

LETTER TO ALL SBC COUNCILLORS FROM SBC CEO MIKE GREENE

Tuesday 26th January 2021

Dear Councillors,

You may be aware that there are various rumours circulating on social media that a member of this Council has made threats against persons, including other Councillors. Some of these allegations relate to events which are alleged to have taken place nearly three years ago. I have received several emails from members who have heard these rumours and are concerned. It has also been suggested that we are not taking appropriate steps to deal with this.

These are very serious issues and under the circumstances, I thought it important that I should clarify the situation and outline what has been done. I have met with senior police representatives and can confirm that there are no police investigations ongoing into any allegations of threats to harm any person by the Councillor concerned.

In addition, various standards complaints have been raised in relation to this matter and have been dealt with appropriately in accordance with the Council's Standards Complaints Protocol by the Monitoring Officer and the Council's Independent Persons.

Any person, including elected members, may bring a Standard complaint against any member of the Council. All these complaints are dealt with by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the independent persons in accordance with the Council's Standards procedures as set out on the Council's website.

There is specific provision within the procedure that the Monitoring Officer will not refer for investigation matters which are, in her opinion, and after consultation with the Independent Person, vexatious, offensive, trivial or politically motivated. I am confident this process has been followed correctly.

To be clear the Monitoring Officer has a statutory role working within the agreed protocol of the council to ensure an independent standards process is followed. In this the role is independent of the Head of Paid Service.

I am also aware that the Monitoring Officer has recently received a further complaint and, again, can confirm that this is being dealt with through the protocol by the Monitoring Officer with the Council's Independent Persons. It is important that any complaint is followed fairly and according to due process and I will ensure that this is done.

I can assure members that we will continue to take all the appropriate steps that we are able to take as a Council in all circumstances where there is substantiated evidence of potential harm to our staff and members. Equally we must ensure that the council does not become a forum for discussion, rumour and debate around allegations outside of due process.

I know that members will appreciate that we may not be able to share the full detail of those steps with all members or staff as this may comprise a breach of the right to privacy of an individual, or may compromise the well-being of another person.

I know that this is a difficult period for everyone and we continue to provide support to all staff and members. On a final note our staff are working tirelessly to support our residents in this difficult time. As a council and a borough we are facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the global pandemic. We will continue to work hard to direct council resources to help the people of our borough.

Mike Greene