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From: Day, Amanda [REDACTED]
 Sent: 02 May 2013 17:14
 To: [REDACTED]
 Subject: Bromley Council response to Publicity Code for Local Authorities consultation

Good afternoon - please note the Bromley Council response to the consultation on the Publicity Code for Local Authorities is being sent on behalf of the Chief Executive of Bromley Council, Doug Patterson. Could you confirm that you have received this email - please contact me if there are any issues around this - many thanks.

Bromley Council response

In responding to the Publicity Code consultation by the CLG, Bromley Council has strong concerns regarding the principle of giving the Secretary of State statutory powers to direct local authorities in terms of the Publicity Code. These are as follows:

- Giving the Secretary of State the statutory powers to direct all or some Councils would undermine local democracy and fly in the face of the principle of localism. It would effectively give the government of the day the power to censor the ability of local representatives to express in a balanced and reasoned way the concerns of local people where these are 'deemed' to be critical of government policy.
- At times of political sensitivity such as elections and referendums, the statutory power to direct could effectively gag views that do not conform to the government of the day again to the detriment of democracy and running counter to the principle of localism.
- In terms of local news papers, Councils have broad powers and responsibilities to communicate information and advice about their services. In line with the principle of localism decisions on the best and most effective way of disseminating this information should be taken at a local level, including how to maximise the geographical distribution of any communication. It is the role of news papers to challenge and hold local authorities to account. However, the information they convey is not always accurate or timely and can result in misinformation about services and function. It is therefore important that in meeting their responsibility regarding communicating with residents local authorities are able to challenge and address any inaccuracies.
- The consultation recognises the vast majority of local authorities comply with the existing Publicity Code as it stands and as such introducing a statutory power to direct is excessive. Where an individual authority consistently breaches the code any action should be proportionate and specific to that authority.

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