

NEWS PROP |

From: Starbrook, Malcolm [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 April 2013 15:09
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Publicity Code response.
Attachments: Response_form_-_Publicity_Code_Consultation.doc
Hi

My response is attached.

Regards

Malcolm Starbrook

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16/05/2013

Response form

Publicity Code Consultation 2013

About you

i) Your details

Name:	Malcolm Starbrook
Position (if applicable)	Editor in Chief
Name of Organisation (if applicable)	Archant London
Address:	539 Media House High Road Ilford IG1 1UD
e mail:	[REDACTED]@uk
Telephone Number:	[REDACTED]

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	
Newspaper proprietor	x
Newspaper staff	
Business	
Councillor	
Member of the public	

Other	
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(please comment):	Editor in chief overseeing five weekly local newspapers
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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?

I don't think the Publicity Code proposal delivers what the industry had hoped for, or expected.

It seems that an individual company/newspaper complains to the Department; the complaint is then considered against the 7 Principles; if necessary a Direction to comply is then issued but no time frame for compliance is made; then it is up to the individual newspaper to go to court to apply for a compliance order.

So no time frame and a bill for court costs for us to bear with no guarantees the judges will see it our way. In addition, while stating that our stance against council-run Pravdas is taken to protect taxpayers' money, we could be embarking on a policy that will add to a town hall's legal costs burden.

Having taken on the authority in court and won, we then expect the same authority to spend money with us?

We are to be used as the Government's attack dogs to ensure the Code is honoured. It is a bit like the mugger's victim fooling the criminal prosecution bill to ensure that justice is served.

2. If there is alternative to the power of direction, how will this meet the aim of improved enforcement of the code?

Rather than a power of direction, it should grant a power of enforcement to the Department compelling adherence.

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

In Tower Hamlets the council, one of the poorest in UK, has set aside a £4.1m budget for publicity. The authority's Weekly newspaper East End Life contains articles whose primary purpose is to promote the elected mayor, Lutfur Rahman. Opposition parties have no access for publicity. Tower Hamlets also finances its quarterly Whats On Guide, it is supported by local advertising. The council also produces an annual directory supported by local advertising: all the advertising costs in these publications are subsidised through the borough purse.

Recently, opposition parties united in overturning the mayor's budget plan in order to stop publication of East End Life. Mayor Rahman responded by releasing £400k from council reserves to enable the EEL to continue during a performance review that ends, coincidentally, after mayor Rahman's re-election bid in 2014.

In Newham there is a fortnightly news magazine, the newhammag, carries local small ads but also carries ads from the council itself as well as supporting organisations such as the police and health authority: normally these organisations would consider advertising in my newspapers but are tempted away by cut price rates heavily subsidised by the majority Labour council. Again no voice of opposition is carried in the mag which also takes a two page homily penned by elected mayor Sir Robin Wales in every edition.

