

**London Borough of Hillingdon Members' Code of Conduct –  
Investigation into complaint by Councillor Janet Duncan against  
Councillor Anita MacDonald**

**Note of interview with Councillor Janet Duncan at 3.00 pm on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> August  
2011 at Hillingdon Civic Centre**

Mr Revell (TJR) introduced himself and said that at the request of the Monitoring Officer for the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) following a complaint received from Councillor Duncan he was conducting an investigation into the allegations she had made against Councillor MacDonald. TJR indicated that the arrangements for this further interview were the same as set out in his letter of 4<sup>th</sup> August 2011. Councillor Duncan (JD) confirmed that she had chosen to be accompanied at the interview by Councillor Paul Harmsworth as friend and adviser. TJR reiterated the need to keep the contents of the interview confidential. He outlined the procedure he was intending to follow. JD had no questions at this stage.

JD indicated that having considered the draft note of the interview on 8<sup>th</sup> August she had concluded that there were some further matters she needed to bring to TJR's attention as she believed that they were pertinent to the investigation. JD had set out this information in a draft statement JD sent to TJR before the meeting and expanded upon the points she had made.

JD indicated that she had been uncomfortable about involving a member of staff from the group secretariat but thought that this was central to the matter. The manner in which Councillor MacDonald had behaved towards Dee Brooklyn, Senior Group Support Officer had caused many members of the group to change their view of her. Most although not all members of the group became aware of the tensions that existed between Councillor MacDonald and Ms Brooklyn and were supportive of Ms Brooklyn. JD believed that this was one of the main reasons why Councillor MacDonald had lost the vote for the Deputy Leadership in May 2011 by 12 votes to 5. One member was on leave at the time and had later said he would have made the vote 13 to 5 had he been present. JD advised that Ms Brooklyn had no objection to this information being given to the investigation and had voluntarily made a statement about it. TJR indicated that he would need to interview Ms Brooklyn separately about the contents of her statement.

JD advised that when the Group Fund had been established in 2002/3, when councillors started to receive allowances rather than expenses, contributions were voluntary except for the ALC subscriptions. A constitution was drawn up in 2003/4 which set out the purposes of the Fund and how it was to be managed. Later the Labour Party rules changed and Labour Groups were required at their AGM to establish a budget and amount of annual contribution to the Fund to cover their ALC subscription, group administration, communications and other appropriate activity.


Each cheque had to be signed by two of the three authorised signatories. She did not accept that there was any substance in the accusations made by Councillor Macdonald and thought that this was an attempt to smear those responsible for the fund.

JD advised that there had been a longstanding decision by the Labour group to have an external minute taker at group meetings so that the group secretary could participate in debates at group meetings. Councillor MacDonald took the view that the group secretary should take the minutes. In September 2010 JD had a conversation with Councillor MacDonald about the matter in which it was agreed that no action would be taken for the moment as it was hoped that the group would soon have the services of a political assistant part of whose role would be to take the minutes. On her return in October 2010 JD discovered that Ms Brooklyn who had previously taken the minutes had ceased to do so following intervention by Councillor MacDonald who had also secretly raised the issue with Ms Brooklyn's manager unbeknown to the Group. Councillor Harmsworth raised the matter at a subsequent group meeting and following a brief discussion Councillor MacDonald left the meeting abruptly. She then made a formal complaint about JD and Councillor Harmsworth to the local Labour party Local Government Committee. This complaint was referred back to the group to deal with and then withdrawn by Councillor MacDonald.

JD advised that she was unsure what had prompted Councillor MacDonald's hostile attitude towards her but believed it had started when Councillor Garg had been suspended from the group. She referred to the discussion she had had with Councillor Gilham as evidence of this hostile attitude. She refuted any suggestion that she was spreading lies about Councillor MacDonald and suggested that anything Councillor Macdonald said should be treated with caution.

The interview concluded at 3.50 pm.

I certify this note is a true record of the interview conducted with Tim Revell on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

  
Signed

10 September 2011  
Date