

North Tyneside Council

Standards of Conduct complaint in respect of Councillor Leslie Miller

Report of Investigation

1 BACKGROUND

This report relates to a complaint by Norma Redfearn, the Mayor of North Tyneside Council, that Councillors Leslie Miller and Alison Austin failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct for members in respect of two pamphlets entitled "InTouch" which Alison Austin published on behalf of herself and Leslie Miller in the campaign for the local elections in May 2014. Mrs Redfearn's complaint form is attached as Appendix One to this report, and the two pamphlets are attached as Appendix Two.

Mrs Redfearn's complaint was considered by the Standards Sub-Committee, which decided to refer her complaints in respect of Councillor Miller only for independent investigation. I was appointed by Vivienne Geary, the Council's Head of Law and Governance, to undertake the investigation on her behalf.

2 THE COMPLAINTS

Mrs Redfearn complaint form states as follows –

"My complaint relates to the distribution of two political leaflets which have been circulated in parts of the Borough. The leaflets make claims about the affairs of the Council which are misleading and untrue, so much so, that they bring the Council into disrepute.

The comments are so misleading that on receipt of the information the Council issued a public statement on its website to provide residents with clarification. A copy of the Council's publication is enclosed for reference dated 24th April 2014.

I believe that the comments contained in the leaflets breach the Code of Conduct under Part 1 of the General Code under Section 4 – you must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing the Council into disrepute.

The second part of my complaint refers to the highly critical and defamatory comments made about myself and the way in which I am conducting the business of the Council in my role as the elected Mayor. I find this to be not only offensive but malicious and insulting. I believe that the issue raised breaches the code of Conduct under Part 1 of the general Code Section 1 – you must treat others with respect including elected members.

The complaint relates to two members of the Council, Councillor Leslie Miller and Councillor Alison Austin. Councillor Leslie Miller is quoted in the leaflet and Councillor Alison Austin is the promoter and publisher of the leaflet on behalf of Councillor Leslie Miller and Mr George Partis. The leaflets were circulated during April 2014 to a number of households in North Tyneside.

I have enclosed a copy of each of the political leaflets referred to and a copy of the publication as it appears on the Council's website."

3 THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Council's Code of Conduct for Members states as follows –

"The code applies whenever you (a) conduct the business of the Authority (including the business of your office as an elected councillor or co-opted member)

"1. You must treat others with respect, including the Authority's officers and other elected members."

"4. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing the Authority, or your office as a member of the Authority, into disrepute"

4 DEFAMATION

Defamation is the intentional publishing of a false statement that harms a person's reputation.

Under the Defamation Act 2013, for a claim in defamation to succeed, the statement must have caused or be likely to cause substantial damage to the person's reputation.

There are 3 defences to a claim of defamation –

- a. Truth – that the imputation conveyed by the statement is substantially true. Where some of the imputations are shown to be substantially true, it is still a defence to show that the imputations which have not been shown to be substantially true did not seriously damage the person's reputation.
- b. Honest Opinion – that the statement is a statement of opinion which sets out the basis for that opinion, and which an honest person could have held on the basis of the information which existed at the time when the statement was made. However, the Act provides that, in determining whether it was reasonable for the defendant to believe that publishing the statement was in the public interest, a court may have regard to disregard any omission of the defendant to take steps to verify the truth of the imputation conveyed by it, unless he is relying on an accurate and impartial report of the matter..
- c. Responsible Publication on a Matter of Public Interest – That the statement related to a matter of public interest and the publisher of the statement believed that its publication was in the public interest

The Code of Conduct does not prohibit defamation, but defamation is, by its nature, going to be a failure to treat with respect, and so contrary to the Code of Conduct.

5 THE INITIAL RESPONSE OF COUNCILLORS LESLIE MILLER AND ALISON AUSTIN

Following receipt of the complaint, the Monitoring Officer provided a copy of the complaint to Councillors Leslie Miller and Alison Austin, who responded as follows –

"Initial response to the complaint made against Cllr Miller and Cllr Austin by the Mayor

This is a joint initial response to the complaint made against us by the Mayor.

We do not feel that this complaint is worthy of investigation. The only basis for the complaint is that a member of one political party is unhappy that opposition councillors have alerted residents to policies which in our view would be damaging to them. As such, it is no different to hundreds of political leaflets which have been delivered by all parties in the past.

We believe that residents will feel that the pursuance of this complaint will result in unnecessary expense to council taxpayers. It also opens up the probability of a plethora of similar, tit for tat complaints being made by all parties in the future, whenever a leaflet is distributed, again with serious implications as to the cost to the council taxpayer.

All of the issues raised in our leaflets are in our view important to the residents of our ward and as elected representatives we have a duty to inform them of actions taken by the Labour Mayor, despite her obvious desire to prevent us from publicising these issues. There is a clear evidential basis for all of the matters raised and for the opinions put forward which we will be happy to provide should the council agree to incur the cost of investigating this complaint on the Mayor's behalf.

The Mayor complains that the comments made are "highly critical and defamatory", although she does not specify which comments she is referring to. However, we can see no evidence of defamation and we believe that it is an integral part of our role as opposition councillors to criticise the Mayor's running of the council wherever we see evidence of this. It is unfortunate that the Mayor appears unable to take criticism and finds this offensive but with the greatest of respect, that is her problem and not ours."

6 THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLITICAL EXPRESSION

6.1 The Code of Conduct and the Right to Freedom of Expression

The relationship between the Code of Conduct and the right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 was explored in the case of R (Calver) v The Adjudication Panel in Wales and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales [2012] EWHC 1172 (Admin). The case related to the conduct of Councillor Calver as an elected member of Manorbier Community Council, under identical provisions in the Community Council's Code of Conduct.

Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights ("the Convention") provides as follows –

"(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers....

(2) The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of...the protection of the reputation or rights of others, ..."

Convention Rights, including Article 10, are given direct effect in domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998. Section 6 of that Act provides that it is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with inter alia Article 10. Section 3 provides that legislation and subordinate legislation, so far as it is possible to do so, must be read and given effect in a way which is compatible with the Convention rights. Accordingly, the requirements in the Code of Conduct to treat others with respect and not to bring the Council into disrepute must be interpreted so as not to infringe the right of freedom of expression.

However, it is to be noted that the right of freedom of expression is not absolute, but is qualified, to the extent necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

6.2 Political Expression

The case-law recognises the importance of expression in the political sphere and that the limits of acceptable criticism are wider in the case of politicians acting in their public capacity than they are in the case of private individuals. This recognition involves both a higher level of protection ("enhanced protection") for statements in the political sphere and the expectation that if the subjects of such statements are politicians acting in their public capacity, they lay themselves open to close scrutiny of their words and deeds and are expected to possess a thicker skin and greater tolerance than ordinary members of the public (Paragraph 58 of Calver).

