

Member Code of Conduct: Consideration of a Complaint

Complaint by: 8 complainants

Complaint against: Councillor G. Williams

Enclosures to this memo are: -

- (a) Original complaint dated 17th June 2020
- (b) Investigation report dated 28th October 2016
- (c) Ethics Committee minutes dated December 2016
- (d) Investigation report dated 8th March 2020
- (e) Ethics Committee minutes dated July 2020

Introduction

The Council's Complaints Protocol relates to how a complaint made against an elected member should be dealt with. As the Monitoring Officer following consultation with the Independent Person, I concluded that the complaints merited formal investigation. This report is the outcome of my investigation.

1. Summary of Complaint

- 1.1 The complaint has been made by eight separate individuals, but the content of each of the complaints is the same. The complainants consider that Councillor Williams is "a known racist, xenophobe, misogynist, and homophobe" and believe that it is unacceptable that he "still holds office".
- 1.2 As the monitoring officer I have determined that this matter should move to the Stage 2 of the complaints protocol and this approach has been agreed by the Independent Person appointed in this matter.

2. Background and detail regarding the Complaint

- 2.1 Copies of the original complaint are enclosed with this report as are the previous reports and Ethics Committee minutes that relate to matters that the complainants have raised but which have already been considered by the committee.

2.2 The Complainants allege that Councillor Williams has breached the following principles set out in the Member Code of Conduct (Code of Conduct). These are the following sections of paragraphs 2 and 3:

- 2.2.1 2. b. Integrity: I will not place myself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence me in the performance of my official duties.
- 2.2.2 2. c. Objectivity: I will make choices on merit, in carrying out public business, including when making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.
- 2.2.3 2. d. Accountability: I am accountable for my decisions and actions to the public and must submit myself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to my office.
- 2.2.4 2. e. Openness: I will be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions I take. I will give reasons for my decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest or the law clearly demands.
- 2.2.5 3. (f). Be accountable for my decisions and cooperate when scrutinised internally and externally, including by local residents
- 2.2.6 3. (h) Behave in accordance with all my legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within the Council's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Council's resources
- 2.2.7 3 (j.) Always treat people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with and those I work alongside.
- 2.2.8 3 (k) Provide leadership through behaving in accordance with these principles when championing the interests of the community with other organisations as well as within this Council.

2.3 In support of their allegations the complainants raise a number of matters that are considered individually below:-

- 2.3.1 The complainants consider that Councillor Williams does not adhere to the code around demonstrating Integrity as he is "clearly influenced by Donald Trump and US politics"

- 2.3.2 The complainants consider that Councillor Williams does not adhere to the code around Objectivity as “Due to William's bigotry I do not trust that he will make objective decisions based on merit as he has prejudiced views towards people of colour, immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, women, and the working class”
- 2.3.3 The complainants consider that Councillor Williams does not adhere to the code around Accountability as “ Williams has faced numerous calls to resign, petitions, complaints but still hold office despite what the public, the people he serves, think.”
- 2.3.4 The complainants consider that Councillor Williams does not adhere to the code around Openness as “after being asked questions on his work twitter account he responds with 'I'm not required to give you a response’”.
- 2.3.5 The complainants consider that Councillor Williams does not adhere to the code around behaving in accordance with all legal obligations as he does not comply with the Equality Act 2010 that “protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of their 'protected characteristics’”.
- 2.3.6 The complainants consider that Councillor Williams does not treat people with respect as “He has not treated the public with respect. It would be hard to find a defence against racist and homophobic views”
- 2.3.7 The complainants in their complaint give examples as to when they consider Councillor Williams has breached the Code as outlined above from his comments as follows.

“he does not "believe in multiculturalism”

- he claimed non-English speaking immigrants were “taking over” the country and should “go home”

- he said Enoch Powell, who incited violence against immigrants in his 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech, was right

- he then said "I stand by anything I say and I can defend myself on anything I say" which is NOT an apology, breaching 1(d) in the Council's Code of Ethics.

- he said 'that the UK will be "overrun with kebab shops" if Turkey joined the EU'

- he said two women kissing was 'pornography'

- he said the city should teach 'traditional family values' and 'not how to be promiscuous' in response to inclusive sex education

2.3.8 The complainants in their complaint give examples as to when they consider Councillor Williams has breached the Code as outlined above from his twitter comments as follows:

"He tweeted this about anti-racist protesters, in response to a question asking how people would deal with them: 'Glenn Williams @Glenn_Williams1

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Jun 6

WATER CANNONS!! Khan really is the worst Mayor, ever!' This features a photograph of Margaret Thatcher, referencing the horrendous treatment of striking miners in 1984.

