveyor.
- All planning, building control, legal and architects fees are your responsibility.
- No change to the specification whatsoever without consultation with both the surveyor and occupational therapist, and only with their agreement.
- We will require 3 quotations for the work and the winning contractor will have to demonstrate they have sufficient skills and insurance cover for these types of work.
- Funding will be for works in direct respect of the adaptations and installation of necessary equipment only, and will only be passed for payment following inspection by the surveyor and occupational therapist.

If you require further clarity please call me on the number above.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Wagner TMIET
Grants/Renewals Manager

these specification will be sent out to Mr _____ Mr Steve Wagner was telling me that without any written confirmation to that point from Mr _____ and he is not prepared to send out any specifications at all. simply advising him that there was no mention in his email that they need to confirm that they want to proceed and I advise him that I can confirm on behalf of Mr _____ that they are happy to proceed and awaiting to see your specifications list and please send your specification list as soon as possible, as the Mr _____ and family have been waiting nearly 4 years. ed him that I can confirm on behalf of Mr _____ family that they have agreed to your suggested specification, but without the specification they cannot obtain an estimate. I also advised Mr Wagner that I already spoken to another senior manager (Ms Manju Dhar - who is very polite and helpful) and he hung up the telephone. I was surprised that Mr Wagner hung up. I would like to reiterate that I was not speaking over him.

Point 4 on your email continued...

"He therefore warned you that if you continued that he would put the telephone down. This he then did and raised the matter formally with Mrs Dhar."

tried to speak with Mrs Dhar again to clarify to the effect and she agreed with me to confirm that if I can put that in writing to her department then that should be enough.

"I also understand that you have contacted the office numerous times and have spoken to a number of staff reporting the same issues. Whilst I can understand your frustration, this is not helpful and it is important that you allow Officers time to answer your queries."

With regards to allowing officers time to answer queries, please note that Mr G has been waiting for the grant since June 2006 (this has taken approx 4 years so far).

"I am sorry that you found the behaviour of any staff member offensive, distressing and intimidating but this was not the intention."

"As you will be aware Mr G has now been sent the specification of works and I look forward to receiving the estimates for the works as outlined in the letter to Mr ."

Mr G informed me today that he is still awaiting the specification and has not received as of yet.

"It would be also be helpful and cause less confusion for the Officers if you could clarify with Mr Grewal if he still wishes for you to act as his agent or to deal with the Council directly."

As far as I am concerned, Mr G has requested me to deal with this matter on his behalf. Your department still asks him to re-confirm again and again that I am dealing with this matter on his behalf. At this point, I have no issue whether the Council deal with Mr G directly or via myself. I will be asking Ms Charanjit Heer (our political officer) to handle the matter while my complaint is being investigated.

I am very disappointed from your findings and it will not be very helpful in our current credit crunch climate when there are some officers, who are trying to waste unnecessary time for the SB Council's resources and disable and vulnerable members of our communities who needs our help

I have brought it for your attention and it is your department and I am happy to leave it in your capable hands, whether to accept my version of events or to your employee Mr Steve Wagner and I am also very concerned amount of time we have spent on this case work from June 2006 until now

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Cllr Balwinder Dhillon Upton Ward SB Council

I have also added below my original email to Finbar McSweeney

From: B Dhillon [mailto:balwinderdhillon@hotmail.com]

Sent: 26 May 2010 19:14

To: McSweeney Finbar; choudhry; Charanjit Heer2

Subject:

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26th May 2010

**Mr Finbar McSweeney
Corporate Complaint Department
Chief Executive
Slough Borough Council
Bath Road Slough**

Ref;

Dear Finbar

As you may know that I have been approached by Mr [redacted] to chase the Private Sector Housing for their DFG and they have been going through the nightmare from the last two years and still no where near to any end at all.

Last week on 25th May 2010 I have spoken to Ms Manju Dhar the manager from Private sector Housing about the progress and I have been advised by Ms Manju Dhar that her office will advise the family concerned about the specification will be drawn up by a Slough Home Improvement Surveyor and they will require 3 quotations for the work and the winning contractor will have to demonstrate they have sufficient skills and insurance cover for these types of work.

I also have got a copy of letter sent on 20th May 2010 to Mr [redacted] and the family is still waiting for a specification from them and can't get their drawing amended and can't get any estimate done accordingly

Today 26th May 2010 I received a telephone call from Mr Steve Wagner Grants Manager at around 1740hrs to say that he need confirmation from the G [redacted] family that they agree with their terms and I try to explain to him that your letter dated 20th May 2010 does not suggest or indicate that you are looking to hear from them for any acceptance at all.

I have requested him (Mr Steve Wagner to go ahead and send them your specification and all your requirements need for Disable Facilities Grants etc, so that family can get their drawing amended accordingly and can ask any builder of their own choice to provide them estimate for the required work to satisfy the Private Sector Housing's surveyors as per their specification

I further explained to him that I have spoken to one of your lady called Ms Manju Dhar who is very nice and pleasant lady to deal with all the time and I never had any difficulty with Ms Manju Dhar within last several years I have dealt with her.

Mr Steve Wagner found this to be very offensive and he was shouting and screaming at me and put his telephone down.

I personally found this very offensive, distressing and intimidating attitude behaviour from Mr Steve Wagner manager who is dealing with very vonurable members of our communities who are desperately waiting for our assistance for Disabled Facilities Grants

I hope you can help me to understand their letter sent out on 20th May 2010 which I will be sending you as well

Thank you and kind regards

BS Dhillon Upton Ward

I believe there is a genuine problem in the way that SBC processes grants, I do believe the system to be inadequate but I do not blame individual officers for what is essentially a problem with process.

I am very disappointed this complaint was made by the Officer given that the residents have had to wait so long and have been asked to fill in never ending reams of paperwork. I would expect that the process would have been much faster if the department had requested all the paperwork in one go rather than drip feeding requests which added to the confusion and the burden on the family.

I am very disappointed, I feel that I and the family have been let down by Slough Borough Council. The family themselves feel like they have been fobbed off by the Council and I feel that there were barriers to completing this casework successfully which were beyond my control and I felt that officers were not as helpful as they could have been.

Kind regards,

Cllr Balwinder Dhillon

Channa Kuldip

From: Ford Keith

Sent: 19 November 2010 15:33

To: Channa Kuldip

Kuldip

Steve Wagner has asked me to e-mail you to confirm that he wishes to proceed with the complaint

Regards

Mr K Ford

Housing Standards Manager

Private Sector Housing
Slough Borough Council

Town Hall

Bath Road

Slough

Berkshire

SL1 3UQ

Direct Line: 01753 875263