It also recognises that "as a general proposition, that freedom of expression includes the right to say things which "right thinking people" consider dangerous or irresponsible or which shock or disturb." The Court noted approvingly an extract from Barendt, Freedom of Speech (2nd ed. 2005) at 76 – 77, in the context of political speech that –

"the exclusion of "all emotive, non-rational expression from the coverage of the principle would be a mistake". It would "often be hard to disentangle such expression from rational discourse" because "the most opprobrious insult may form part of an otherwise serious criticism of government or of a political figure". He also stated that, even if it were possible to separate the emotive content from the other parts of a particular publication, "it would be wrong to allow its proscription" because "if speakers could be punished each time they included a colourful, non-rational epithet in their publication or address, much valuable speech would be inhibited". He concluded that "some margin should be allowed for invective and exaggeration, even if that means some apparently worthless comments are as fully protected as a carefully balanced argument".

From this I draw the following principles –

- a. Where a Councillor is commenting on matters relating to the business or conduct of the Council of which he/she is a member, those comments will come within the description of "political expression" unless they comprise solely or very largely personal abuse;
- b. Where they constitute "political expression", the Councillor's comments are entitled to a higher level of protection than would otherwise be the case;
- c. However, there is a responsibility upon the member to take reasonable steps to ensure that any assertions of fact are correct before relying on those facts as a basis upon which to form an opinion.

7 THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION

I have been provided by the Council's Head of Law and Governance with the Council's statement of clarification. Whilst I consider that it is useful in pointing up the Council's view on the matters covered in the leaflets, it was issued after the leaflets were published and so did not alter the Councillors' state of knowledge at the time that they made the remarks contained in the leaflets.

8 EVALUATION

8.1 Did the Councillor publish the leaflets?

The leaflets complained of were clearly published in the context of the local elections which took place in May 2014, and are headed "Election Special".

Leaflet 1 was published on behalf of Councillor Leslie Miller, who was standing for re-election to the Council in those elections for the Monkseaton North Ward, and Leaflet 2 was published on behalf of Mr George Partis, who was at the time not a member of the Council but was standing for election for the Monkseaton South Ward.

Leaflet 1 is stated to be published on behalf of Councillor Leslie Miller. It is clearly an election leaflet published on his behalf, and quotes him extensively. I conclude that, on the balance of probabilities, he will have authorised its publication and approved its content.

Leaflet 2 is stated to be published on behalf of G Partis. It is in very similar form to Leaflet 1, and contains very similar quotes, here largely ascribed to Mr George Partis. The only quote ascribed to Councillor Leslie Miller is the assertion on the first page asserting that Labour has historically wanted to close Middle Schools. I have no evidence that Councillor Leslie Miller authorised the use of this quotation. Accordingly, I make no finding against Councillor Miller in respect of Leaflet 2.

8.2 In authorising the publication of Leaflet 1, was Councillor Leslie Miller conducting the business of the Authority (including the business of your office as an elected councillor or co-opted member)?

Any qualified person may stand for election to North Tyneside Council. So standing for re-election is not a statutory function of a Councillor. However, case-law (see particularly *Livingstone v Adjudication Panel for England* [2006] EWHC 2533) has held that "conducting the business of your office as an elected Councillor" extends beyond the discharge of the formal business of the authority and includes attending to constituency issues and concerns. Leaflet 1 is published on behalf of Councillor Leslie Miller, who is identified therein as a current Councillor, seeking re-election, and he is quoted extensively as "Councillor Leslie Miller". In this case, I am of the opinion that residents who received Leaflet 1 would identify that in the leaflet Councillor Leslie Miller is simply continuing to pursue local political issues which he has previously raised in his role as a Conservative ward Councillor. Accordingly, I am of the opinion that his actions and quotes in Leaflet 1 would be recognised by residents as an extension of his work as a Conservative ward Councillor, and therefore come within the business of his office as an elected Councillor.

8.3 Does Leaflet 1 constitute "Political Expression"?

Both leaflets were published as part of the local election campaigns of Councillor Leslie Miller and Mr G Partis respectively, and both relate exclusively to matters of local political concern within the responsibility of the Council and other public authorities. Any personal criticism or epithets relating to Ms Norma Redfearn relate to her conduct of the office of Mayor and are subsidiary to the commentary on these matters of public concern. Accordingly, I conclude that the entirety of the 2 leaflets come within the description of "political expression".

8.4 Does Leaflet 1 amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct by Councillor Miller?

I have separated the remarks in Leaflet 1 and collated them by topic. In each case, I then analyse whether they constitute a failure to treat with respect or conduct likely to bring the Council into disrepute, and whether they are acceptable as political expression.

This is set out at Appendix Three to this report.

9 FINDINGS

- 9.1 Councillor Leslie Miller was directly responsible for the publication of Leaflet 1 and the inclusion of the remarks ascribed to him therein. I have no evidence that he was responsible for the publication of Leaflet 2, or the inclusion of a quote ascribed to him.
- 9.2 Whilst he did so in his capacity as a candidate for re-election to the Council, he was at the time a serving Councillor, dealing with matters relating to the Council, which he would deal with as a Councillor (with the exception of the Police station at Whitley Bay) and I am of the opinion that he can therefore be considered to have been acting in his capacity as a Councillor in approving the publication of Leaflet 1, but not Leaflet 2.
- 9.3 I am of the opinion that a number of Councillor Leslie Miller's statements in Leaflet 1 were inaccurate, largely by omission of balancing facts which were known to him at the time, and in ascribing views and policies personally to Ms Norma Redfearn.
- 9.4 I am of the opinion that everything contained in Leaflet 1 falls within the definition of "Political Expression" and so is entitled to an enhanced level of protection against infringement of the right of political expression.
- 9.5 However, I am of the opinion that Councillor Leslie Miller's assertion that Ms Norma Redfearn in her capacity as Mayor of North Tyneside "is pressing on with her unpopular Local Housing Plan which will see her give developers the green light to build 5,500 new properties on the green fields between Earsdon and Rake Lane Hospital" falls outside the limits of acceptable political expression in that Councillor Leslie Miller not only knew or should have known that it is incorrect and misleading, but in that it is positively damaging to the reputation of the Council and the reputation of Ms Norma Redfearn in her capacity as Mayor to suggest that she is intent on pushing through proposals for development irrespective of the statutory consultative and decision processes, which in any case rest with the Council rather than the Mayor. As such, I find that on this one count, Councillor Leslie Miller did fail to comply with Paragraphs 1 and 4 of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Peter Keith-Lucas

Consultant

Bevan Brittan LLP

10 December 2104.

APPENDIX ONE

Complaint Form



North Tyneside Council

Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members of North Tyneside Borough Council

COMPLAINT FORM

This form can be either completed by hand and posted or faxed to the Monitoring Officer, or completed on a computer. If it is completed on a computer it can either be e-mailed to the Monitoring Officer, or printed and then posted or faxed. Address details are found at the end of the form.

