

PCC upholds MP's complaint over expenses story

The Press Complaints Commission has upheld a complaint against the East Kilbride News under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Editors' Code of Practice.

The complaint was made by the MP for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow, Michael McCann. The article related to his Parliamentary expenses, which had been published following the release of the figures by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA). Mr McCann argued that a claim made in the article - that his expenses "include £1150 in hotel bills to fund his trips to Westminster, while he also claims for a rented property in central London" - was misleading because it suggested that he had claimed for hotel rooms at the same time as paying rent on a property. In fact, the hotel bills were incurred before he had the property.

The Commission found the claim in the article could have misled readers into believing that the claims for hotel bills and rent were made concurrently, rather than consecutively. The newspaper should have clarified this following the complaint. It failed to do so and the result was a breach of the Code.

The newspaper published the adjudication with due prominence last Wednesday. However, in doing so, it made some minor amendments to the text and failed to publish a proper reference to the PCC in the headline. As a result, it republished the adjudication in full today.

An additional complaint under Clauses 1 (Accuracy) and 4 (Harassment) was not upheld by the Commission.

Stephen Abell, Director of the PCC, commented: "Scrutiny of an MP's expenses can be an important function of a newspaper. However, there is a real need for editors to ensure that they get the claims right. In this case, the article could have misled readers about the conduct of their MP, and the newspaper should have clarified the position when asked to do so.

Furthermore, when the complaint was upheld by the PCC, the newspaper should have ensured the ruling was carried properly. I am glad that the full text has now been published, in accordance with the requirements of the Code."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. The PCC is an independent body which administers the system of self-regulation for the press. It does so primarily by dealing with complaints, framed within the terms of the Editors' Code of Practice, about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines (and their websites, including editorial audio-visual material) and the conduct of journalists.
2. To read the adjudication, please click [here](#).
3. Tina Weaver, the editor of the Sunday Mirror and editorial member of the Commission, took no part in the PCC's deliberations of this complaint, and left the room when it was discussed. She did not see any correspondence connected to the case. This is because the East Kilbride News is published by Trinity Mirror, which also publishes the Sunday Mirror. The PCC publishes a Register of Interests which includes a list of titles in which editorial Commissioners have an interest, and about which they do not consider complaints. It is available [here](#).
4. For more information, please contact Jonathan Collett on 020 7438 1246 or 07740 896805.

2 February 2011