

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

**Note of interview with Councillor Anita MacDonald at 5.30 pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>  
August 2011 at Azalea Close, Eastcote**

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. Councillor MacDonald (AM) confirmed that she had received TJR's letter of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2011. TJR ran through the contents of the letter. AM confirmed that she had chosen not to be accompanied at the interview. TJR reiterated the need to keep the contents of the interview confidential. He outlined the procedure he was intending to follow. AM had no questions at this stage.

TJR asked AM to set out the circumstances leading to her sending the e-mails that gave rise to the complaint. AM indicated that issues around the Labour group fund were the significant factor. Before she became Deputy Leader in May 2010 she had known little about the operation of the fund although she had paid into it even when her personal circumstances had been difficult. Not all members had paid into the fund. Together with Councillor Garg who had become Chief Whip in May 2010 she asked to see the accounts from 2006 to 2010 when Councillor Harmsworth was Chief Whip. She was concerned about payments in cash to staff in the group secretariat, for meals and for gifts to officers. AM felt that when she and Councillor Garg starting asking questions about the fund Councillors Duncan and Harmsworth who did know how it had been used acted against them. In July/August 2010 Councillor Garg was accused of not revealing a police caution for domestic violence that he had previously received and was suspended from the Labour group. AM believed that Councillor Harmsworth had known about this for some years but only acted upon it when Councillor Garg asked questions about the Labour group fund. AM indicated that there would be a Labour party investigation into the group fund and Councillor Duncan had made the complaint to the standards committee in order to delay this investigation.

AM believed that she had been ostracised by Councillors Duncan and Harmsworth who had organised a political whispering campaign against her which had led to her losing the Deputy Leadership in May 2011. AM indicated that she had been accused of bullying, particularly with regard to a member of staff in the group secretariat. She denied that she had been involved in bullying. However, she accepted that she could sometime express herself in a forthright or even impulsive manner but this was not consistent with bullying which involved a pattern of behaviour. She believed though that the actions of Councillors Duncan and Harmsworth over a period of time in ignoring her and denigrating her did amount to bullying. TJR asked whether this could be regarded as political discourse which could often be conducted in a robust manner. AM thought it went beyond what could be regarded as reasonable.

cllr macdonald interview 18.8.11

  
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AM was unhappy when she discovered that staff in the secretariat were paid in cash to take the minutes of group meetings as she thought that this was potentially unlawful. She raised this with the Leader, Councillor Khursheed, but as nothing was done then with the manager responsible for the secretariat and finally with the Head of Democratic Services. The practice then ceased and AM explained her reasons to the member of staff concerned. She thought that the matter should have been resolved within the group as it gave a bad impression of how it operated.

TJR asked AM if she regretted the use of language in her e-mails to Councillor Duncan. AM said that she regretted sending the e-mails and the language used in them. She was angry at the situation and wanted to confront the issue head on. TJR asked why the e-mails had been copied to all Labour councillors. AM responded that as the issue of the group fund affected all Labour councillors it was appropriate to alert them all to the concerns she had.

The interview concluded at 6.10 pm.

I certify this note is a true record of the interview conducted with Tim Revell on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

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Signed

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Date