What this form is for

This form is for registering a complaint that an Elected Member or Co-opted Member of North Tyneside Council has breached the Code of Conduct as adopted by the Authority with effect from 1 July 2012. This form can be found on the Standards Committee page of the North Tyneside Council website (www.northtyneside.gov.uk).

The points listed below will help you decide whether this is the correct form to use when making your complaint.

- Your complaint must be about conduct that occurred while the member(s) complained about were in office. Conduct of an individual before they were elected, co-opted or appointed to the Council, or after they have resigned or otherwise ceased to be a member, cannot be considered.
- The Code of Conduct came into effect on 1 July 2012. If your complaint concerns matters that occurred before this date you should contact the office of the Monitoring Officer before making your complaint.
- Your complaint must be about one or more named members of North Tyneside Council.
- Your complaint must be that the member(s) has, or may have, breached the Code of Conduct.
- Complaints about dissatisfaction with a decision or action of the Authority or one of its committees, a service provided by the Authority or the Authority's procedures do not fall within the jurisdiction of the Standards Committee. Complaints about the actions of people employed by the Authority also do not fall within the jurisdiction of the Standards Committee.

If your complaint does not meet these criteria you should make use of the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure by contacting:

Customer and Member Liaison Office
Quadrant
The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park
North Tyneside
NE27 0BY
Tel: 0191 643 2280
customerliaisonoffice@northtyneside.gov.uk

Explanation of the Complaints Process

Complaints against Members of the Council are the responsibility of the Authority's Standards Committee. Complaints must be made in writing to the Monitoring Officer.

The first stage of the process is that normally within 28 days of receipt the Authority's Monitoring Officer will consider your complaint. It is not the task of the Monitoring Officer to consider whether or not the Member concerned has broken the Code of Conduct. Rather, he/she will decide whether the matter warrants referral for investigation or other action. Only if the matter is referred for investigation will the substance of the complaint be considered and a decision made about whether or not the Code has been breached.

The Monitoring Officer will decide:

1. whether the allegation, if proven, would constitute a failure to observe the Code of Conduct;
2. if it would constitute such a failure, whether the allegation is to be investigated. This decision will be guided by the Council's Assessment Criteria. The Assessment Criteria are available from the Monitoring Officer;
3. where the decision is not to investigate the allegation, whether to direct the Monitoring Officer to pursue an alternative course of action such as training for the Member concerned or conciliation between the complainant and the Member.

The Monitoring Officer will produce a summary of his decision, and to send it to the complainant and to the Member concerned unless to do so would in his/her opinion prejudice a subsequent investigation.

If an allegation is considered to require investigation, the matter will be referred by the Monitoring Officer for the investigation of the allegation.

Following the completion of an investigation into an allegation, unless the complaint can be resolved informally, the Council's Standards Committee will meet to consider the allegation and the findings of the investigation.

- Monitoring Officer
- Other council officer or authority employee
- Other ()

3. Please provide us with the name(s) of the Member(s) of North Tyneside Council whom you believe has breached the Code of Conduct:

Title	First name	Last name
Cllr.	Leslie	Miller
Cllr.	Alison	Austin

4. Please explain in this section (or on separate sheets) 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 very important that you provide all the information you wish to have taken into account by the Monitoring Officer when he/she 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.

If the allegation is upheld and a breach of the code of conduct is found the Standards Committee have a range of sanctions available to them.

Any queries regarding the Complaints process should be directed to the Monitoring Officer at the address at the end of this form.

Making Your Complaint

1. Please provide us with your name and contact details

Title:	ELECTED MAYOR
First name:	NORMA
Last name:	REDFEARN
Address:	NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL QUADRANT NE 27 OBY
Daytime telephone:	0191 6435314
Evening telephone:	
Mobile telephone:	
Email address:	norma.redfearn@northtyneside.gov.uk

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 Member(s) you are complaining about
- the Council's Independent Person(s) with whom the Monitoring Officer must consult before deciding whether the matter warrants referral for investigation or other action.
- the Standards Committee

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. If you have serious concerns about your name and a summary or details of your complaint being released, please complete section 5 of this form.

2. Please tell us which complainant type best describes you:

- Member of the public
- An elected or co-opted Member of an authority
- Member of Parliament

Please provide us with the details of your complaint. Continue on a separate sheet if there is not enough space on this form.

See attached

Only complete Section 5 if you are requesting that your identity be kept confidential.

5. In the interests of fairness and natural justice, we believe Members who are complained about should be informed of who has made the complaint and be provided with a summary of the complaint. We are unlikely to withhold your identity or the details of your complaint other than in exceptional circumstances.

The Monitoring Officer will consider the request for confidentiality as a preliminary matter before the substance of your complaint. We will then contact you with the decision. If your request for confidentiality is not granted, we will usually allow you the option of withdrawing your complaint.

However, it is important to understand that in certain exceptional circumstances where the matter complained about is very serious, we can proceed with an investigation or other action and disclose your name even if you have expressly asked us not to.

Please provide us with details of why you believe we should withhold your name and/or the details of your complaint:

My complaint relates to the distribution of two political leaflets which have been circulated in parts of the borough. The leaflets make claims about the affairs of the Council which are misleading and untrue, so much so, they bring the Council into disrepute.

The comments are so misleading that on receipt of the information the Council issued a public statement on its website to provide residents with clarification. A copy of the Council's publication is enclosed for reference dated 25 April 2014.

I believe that the comments contained within the leaflets breach the Code of Conduct under Part 1 of the General Code under Section 4 – you must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing the Council, into disrepute.

The second part of my complaint refers to the highly critical and defamatory comments made about myself and way in which I am conducting the business of the Council in my role as the Elected Mayor. I find this to be not only offensive but malicious and insulting. I believe that the issue raised breaches the code of conduct under part 1 of the General Code Sections 1 – you must treat others with respect including Elected Members.

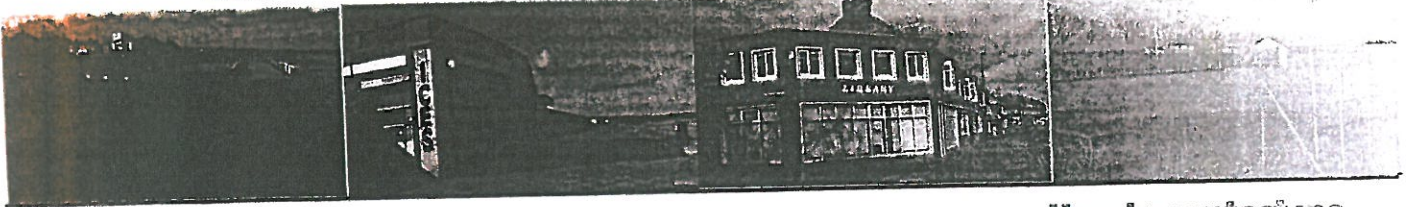
The complaint relates to two members of the Council, Councillor Leslie Miller and Councillor Alison Austin. Councillor Leslie Miller is quoted in the leaflet and Councillor Alison Austin is the promoter and publisher of the leaflet on behalf of Councillor Leslie Miller and Mr George Partis. The leaflets were circulated during April 2014 to a number of households in North Tyneside.

