

From: B Dhillon [balwinderdhillon@hotmail.com]
Sent: 01 April 2011 21:52
To: Kauser Shabana; Cook June
Cc: Derek Cryer; Nigel Brothers
Subject: Statement of Cllr Balwinder S Dhillon for S B Council's Complaint by Mr S Wagner

Slough Borough Council
Complaint by Mr Steve Wagner
Statement of Cllr Balwinder Dhillon

It is accepted that I had a telephone conversion with Mr Steve Wagner on the 26 May 2010 at approx. 17.40 hrs. I was very concerned and unhappy with the way that Mr Wagner dealt with me over the phone that day. I have therefore made a complaint about Mr Wagner.

The complaint was dealt with by Mrs Denise Alder, The Strategic Director for the Green and Built Environment. Her response to the complaint, by email, dated the 24 June 2010, stated that Mr Wagner's recollection is that he was not given an opportunity to explain and respond. Her email concludes with: "I am sorry that you found the behaviour of any staff member offensive, distressing and intimidating, but this was not the intention."

I am not entirely happy with the response in that the underlying problem of Mr Grewal's application for a DFG has still not been resolved. Mr Grewal's application was first made in 2007. It does not appear that Mr Wagner has dealt with this in an efficient manner. His attitude has not been conducive to a timely processing and approval of this grant.

I am faced with a situation where I have tried to carry out my duties as a Councillor. I had received a telephone call from an officer of the Council, had a very unsatisfactory response, complained about that officer, my complaint appears to have only resulted in the email referred to above which contains an expression of sorrow. I have been content to let matters rest there. I have even written to Mr Wagner on the 25 October 2010 giving my apology to him if my conduct had upset him. Yet I am still faced with these proceedings. This appears to me to be most unfair and disproportionate. Most significantly the problem regards Mr Grewal's grant has still not been resolved.

There is a statement from Mr Grewal. This confirms that I did not behave in the way that has been suggested by Mr Wagner. The complaint by Mr Wagner starts by asserting that I called him. It was confirmed by Mr Grewal's statement that I in fact did not call Mr Wagner and instead received a telephone call from him (Mr Wagner) at around 17.40 hrs on 26 May 2010.

I can also further confirm this with four of my telephone bills: 01753 525303 my home telephone number, 07836 535219 my mobile telephone number, my fax telephone number 01753 524936 and my private mobile number. None of them have made any outgoing calls to Mr Wagner on his Council telephone

line on 26 May 2010 at approx. 1740 hrs.

Furthermore, my original complaint was made to Mr Finbar and to Mrs Denise Alder. Only once I challenged the matter through my legal team (Mr Nigel Brothers, NC Brothers Solicitors) was an investigation into the matter launched by Investigating Officer, Ms Kuldeep Channa. Ms Channa made inquiries from S B Council's customer services. Now it is confirmed by S B Council's Private Sector Housing that Mr Wagner's own extension (01753 875262) did make a telephone call to my mobile telephone number (07836 535219) at approx. 17:40:31 on 26 May 2010.

I would like to further refer to your DOCUMENT 11, page 63, which states that following S B Council's own Customer Services enquiries into this out-going call to my mobile telephone number by Mr Wagner, and further meetings between Ms Channa and Mr Wagner on 10 March 2011 (page 63), even when challenged by Ms Channa to recall the details of 26 May 2010; he (Mr Wagner) tried to describe the same situation again that he was the last person in the office that day and took a telephone call from Cllr Dhillon. Ms Channa tried to remind him again to cast his mind right back to the evening in question, and he said what he had said was what he remembered about who telephone who that evening. On the third time of asking, Ms Channa showed him a copy of the telephone records from Tony Gorski (Customer Services) for the 26 May 2010 between 1600-1900 hrs. Only when Ms Channa directed him to the calls made from Mr Wagner's own extension number to Cllr Dhillon's mobile number at 17:40:31 did Mr Wagner believe that he in fact did make the telephone call. The statement recalls Mr Wagner looking very shocked and holding his head in his hands. He said he was "gobsmacked".

On 3 November 2010 Mr Wagner sent an email to Ms Channa to advise her of Cllr Dhillon's email regarding 26 May 2010, stating that who called me that my statement is lie and I will take this is very offensive, distressing and disrespectful and you should be able to draw your assumptions about his credibility. Given that Mr Wagner is factually incorrect on that point, I feel that this indicates that there are other inaccuracies in what he has put forward. I entirely accept that I did say to Mr Wagner that his line manager Mrs Dhar was more helpful. This is true, I did not find Mr Wagner at all helpful.

I have more knowledge of the procedure, I was not asking for any special favours from Mr Wagner. I only asked for his assistance in getting this application processed, as, at that time, it had taken more than two years. Asking for his help in ensuring that this was dealt with as quickly as possible is not, given the circumstances of this case, unreasonable. Saying that Mr Wagner was not being very helpful is not offensive and saying that his manager was the only nice person is not itself offensive or insulting. That this is an implied criticism does not mean that it is inaccurate, as on that occasion Mr Wagner did not properly deal with the concerns being expressed.

This matter appears to be blown out of proportion. What is set out on the form of complaint does not refer to "bullying" or undue pressure, he refers to "I took this as an insult". It is interesting to look at my letter of the 26 May 2010 to Mr

Finbar McSweeney, where I have commented upon Mr Wagner's behaviour on that date. That Mr Wagner's complaint was made on 7 June 2010, some two weeks later after my letter, suggests that the only reason for this complaint being made is because of the complaint I made on the 26 May 2010.

It is also interesting to note that in his statement (undated document 4), Mr Wagner does not say that he felt bullied. He says that as a senior manager he felt able to deal with my attitude. He goes on to state that a junior member may have felt bullied. There is no statement from Mr Wagner saying I bullied him. Even his note of the telephone call does not state that. The suggestion that I bullied him is therefore unsubstantiated.

Mr Wagner was unhappy that I said that Mrs Dhar was the only nice and helpful person in the team. He found this insulting, both personally and for his team. It was never intended to be a compliment. It does, however, reflect an honestly held opinion that on that occasion he was unhelpful and his people skills were lacking. I was trying to help someone resolve a problem; Mr Wagner was not interested in helping to speed up what had already taken 2½ years. He could have been more helpful if he has wanted to, no one was asking him to do anything improper. Respect goes both ways, Mr Wagner did not deal with me that occasion with the respect that is being suggested is due to himself.

Given that the Investigating Officer has formed a conclusion that "On balance the evidence is..." I would submit that her conclusion does not reflect all of the evidence. She did not speak to Mr Grewal. I feel that the this report ought to be withdrawn as it is based on misleading and inaccurate information as Mr Steve Wagner cannot remember anything precisely. Saying to someone that you are not happy with the service they are providing is not showing a lack of respect. Saying that someone else is more helpful is not, in itself, showing a lack of respect, though I accept that by inference this is not a compliment and someone may not be happy about such a comment.

The second conclusion that I have breached paragraph 3 (1)(b) that I put undue pressure on Mr Wagner has to be unfounded. There is no such complaint.

Balwinder Dhillon