

PCC rules on MP expenses complaints against Daily Telegraph

The Press Complaints Commission today publishes two rulings on complaints from MPs about The Daily Telegraph's recent coverage of parliamentary expenses.

In the first case, the PCC has upheld a complaint from Brian Binley, MP for Northampton South, after The Daily Telegraph claimed he was a 'millionaire' and possessed a 'multi-million pound fortune'. Mr Binley said that both assertions were inaccurate and supplied evidence of his actual financial situation. The newspaper, which had not put these claims to him prior to publication, was not able to corroborate them and (after a period of investigation by the PCC) offered to publish a brief clarification. Mr Binley rejected the offer.

The Commission agreed with the complainant that the proposed statement was inadequate. While the point at stake was a narrow one, it was "significant". The Daily Telegraph had not checked Mr Binley's financial position prior to publication and had not been able to corroborate its contentions after it received his complaint. In such circumstances, it should have "offered promptly to publish a correction and apology which accepted the articles were incorrect". The newspaper's failure to do so meant that the complaint was upheld.

To see the ruling on Mr Binley's complaint in full please click here:

A second complaint, this time from Stafford MP, David Kidney, has been rejected. Mr Kidney complained that the Telegraph had implied misbehaviour in relation to council tax claims he had made. While he had repaid around £2,500 to the Fees Office, this was the result of a mix-up, he said, not of any deliberate attempt to over-claim. He argued that it was misleading to refer to his error in the context of an article that referred to 'phantom', 'inflated' and 'dubious' claims of other MPs. However, the Commission disagreed. It was not in dispute that that the complainant had - for whatever reason - made a duplicate claim and the newspaper had not said directly that his actions were deliberate. Indeed, it had merely said that Mr Kidney had 'privately repaid over-claimed council tax to the Commons fees office'. A more detailed explanation - referring correctly to a 'mix-up' - was contained within a special supplement, which was published on the same day. In these circumstances, the Commission was satisfied that readers would not generally have been misled and the complaint was, therefore, not upheld. The ruling can be seen in full here:

The PCC has previously resolved a separate complaint from Mr Kidney against the News of the World.

The adjudications have been published in The Daily Telegraph today.

ENDS

For more information about these cases please contact Stephen Abell on 020 7831 0022.

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