I have enclosed a copy of the each of the political leaflets referred to and a copy of the publication as it appears on the Council's webpage.



APPENDIX TWO

Leaflets 1 and 2



intouch

Monkseaton North Ward Election Special

FEARS GROW FOR SURVIVAL OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS

A letter sent to parents by the Labour Council in the last few weeks has confirmed our warnings about the Labour Mayor's threat to the survival of our successful and popular Middle Schools.

Just as we stated in our last *In Touch*, Labour have finally admitted to carrying out a major review of the education system. You may have read in the press that fears are growing amongst parents that this will herald the closure of Wellfield, Valley Gardens, Marden Bridge and Monkseaton Middle Schools.



Valley Gardens Middle School could be under threat.

Conservative Councillor and candidate for Monkseaton North Ward, Leslie Miller comments:

"Historically, Labour has always wanted to close down our Middle Schools and we believe this review is simply an excuse to put their plan into action. The conclusions of the review will not be made public until summer 2014,

very conveniently for Labour, after the May Local Elections. The only consultation with parents will be a paper exercise after the decision has been taken. The Middle Schools would then be closed from September 2015 with the land and buildings sold to boost the Labour Mayor's

coffers. We are the only party who support the Middle schools and if re-elected I will fight to save them."

One thing is certain - a vote for the Labour candidate in the elections on May 22nd is a vote to close down all four of our popular Middle Schools.

LABOUR'S DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE COAST

The longer the Labour Mayor is in office, the more her discrimination against the coastal wards becomes evident.

It was recently revealed that the Labour Mayor is happy to spend a staggering £800,000 a year to subsidise the John Willie Sams Centre in Dudley, which is very much underused. The News Guardian also reported that the Labour Mayor has given a youth project based in Longbenton a £36,000 grant to buy themselves a brand new minibus.

Contrast this with her refusal to spend the £42,000 a year to keep the Marden Bridge Sports Centre open. We say, if she can spend money subsidising a loss making community centre in Dudley and give away a brand new minibus in Longbenton, why won't she find the money to keep the coast's only Sports Centre open?

How to contact me
Cllr. Leslie Miller on 07968093760
Email: cllrles@gmail.com

POLLING DAY IS THURS 22 MAY

LESLIE MILLER - WORKING HARD FOR MONKSEATON NORTH WARD



Leslie Miller has worked hard as a councillor representing the interests of the residents of Monkseaton North since 2008.

Alongside his ward colleagues Alison Austin and Paul Mason, he has carried out regular street surgeries and holds frequent ward surgeries for the benefit of residents.

Leslie previously served as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and is a practice manager at a local GP Surgery.

If re-elected, Leslie pledges to ;

- Fight Labour's plans to close our Middle Schools.
- Fight Labour's plans to build 5,500 houses at Murton.
- Fight Labour's plans to close Marden Bridge Sports Centre.
- Fight Labour's plans to close Whitley Bay Police Station.

Councillor Leslie Miller asks for your support to improve and protect Monkseaton.

Please vote for him on Thursday 22nd May.



GOODBYE TO OUR GREEN FIELDS?

The Labour Mayor is pressing on with her unpopular Local Housing Plan which will see her give developers the green light to build 5,500 new properties on the green fields between Earsdon and Rake Lane Hospital.

Conservative candidate Councillor Leslie Miller reports:

"I have spoken to hundreds of residents at both ward and street surgeries and on the doorstep. One issue which continues to cause great concern is the Labour Mayor's plan to encourage developers to build 5,500 new houses on the fields at Murton. This will put an enormous strain on our local roads and schools, even more so if Labour get their way and close down our four Middle Schools!"

The Labour Mayor has consistently refused calls from your local Conservative Councillors to remove this huge site from her Housing Plan. All of the Labour Councillors support the Mayor's Plan, even those who supposedly represent wards close to this site.

A vote for the Labour candidate in the elections on May 22nd will be a vote to accept thousands of new houses and say goodbye forever to our green fields."

NIMBY COUNCILLORS RECORD REVEALED

Residents are justifiably concerned at the Labour Mayor's determination to allow thousands of new properties to be built at Murton.

Shockingly, one Labour Councillor (who is also a member of the council's Planning Committee) responded to these concerns by commenting "Sod the NIMBY prats" in a local newspaper Facebook discussion.

Now it has been revealed that the Councillor concerned has attended just one meeting of the Planning Committee this year, although we feel sure that he will make the effort to attend when the Murton plans go before the Labour dominated Planning Committee!

SHAMEFUL!

Labour recently voted through their budget, which saw savage and unprecedented cuts to vital services for the most vulnerable members of our society.

The funding for Children's Centres was slashed by £550,000 and placements for special needs children were cut by £500,000. Cuts were made to the Mental Health budget, including dementia care, a service on which the last Conservative council had actually managed to increase spending, even in these difficult financial times.

There were also cuts to the Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation service, the Widening Horizons Sports programme for young people has been scrapped and the youth activities programme is also to be slashed leading to fears of increasing anti-social behaviour. Finally, the vital safeguarding service which seeks to protect vulnerable children and the elderly has also been cut.

Councillor Leslie Miller, who served as the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services on the previous Conservative controlled council, balanced the department's budget every year through good management and says:

"The previous Conservative council also had to work with a reduced budget as part of our attempt to deal with the mountain of debt left by Gordon Brown's Labour Government, but under our control there were no such cuts to vital frontline social services.

Incredibly, after they had successfully voted these savage cuts through, the Labour Mayor and her councillors gave themselves a round of applause and congratulated each other on forcing through their shameful budget."

MARDEN BRIDGE SPORTS CENTRE CLOSURE

Mayor fails to answer questions on the future of Sports Centre

Conservative councillors have asked questions regarding the future of Marden Bridge Sports Centre, which the Labour Mayor has yet again failed to answer.

The council has admitted that Labour's decision to remove all funding and council staff from the Centre and force responsibility for its operation onto the school, is likely to lead to its closure.

When the Conservatives were in control of the council we also had to make savings, but through good management of the budget, we did so without scrapping valuable assets like our Sports Centres and local Libraries.

Conservative candidate Leslie Miller says:

"It is hard to know whether the Labour Mayor's decision to stop funding Marden Bridge Sports Centre is due to financial incompetence and her need for a quick fix for her budget, or, as many suspect, an attack on facilities at the coast simply because Labour have always preferred to spend our money on other parts of the borough. She chooses to spend £800,000 a year subsidising the under used John Willie Sams Centre in Dudley, but is happy to see Whitley Bay's Marden Bridge Sports Centre close when the costs to keep it open would only be £42,000 a year."

