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From: Chris Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 April 2013 22:10
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Consultation on publicity code
Attachments: Response_form_-_Publicity_Code_Consultation.doc
Response form attached.

Regards

Chris Smith
Chair - Greenwich Borough Liberal Democrats

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16/05/2013

Response form

Publicity Code Consultation 2013

About you

i) Your details

Name:	Chris Smith
Position (if applicable)	Chair
Name of Organisation (if applicable)	Greenwich Borough Liberal Democrats
Address:	[REDACTED]
e mail:	[REDACTED]
Telephone Number:	

ii) Are the views expressed on this consultation an official's response from the organisation you represent or your own personal views?

Organisational response

☐

Personal views

☒

iii) Please tick the box which best describes you or your organisation:

District council	
Metropolitan district council	
London borough council	
Unitary authority/county council/county borough council	
Parish council	
Membership organisation	x
Newspaper proprietor	
Newspaper staff	
Business	
Councillor	
Member of the public	
Other	

(please comment):	
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Questions:

1. Views on the proposed legislation are invited, and in particular do consultees see the proposals as fully delivering the commitment to give greater force to the Publicity Code by putting compliance on a statutory basis?

Yes – given the refusal of some local authorities to abide by the code, such as our own, greater force is needed to see that they comply.

2. If there is alternative to the power of direction, how will this meet the aim of improved enforcement of the code? Not sure that it will.

2. This consultation invites evidence of the circumstances where the code was not met and the implications of this on competition in local media

Greenwich Time is the weekly council newspaper in Greenwich SE London. It is known locally as Pravda and would be worthy of any Soviet Bloc publicity department. Of course I myself and my party are biased against it, as I am sure all non-Labour political groups in Greenwich borough are, but looking at this rag objectively it is quite simply an insult to democracy and a serious threat to local newspapers. The council has been Labour controlled for most of the last 70 years and currently is heavily controlled and dominated by Labour. The paper regularly carries numerous pictures of Labour councillors – not all of which would be justified by their work as councillors. Articles carry

heavily politically biased and controversial content, often breaking their own stories ahead of the local press – the proposal for a pro river crossing campaign is a case in point. The letters page should be used by a comedy TV show, so effusive are most of the letters in praising the Labour council.

I would say it clearly falls short on objectivity and even handedness as well as appropriate use of publicity (it looks like a local newspaper in many ways). The council would argue that it is cost effective in terms of advertising, council lets etc – I am not sure of the comparative costs but a gross cost figure reported of £600,000 is horrific if true.

Local newspapers cannot compete effectively and are suffering in an already difficult climate. In terms of getting other non Labour Party views across to local residents, competing with a state funded weekly delivered publicity paper makes that very difficult.

