Herefordshire Council

COC090
Note of Interview with witness ('X') on 22 October 2024

1. The interview was conducted by Deborah Nickson ('DN'), Senior Governance Lawyer, Herefordshire Council, by telephone call on 22.10.24.

2. DN explained that the interview was part of a process concerning a complaint about Councillor Ewen Sinclair. DN explained that she had been asked by the Monitoring Officer of Herefordshire Council to investigate the complaint.

3. DN explained the process and said that this it is confidential but if the matter proceeds to a hearing before Standards Panel, X's evidence may be required.

4. DN said that she would like to ask X about an incident that happened on 17 September 2024, and whether X is aware of any relevant context to the incident.

5. X explained that she works at REDACTED shop in Ledbury. Her colleague is David Thomas ('DT') whom X is aware is the complainant in this case.

6. DN asked X to describe her observations of the incident on 17 September 2024. X said that on that date, she and DT were working at the shop. Just before the shop was due to close at 5pm, DT and X were preparing to close for the day, which involved going in and out of the shop premises.

7. Whilst they were outside, X observed two men, neither of whom she knew, walking past the shop. X said that, as they came up to the shop, one man said 'Oh, let's go to The Barn tonight'. This was said in a loud voice, which X believed was raised with the intention of being heard, and she had the impression the man who spoke knew David.

8. DN asked X whether it was possible that the comment had just happened to be said as the men were passing the shop. X was sure this was not the case because she believed the volume that was used was deliberately raised, which she thought was an opportunistic attempt to provoke DT.

9. DN asked X why she thought the comment would provoke DT. X said that she is aware, although not in detail, of past events that would mean that DT would be upset by the comment made in relation to The Barn.

10. X said that she continued with the tasks of closing the shop and she went inside. She saw that DT went to speak to the man who had spoken to him, but she did not hear or see anything further.

11. X said that DT came back into the shop quite quickly, and she observed that he seemed upset and cross about what had happened. X said that they did not discuss the matter, but she could see that DT was upset.

12. X said that she thought at the time that the comment was made opportunistically, and that it was childish behaviour. The comment appeared to X to be an unnecessary attempt to provoke DT. X said that she felt that the man who spoke to DT should be ashamed of his behaviour, especially as she now understands that he is a councillor.

13. DN thanked X for speaking to her and will send a note of the meeting for agreement.

I agree that this is a true and accurate record of the interview.

Signed: …….
REDACTED

Dated: 22 October 2024