DON'T CLOSE OUR POLICE STATION

Local Conservatives organised a petition against Labour Police Commissioner Vera Baird's decision to close Whitley Bay Police Station - a decision which was taken without any consultation.

Leslie Miller helped to collect signatures and says:

"All organisations have to make savings in these difficult times, as we take steps to sort out the financial mess left by Gordon Brown's Labour Government. However, I am sure there are other ways to make savings without closing our Police Station. Perhaps Ms Baird could start by cancelling the expensive advertising campaign she is currently running on the Metro system?"

It was clear that the majority of residents do not accept her reasons for closing our Police Station and our petition calls on Vera Baird to look again at her decision, which many believe has been taken for political rather than financial reasons."

THURSDAY 22ND MAY IS POLLING DAY

Don't lose your vote! If you need an Emergency Proxy Vote or assistance reaching the Polling Station on the day itself, then please contact us using the details below or overleaf.

ISSUES TO RAISE? CONTACT LESLIE MILLER:

Email: cilrles@gmail.com

Tel: 07968093760

Delivered free by your local Conservatives – at no cost to you.



intouch

How to contact me

George Partis Tel: 0191 253 0883

Email: george.partis@sky.com

POLLING DAY IS

THURS 22 MAY

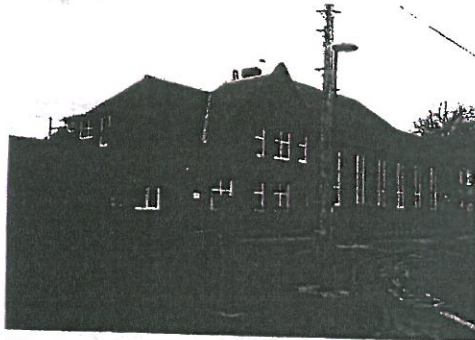
Monkseaton South Ward Election Special

FEARS GROW FOR SURVIVAL OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Conservative candidate, George Partis reports:

A letter sent to parents by the Labour Council in the last few weeks has confirmed my warnings about the Labour Mayor's threat to the survival of our successful and popular Middle Schools.

The letter admits that the Labour candidate in our ward is carrying out a major review of the education system across the whole borough, just as I informed you in my last newsletter. As you may have read in the local press, fears are now growing amongst parents that this will herald the closure of our local Middle Schools.



Monkseaton Middle School could be under threat.

Historically, Labour has always wanted to close down our Middle Schools and I believe this review is simply an excuse to put their plan into action. The conclusions of the review will not be made public until summer 2014,

very conveniently for Labour, ~~after the May Local Elections.~~ The only consultation with parents will be a paper exercise ~~after~~ the decision has been taken. The Middle Schools would then be closed from September 2015 with the land and buildings sold off to boost the Labour Mayor's coffers.

We are the only party who support the Middle schools and if elected I will fight to save them.

One thing is certain - a vote for the Labour candidate in the elections on May 22nd is a vote to close down all four of our popular Middle Schools.

LABOUR'S DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE COAST

The longer the Labour Mayor is in office, the more her discrimination against the coastal wards becomes evident.

It was recently revealed that the Labour Mayor is happy to spend a staggering £800,000 a year to subsidise the John Willie Sams Centre in Dudley, which is very much underused: The News Guardian also reported that the Labour Mayor has given a youth project based in Longbenton a £36,000 grant to buy themselves a brand new minibus.

Contrast this with her refusal to spend the £42,000 a year to keep the Marden Bridge Sports Centre open. We say, if she can spend money subsidising a loss making community centre in Dudley and give away a brand new minibus in Longbenton, why won't she find the money to keep the coast's only Sports Centre open?

GEORGE PARTIS - WORKING HARD FOR MONKSEATON SOUTH WARD

George Partis worked hard as a councillor representing the interests of the residents of Monkseaton South from 2008 to 2012.

A recent freedom of information request revealed that in those four years he dealt with an impressive 338 enquiries from residents.

During his time as your councillor, George carried out regular street surgeries and unlike your current Labour councillors he held frequent ward surgeries for the benefit of residents. George remains a director of the Whitley Bay Young People's Centre and a trustee of the Victor Mann Trust.

If elected, George pledges to ;

- Fight Labour's plans to close our Middle Schools.
- Fight Labour's plans to build 5,500 houses at Murton.
- Fight Labour's plans to close Marden Bridge Sports Centre.
- Fight Labour's plans to close Whitley Bay Police Station.

George asks for your support to improve and protect Monkseaton South.

Don't leave it to others to vote - they may be leaving it to you.

Please vote **GEORGE PARTIS** on Thursday 22nd May.

 **Conservatives**

GOODBYE TO OUR GREEN FIELDS?

The Labour Mayor is pressing on with her unpopular Local Housing Plan which will give developers the green light to build 5,500 new properties on the green fields between Earsdon and Rake Lane Hospital, next to Monkseaton South Ward.

Conservative candidate and campaigner George Partis reports:

"I have spoken to many residents and one issue which continues to cause great concern is the Labour Mayor's plan to encourage developers to build 5,500 new houses on the fields at Murton. This will put a huge strain on our local roads and schools, even more so if Labour get their way and close down our four Middle Schools!

The three Labour councillors for Monkseaton South Ward have backed her proposal to build on this massive green field site.

The Labour candidate in May's elections recently put up a notice regarding a planning application on a small part of this site and called it "the thin end of the wedge". Why then did he go on to vote in favour of the whole "wedge" and support his Labour Mayor's plan to build 5,500 houses on the very same site? Does he say one thing to you, the residents, but vote against your wishes in Cabinet meetings? Can you really trust anything he promises you in his election leaflets?

A vote for the Labour candidate in the elections on May 22nd will be a vote to accept thousands of new houses and say goodbye forever to our green fields."

NIMBY COUNCILLOR'S RECORD REVEALED

Residents are justifiably concerned at the Labour Mayor's determination to allow thousands of new properties to be built at Murton.

Shockingly, one Labour Councillor (who is also a member of the council's Planning Committee) responded to these concerns by commenting "Sod the NIMBY prats" in a local newspaper Facebook discussion.

Now it has been revealed that the Councillor concerned has attended just one meeting of the Planning Committee this year, although we feel sure that he will make the effort to attend when the Murton plans go before the Labour dominated Planning Committee!

SHAMEFUL!

The Labour Mayor and her councillors recently voted through their budget, which saw savage and unprecedented cuts to vital services for the most vulnerable members of our society.

Funding for Children's Centres was slashed by £550,000 and placements for special needs children were cut by £500,000. Cuts were made to the Mental Health budget, including dementia care, a service on which the last Conservative council had actually managed to increase spending, even in these difficult financial times.

