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# 12297-16 Miles v Thanet Gazette

**Decision: No breach - after investigation**

**Relevant code provisions**

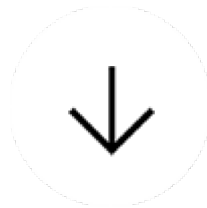
1 Accuracy (2016)  
2 Privacy (2016)

**Publication**

Isle of Thanet  
Gazette (Trinity  
Mirror PLC)

**Conclusion**

No breach - after  
investigation



Decision of the Complaints Committee 12297-16 Miles v Thanet Gazette

Summary of complaint

1. Peter Miles complained to the Independent Press Standards Organisation that the Isle of Thanet Gazette breached Clause 1 (Accuracy) and Clause 2 (Privacy) of the Editors' Code of Practice in an article headlined "The fight for the coach house as the asset sell-off consultation deadline looms", published on 13 October 2016.
2. The article reported Thanet Council's proposal to sell off 22 sites as part of a property disposal programme, including The Coach House in Northdown Park, Margate. The article explained that the current lease on The Coach House, due to end in 2021, stipulated that it should be used as a museum and curator's living accommodation. It said that the property did not currently have a museum open for public use for 100 days a year and that the complainant, the lessee of the house, failed to open a museum following an Easter deadline that was set out at a Scrutiny Committee review. The article included a comment from the grandson of the original benefactor of Northdown House, who said that he was "amazed" that Thanet District Council would consider trying to sell property "in light of its U-Turn on the same proposal in

2008". The article went on to make reference to a 1,800 signature petition in 2008 against any sale of the property.

3. The complainant said that it was inaccurate for the article to report that the property was on the 2008 asset disposal list. He said that the Council had attempted to sell Northdown House and the Depot in 2008, but denied that The Coach House was ever part of the planned sale. He also said that it was inaccurate for the article to report that a petition against the sale of The Coach House was raised in 2008. He said that while the petition report referred to the proposed sale of "Northdown House and its environs", he said that the words "and its environs" did not refer to The Coach House. He said that Northdown House and The Coach House are two entirely different buildings, with no connection beyond that of a common ownership.

4. The complainant said that it was inaccurate to report that the current lease on the property stipulated that a museum should be open at the site for public use for 100 days a year; he said that the Council "agreed to vary" the lease at a council meeting in 2010. He also said that the article represented an intrusion into his privacy because it included his name in association with what he considered to be false allegations against him.

5. The newspaper denied that the article was inaccurate. It said that the Northdown House estate included The Coach House, and that both properties were included for sale in 2008. It also said that the proposed sale of The Coach House was referred to in a Coach House Working Party meeting on 28 September 2010. It did it consider that the documents provided by the complainant which made reference to "Northdown House and the Depot" supported or contradicted his assertion that The Coach House was not part of Northdown House with regard to the earlier asset disposal list. In any event, it did not consider that the article's reference to the inclusion of The Coach House on the 2008 asset disposal list was significant in the context of the article as a whole.

#### Relevant Code Provisions

##### 6. Clause 1 (Accuracy)

i) The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.

ii) A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and — where appropriate — an apology published. In cases involving IPSO, due prominence should be as required by the regulator.

##### Clause 2 (Privacy)

- i) Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.
- ii) Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. Account will be taken of the complainant's own public disclosures of information.
- iii) It is unacceptable to photograph individuals, without their consent, in public or private places where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

### Findings of the Committee

7. The Committee considered that the newspaper had provided documents to support its position that it had taken care over the accuracy of the article, and while the complainant had contested the interpretation of these documents, he had not been able to demonstrate that they could not be relied upon. In any event, the Committee did not consider that any inaccuracy as to whether the property was included on an asset disposal list in 2008, or whether there was a signature petition against its alleged sale, would have represented a significant inaccuracy in the context of an article that reported that The Coach House was one of the properties on the 2016/17 asset disposal list. There was no breach of Clause 1 on either point.

8. While the Committee noted the complainant's position that the Council had "agreed to vary" the lease, he confirmed that it had not in fact been varied, even though he did not consider that it was necessary to do so. In reporting that the terms of the lease included having the museum open for 100 days a year, there was no breach of Clause 1.

9. The Committee did not consider that the inclusion of the complainant's name revealed any private information about him, nor did the details provided in the article represent an unjustified intrusion into his private life. There was no breach of Clause 2.

### Conclusions

10. The complaint was not upheld.

### Remedial Action Required

N/A

Date complaint received: 09/11/2016

Date decision issued: 31/03/2017

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