

Case Summary - Redcar and Cleveland

Case no. SFE-000189
Member(s): Councillor Sheelagh Clarke
Date received: 17 Mar 2011
Date completed: 07 Jun 2011

Allegation:

That Councillor Clarke lied at a ward meeting about his decision making role in the closure of a local school.

Standards Board outcome:

The ethical standards officer found that the member did not breach the Code of Conduct.

Case Summary

At a ward meeting that was held to discuss the proposed amalgamation of two local schools, Councillor Clarke stated that the decision as to whether the schools would be amalgamated or not was a decision for the Secretary of State for Education to make and not hers.

It was alleged that this was a lie. Councillor Clarke was Deputy Leader of the Council and the decision whether to amalgamate the two schools was for her and the Council's cabinet to make. It was also alleged that she did not tell the truth at the meeting because it was a heated meeting and she did not want to have the discussion with the people who were in attendance.

The Ethical Standards Officer found that, at the time of the ward meeting, Redcar and Cleveland Council had begun a consultation on the proposed amalgamation. At the same time the Council had applied to the Secretary of State for the two schools to merge to become one academy. One of the two schools had applied in its own right to become an academy without the other school. Consequently, while the decision to press ahead with the proposal to merge the two schools would be taken by the cabinet, the final decision on whether the two schools would merge would be a matter for the Secretary of State. If the Secretary of State approved the school's solo application, then the Council would not be able to merge the two schools as a joint academy.

The Ethical Standards Officer found that Councillor Clarke had not lied at the ward meeting when she said the decision to merge the schools rested with the Secretary of State. Consequently, as Councillor Clarke had not lied, she had not contravened Paragraph 5 of the Code of Conduct, which states that members must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or

authority into disrepute. Councillor Clarke, therefore, did not breach Redcar and Cleveland's Code of Conduct.

Relevant paragraphs of the Code of Conduct

Paragraph 5

09 June 2011