There were also cuts to the Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation service, the Widening Horizons Sports programme for young people has been scrapped and the youth activities programme is to be slashed leading to fears of increased anti-social behaviour. Finally, the vital safeguarding service which seeks to protect vulnerable children and the elderly has also been cut.

Conservative candidate George Partis says:

"The Labour candidate in May's elections is currently the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and is personally responsible for these savage cuts. The previous Conservative council also had to work with a reduced budget as part of our attempt to deal with the debt left by Gordon Brown's Labour Government, but under our control there were no such cuts to vital social services. So when the Labour candidate tells you how much he cares about services for children and young people, perhaps you should ask him why he wasn't able to do as good a job of managing the budget as the Conservative Cabinet Member before him?"

Incredibly, after they had successfully voted these savage cuts through, the Labour Mayor and her councillors gave themselves a round of applause and congratulated each other on forcing through their shameful budget.

MARDEN BRIDGE SPORTS CENTRE CLOSURE

Mayor fails to answer questions on the future of Sports Centre

Conservative councillors have asked questions regarding the future of Marden Bridge Sports Centre, which the Labour Mayor has yet again failed to answer.

The council has admitted that Labour's decision to remove all funding and council staff from the Centre and force responsibility for its operation onto the school, is likely to lead to its closure.

When the Conservatives were in control of the council we also had to make savings, but through good management of the budget, we did so without scrapping valuable assets like our Sports Centres and local Libraries.

Conservative candidate George Partis says:

"It is hard to know whether the Labour Mayor's decision to stop funding Marden Bridge Sports Centre is due to financial incompetence and her need for a quick fix for her budget, or, as many suspect, an attack on facilities at the coast simply because Labour have always preferred to spend our money on other parts of the borough. She chooses to spend £800,000 a year subsidising the under used John Willie Sams Centre in Dudley, but is happy to see Whitley Bay's Marden Bridge Sports Centre close when the costs to keep it open would only be £42,000 a year."

DON'T CLOSE OUR POLICE STATION!

Local Conservatives organised a petition against Labour Police Commissioner Vera Baird's decision to close Whitley Bay Police Station - a decision which was taken without any consultation.

George Partis helped to collect signatures and says:

"All organisations have to make savings in these difficult times, as we take steps to sort out the financial mess left by Gordon Brown's Labour Government. However, I am sure there are other ways to make savings without closing our Police Station. Perhaps Ms Baird could start by cancelling the expensive advertising campaign she is currently running on the Metro system?"

It was clear that the majority of residents do not accept her reasons for closing our Police Station and our petition calls on Vera Baird to look again at her decision, which many believe has been taken for political rather than financial reasons."

THURSDAY 22ND MAY IS POLLING DAY

Don't lose your vote! If you need an Emergency Proxy Vote or assistance reaching the Polling Station on the day itself, then please contact us using the details below or overleaf.

ISSUES TO RAISE? CONTACT GEORGE PARTIS: Email: george.partis@sky.com Tel: 0191 2530883

APPENDIX THREE

Analysis of Leaflet 1

North Tyneside MBC

Standards Investigation

Complaint by Mrs Norma Redfearn in respect of Councillor Leslie Miller

Comparison of Pamphlet and Council Response

	Pamphlet Statement	Council Response	Conclusions
1.	<p>Middle Schools Labour have finally admitted to carrying out a major review of the education system</p>	<p>No recommendations have been made about the future education provision in North Tyneside – including its middle school system</p>	<p>This statement is factually correct, although the decision rests with the authority rather than with "Labour"</p>
2.	<p>Historically Labour has always wanted to close down our Middle Schools.</p>		<p>This is a statement of opinion.</p>
3.	<p>We believe this review is simply an excuse to put their plan into action</p>	<p>The Council is undertaking a borough-wide review to address the changing population needs, surplus places, school funding and to ensure that all children can continue to benefit from excellent learning. Analysis by both the Council and the Department for Education confirmed that the number of surplus places is now forecast to be just above 20 per cent by 2015/16. If action isn't taken this would have a destabilising and disproportionate impact on the schools network. While there needs to be some flexibility in school places and potential demand from planned house building in the borough, more than 10 per cent surplus places is nationally recognised as potentially damaging in terms of value for money. Significant surplus places can jeopardise standards. The review is being carried out with the support of Head Teachers across the Borough and also involves Tynemet College. The Authority is currently working to develop a full and comprehensive picture of the current education system. This picture will include an analysis of current and predicted admissions to each school, a full financial appraisal of each</p>	<p>This is a statement of opinion.</p>

		<p>school, a condition survey for each school, a review of the implications of changes in school funding and anticipated population changes.</p>	<p>Factually correct as to timing. Whether it is convenient for the Labour Party is a statement of opinion.</p>
4.	<p>The conclusions of the review will not be made public until summer 2014, very conveniently for Labour, after the May Local Elections</p>		
5.	<p>The only consultation with parents will be a paper exercise after the decision has been taken</p>	<p>The information will be used to develop a number of options for changes to the system. The development of options will take place over the summer months and will involve all political parties. The Council will then undertake a comprehensive consultation process on those options, in line with statutory guidelines, involving parents and schools. This consultation process and the views put forward by parents will be used to inform the decision making process. The Council is committed to an open and honest dialogue with our schools, their governors and parents and we are committed to an inclusive decision-making approach which meets the needs of the borough and its children.</p>	<p>Councillor Miller has drawn my attention to a report in the Chronicle Live on 10 March 2014, in which Councillor Ian Grayson, North Tyneside Council's cabinet member for children, young people, is quoted as saying – "There is a review but no firm decisions have been made. Clearly when there are, we will consult fully." At the time when Councillor Miller made the comments set out in the pamphlet, it was this statement, rather than the subsequent statement in clarification by the Council, which was before him. The Council's Head of Children and Young Persons has informed me as follows – "When Cllr Grayson informed a national newspaper that 'no firm decisions have been made' in regard to the school review he was making reference to decisions which would lead to a series of options. He was not referring to decisions that would lead to school closure. Parent were not kept in the dark until March 2014. The council was waiting until officers leading on the review had sufficient data and evidence to construct a range of options for consultation. It would be impossible to hold a consultation process if preliminary decisions or a better description would be 'proposals' had been established." I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of this explanation, but Councillor Miller had before him the Chronicle Live's report of Councillor Grayson's statement. The implication of his statement as reported is that consultation will only take place once decisions have been made. It is not unreasonable to infer from that that the consultation will not be able to inform the decisions, which by then will already</p>

			have been taken.	Conclusion – whilst Councillor Miller could have sought clarification of Councillor Grayson's statement, I am of the view that he has made reasonable inferences from Councillor Grayson's statement as reported, and that any substantive damage to the Council's reputation should properly be ascribed to the report (accurate or not) of Councillor Grayson's statement, rather than Councillor Miller's not unreasonable inferences from that reported statement.
6.	The Middle Schools would then be closed from September 2015 with the land and buildings sold to boost the Labour Mayor's coffers	It is anticipated that any changes to the current system would not be implemented until September 2015		Factually correct, that any surplus sites would be disposed of. The reference to the Labour Mayor's coffers is political rhetoric.
7.	One thing is certain – a vote for the Labour candidates on May 22 nd is a vote to close down all four of our popular Middle Schools			This is a statement of opinion
8.	If re-elected, Leslie pledges to fight Labour's plans to close our Middle Schools			This is a statement of opinion.
9.	Even more so if Labour get their way and close down our four Middle Schools			This is a statement of opinion.
10.	Green Fields The Labour Mayor is pressing on with her unpopular Local Housing Plan which will see her give developers the green light to build 5,500 new properties on the green fields between Earsdon and Rake Hill Hospital	North Tyneside is required by national government to produce a Local Plan to shape the growth and development of the borough over the next 15 years. Its initial draft plan sets out a range of options to achieve this without building on the green Belt. A cross-party working group agreed that all 110 potential sites previously identified for potential development should be opened to public scrutiny. Although all potential sites are included as part of the initial consultation, they will not all be needed. The consultation is a means to help the Council determine which are the best sites to take forward. There remains a series of formal stages when there will be further opportunities for the public to feedback their views on the Local Plan, including		Martin Craddock, Principal Planning Officer, advised me that land at Murton Village is identified as sites 35 to 41 out of 110 potential development sites within the Consultation Draft of the Local Plan on the recommendation of the cross-party Local Plan Sub-Group of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as reported to and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 nd September 2013. The express purpose of the Committee was to include more sites than are required within the plan period to 2030, to allow for genuine consultation and choice. Sites 35 to 41 have a capacity to provide 3,068 homes within the plan period, which could extend to 5,350 if development after the plan period is taken into account. This land has been included in the

a public inquiry chaired by a government planning inspector, before it is formally adopted. This is expected in late 2015 and will then be used to help determine day-to-day planning applications within the borough

published annual strategic housing land availability assessment since 2009. The area of land between the Green Belt and the urban area was safeguarded under policies E21 and E21/1 of the Unitary Development Plan, but this designation was only valid for the life of the UDP, to 2006. The current Local Plan review is the proper means by which that safeguarding policy is reviewed, to determine whether it should be removed to enable all or part of the land to be used to meet the Borough's housing needs, or given further protection within the new Local Plan. I also note that in her "A Year On" statement (dated Summer 2014, so subsequent to Councillor Miller's statement), Ms Norma Redearn included among her achievements of her first year in office – "Established plans to build 3,000 affordable homes in the next 10 years and launched consultation on where best to locate future housing development around the borough." Councillor Miller points to the role of the Mayor as set out in the Council's Constitution, as follows - "The Elected Mayor and Cabinet are the Executive of the Authority and form the administration of the Authority. The Executive's role is central to the functioning of the authority. It takes key decisions and implements the authorities policies and budgets. It also leads the community planning process..." "That the role of the Elected Mayor is to carry out the following roles:
a) be the Authorities principal public spokesperson;
b) give overall political direction to the authority"
However, in my opinion, that does not detract from the inaccuracy of ascribing to Ms Norma Redearn an intention to force through the release of this land for housing, irrespective of the outcome of consultation,

Conclusion

Councillor Leslie Miller was or should have been

aware that the Local Plan process and the grant or refusal of planning permission are non-executive functions which will ultimately be determined by Council, or a Committee of Council, rather than by the Mayor, and that the land at Murton has been included in the Local Plan review process by decision of the Council and its Committee, rather than by the Mayor. As such, he knew or should have known that their assertion that the Local Plan review is "her Housing Plan" and that she can "give the green light" to development is factually incorrect and gives the incorrect implication that she intends to use her Mayoral powers to push through the release of this land for housing against the wishes of local residents and without having proper regard to the outcome of statutory consultation.

Accordingly, I find that Councillor Miller knew or should have known that his statement was incorrect, and I am of the opinion that he should not have asserted that Ms Norma Redfearn had a personal commitment to push through the release of certain land for housing without any evidence of such a commitment on her part. I am of the opinion that it is important for the reputation of a local authority that it has a reputation for undertaking genuine consultation and taking public responses into serious account when addressing difficult issues such as the allocation of land for housing. To suggest very publicly that the leadership of the authority has already taken a decision, irrespective of the outcome of statutory consultation, is likely to damage the reputation of the authority and of the leadership of the authority. Accordingly, I find that Councillor Miller did fail to comply with Paragraphs 1 and 4 of the Code of Conduct, in that it was likely to damage the reputation of both the Council and Ms Norma Redfearn as Mayor of North Tyneside, and that his statement fell outside the limits of acceptable political expression.

11.	The Labour Mayor's plan to encourage developers to build 5,500 new houses on the fields at Murton		As above
12	This will put an enormous strain on our local roads and schools, even more so if Labour get their way and close down our four Middle Schools		This is a statement of opinion, but ignores that the Local Plan process would seek to ensure that through Section 106 agreement and Community Infrastructure Levy the Council would be able to secure that sufficient local road improvements and new or enlarged schools would be provided to meet the additional local need. I consider that it does not enhance Councillor Miller's reputation, but does not constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct Opinion.
13	If re-elected, Leslie pledges to fight Labour's plans to build 5,500 houses at Murton Children's Centres		
14.	Labour voted through their budget which saw savage and unprecedented cuts to vital services for the most vulnerable members of our society		This is a statement of opinion.
15.	The funding for Children's Centres was slashed by £550,000		Factually correct
16.	Incredibly, after they had successfully voted through these savage cuts, the Labour Mayor and her Councillors gave themselves a round of applause and congratulated each other on forcing through their shameful budget		I am advised that the Mayor congratulated Council on the constructive and positive manner in which they had addressed the very difficult decisions required by the Budget making process. However, in my opinion, this is and will be understood by the public to be party political rhetoric.
17.	Marden Bridge Sports Centre Conservative Councillors have asked questions regarding the future of Marden Bridge Sports Centre which the Labour Mayor has yet again failed to answer	North Tyneside Council is not seeking the closure of Marden Bridge Sports Centre. A reduction of £42,000 in the subsidy to Marden Bridge Sports Centre was identified in the 2013/14 Budget. Both the Council and Marden Bridge are committed to ensuring that the sports centre continues to offer a wide range of activities to benefit the residents. They will work together on a business plan to ensure that the long term outlook for the sport centre is sustainable and no	As part of the 2013-14 budget setting process, business cases were prepared in respect of each key funding issue, and these business cases were circulated to all Councillors. Business Case 22 stated as follows in respect of Marden Bridge Sports Centre – "Marden Bridge Sports Centre is a school asset, used by the school for PE and other related activities and is managed by the Sport and Leisure service under an agreement signed in 1999. The operational subsidy is currently picked up by NTC

		additional costs will be incurred by the school.	<p>Sport and Leisure Service. This efficiency proposes that the Council withdraws all of its financial support leaving the school to directly cover the subsidy costs, manage the facility and take responsibility for Community access. In doing this they would take sole responsibility for the management and upkeep of the Sports Centre. Alternatively they could seek another provider, close the facility for community use or ask the Council to continue to run the service but pick up the subsidy costs themselves."</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u> The implications of the removal of subsidy for the Sports Centre were made clear to all Councillors as part of the budget setting process. The business case makes it clear that subsequent decisions on the future of the Sports Centre would rest with the school rather than the Council. Accordingly, I do not consider that Councillor Leslie Miller's statement is a breach of the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>As set out above, this was made clear in the business case as part of the budget-setting process. So it is a factual statement.</p>
18.	The Council has admitted that Labour's decision to remove funding and council staff and force responsibility for its operation on the schools is likely to lead to its closure.		<p>Councillor Leslie Miller was or should be aware that his statement was incorrect in that, whilst the Mayor proposes the draft Budget, ultimately the Council's Budget is formally approved by Council, not by the Mayor. However, I accept that, as the Mayor proposes the Budget, it is not unreasonable to ascribe to the Mayor key funding proposals which were contained in the draft Budget. As such it comes within the acceptable limits of political expression. The balance of the statement is opinion.</p>
19.	Conservative candidate Leslie Miller says – "it is hard to know whether the Labour Mayor's decision to stop funding Marden Bridge Sports Centre is due to financial incompetence and her need for a quick fix for her budget or, as many suspect, an attack on facilities on the coast simply because Labour has always preferred to spend our money on other parts of the borough."		<p>Councillor Leslie Miller was or should be aware that his statement was incorrect in that, whilst the Mayor proposes the draft Budget, ultimately the Council's Budget is formally approved by Council, not by the Mayor. However, I accept that, as the Mayor proposes the Budget, it is not unreasonable to ascribe to the Mayor key funding proposals which were contained in the draft Budget. As such it comes within the acceptable limits of political expression. The balance of the statement is opinion.</p>
20.	"She chooses to spend £800,000 a year subsidising the under-used John Willie Sams Centre in Dudley, but is happy to see Whitley Bay's Marden Bridge Sports Centre close when the costs to keep it open would only be £42,000 a year."	This Centre (John Willie Sams) has a controllable budget of £767,402 for 2104/15. The budget for 2013/14 was £832,237. The centre is a LIFT PFI project which started in 2007/08. At that time the required budget was an additional £620,000. Since that time inflationary	<p>Councillor Leslie Miller was or should be aware that the John Willie Sams Centre is a PFI project and that it is unrealistic to attempt a straight comparison between the budgeted costs of this centre and the subsidy for the Marden Bridge Sports Centre. He knew or should have known that his statement</p>

		<p>increases have taken the budget to the current position for 2014/15 of £767,401.</p> <p>This is a fully serviced contract which means that it appears expensive compared with a simple rental for a building as all facilities management and maintenance are included in the charge for the building.</p> <p>Value for money tests were completed before the contract was entered into in 2007/08 that demonstrated this contract presented better value for money than a traditional Council owned building.</p>	<p>was misleading in that this was not a fair comparison, but he is essentially making a political point about the priorities of the Labour Administration, as proposed in the Mayor's draft Budget and as approved by the Council. Accordingly, I consider that this comes within the limits of acceptable political expression.</p>
21.	<p>If re-elected, Leslie pledges to fight Labour's plans to close Marden Bridge Sports Centre</p>		Opinion
22.	<p>It was recently revealed that the labour Mayor is happy to spend a staggering £880,000 a year to subsidise the John Willie Sams Centre in Dudley, which is very much underused.</p>		As above
23.	<p>The News Guardian also reported that the Labour Mayor has given a youth project based in Longbenton a £36,000 grant to buy themselves a brand new minibus</p>	<p>The minibus handed over to Longbenton Youth Project recently was one of the projects benefiting from the Play and Youth Capital Investment Programme agreed by Cabinet in May 2012.</p> <p>This was one of 43 applications received under this scheme, of which 26 applications have been successful following assessment by an independent panel.</p> <p>In this case, a number of different organisations were persuaded to make a joint bid offering better value for money.</p> <p>The project was formally approved by Paul Cook, Head of Service on the Youth Panel.</p>	
24.	<p>Contrast this with her refusal to spend the £42,000 a year to keep the Marden Bridge Sports Centre open.</p>		As above.
25.	<p>We say, if she can spend money subsidising a loss making community centre in Dudley and give away a brand new minibus in Longbenton, why won't she find the money to keep the coast's only Sports Centre open?</p>		This is political rhetoric.
	Whitley Bay Police Station		

26.	<p>Local Conservatives organised a petition against Labour Police Commissioner Vera Baird's decision to close Whitley Bay Police Station – a decision which was taken without any consultation</p>	<p>Northumbria Police have put forward some proposals on the future of the Whitley Bay Police Station.</p> <p>This is not a decision for North Tyneside Council. However, the authority is committed to continuing to work with Northumbria Police to ensure a successful alternative base is found in Whitley Bay. Reassurance has been provided that the Police Station will not close until such an alternative base is found and that there will be no impact on future policing of the area.</p> <p>North Tyneside Council has already worked very successfully with the force in addressing their need for office accommodation in Killingworth by providing space in the White Swan Customer first Centre which brings a range of services to the public under one roof.</p>	<p>This statement is outside the scope of Ms Norma Redfearn's complaint, in that it does not relate to either the Mayor or the Council.</p> <p>However, Northumbria Police have given a public commitment not to close Whitley Bay Police Station until an alternative base is found, and I note a report in the News Guardian in which the Police and Crime Commissioner Vera Baird is quoted as follows –</p> <p>"The Chief Constable and I are very committed to maintaining the number of police officers and staff working in our neighbourhoods.</p> <p>We will relocate neighbourhood policing teams to bases in the local community, usually shared with other services. We are currently doing this in North Tyneside where we are proposing to have police in the White Swan Centre at Killingworth following public consultation, rather than in an outdated, expensive to maintain police station in Forest Hall. And we are keen to make further savings by relocating other neighbourhood policing teams into the communities that they serve, as this is what local policing is all about. However, we guarantee that no police services will be re-located until we have found accessible bases within the community for neighbourhood teams to work from and they are working well."</p>	<p>I am of the opinion that Councillor Leslie Miller's statement in the pamphlet was misleading in failing to include any reference to the undertaking given by the Police. However, this is outside the scope of Ms Norma Redfearn's complaint.</p>
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