He tweeted this about the refugee crisis which I stress is a crisis and not an invasion: 'Glenn Williams @Glenn_Williams1

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May 25

If only the press would spend as much time, indeed ANY time, reporting on the SCANDAL of illegal immigrants arriving on our shores in swarms!" " "

- 2.4 Councillor Williams chose not to respond to the complaints as he was concerned that they were vexatious and before agreeing to respond wished for confirmation of the complainant's names and addresses. Councillor Williams was not prepared to provide confirmation that he would not pass on these personal details to any third person and as a result I did not consider in the circumstances that the information should be disclosed.

3. Analysis of Complaint

- 3.1 The Code of Conduct only applies to councillors when they are acting in their capacity as an elected member or holding themselves out to be a councillor. In this case the behaviour took place in public either in a Council meeting or on a social media where Councillor Williams clearly refers to his role as a Councillor. His twitter description describes him as "Councillor for Bablake ward, Coventry. True Brexit. Working hard to protect our Greenbelt. Making Bablake great again. Coventry's Countryside Mayor".
- 3.2 In considering this complaint the concerns outlined by the complainants have been considered, Councillor Williams has had the opportunity to respond, I have reread the previous investigations and Ethics Committee minutes and viewed Councillor Williams twitter feed.
- 3.3 The complainants are concerned about a breach of the code as outlined in 2.3 above. There concerns stem from what they consider Councillor Williams believes making it inappropriate for him to be an elected member representing Coventry residents.
- 3.4 In support of these allegations the complainants give examples. The examples provided in paragraph 2.3. 1 – 2.3.7 either fall outside of the timescale for consideration as a complaint or have already been investigated and findings made. A copy of these investigations and the minutes of the ethics committee meetings that considered these investigations are attached
- 3.5 The matters raised in paragraph 2.3.8 are however new matters that have not previously been considered and it is these matters that are been considered now as part of this Stage 2 investigation.
- 3.6 Councillor Williams' use of social media can often be provocative and this can be challenging and cause offence to some residents. Councillor Williams' position is that his views are his own and if people do not like them they should not follow him on social media. This position is however difficult when you are in a position of public office and you should be held accountable and open to scrutiny. Councillor Williams also clearly uses social media as a tool to provide information about his work as a Councillor. The complaint alleges that Councillor Williams did not treat people with respect. "Respect" is not defined in the Council's Code of Conduct but must be viewed objectively. Account should be taken of the councillor's intent in their conduct and how their behaviour would

reasonably be perceived by the public and the individual. Conduct that is unreasonable, unwarranted and personalised, may be perceived to be disrespectful

- 3.7 Councillor Williams suggested the use of Water Cannons reacting to a discussion thread about protests that had taken place in London that day.

Glenn Williams

@Glenn_Williams1

WATER CANNONS!! Khan really is the worst Mayor, ever!

Water cannons are not used in the UK for a number of reasons including “ the possibility to cause primary, secondary and tertiary injuries, including musculoskeletal injuries such as spinal fracture, as well as other serious injuries such as concussion, eye injury and blunt trauma.” (Home Secretary’s oral statement on use of Water cannons – July 2015)

Councillor William’s comment received a response which is still live and is copied below. These are of course not Councillor William’s words but demonstrates the inflammatory response the such discourse can generate.

Replying to

@Glenn_Williams1

Water cannons are for wimps. Medium machine guns at least.

- 3.8 A few weeks before (25th May) he made his statement on Twitter about water cannons Councillor Williams was commenting about press coverage of an incident relating to a government advisor and tweeted:

Glenn Williams

@Glenn_Williams1

If only the press would spend as much time, indeed ANY time, reporting on the SCANDAL of illegal immigrants arriving on our shores in swarms!

When questioned on twitter about his comments on the 27th May Councillor Williams repeated the comment saying:

“Flattered you hang on my every word! I'm more concerned with the swarms of illegal immigrants that are being escorted to the Kent coast.”

3.9 Councillor Williams has not provided any reasons for his postings and it is regrettable that he made the decision not to respond to the complaints made. The use of the metaphor “swarm” is clearly in this context antagonistic and aims to dehumanise. It is likely he was making provocative comments to amplify his views however in his role as an elected member he should be more measured in his public pronouncements and should avoid divisive and inflammatory rhetoric. It is my view that Councillor William’s pattern and habit of making disrespectful and inflammatory use of social media undermines the role of elected members of the City Council. These pronouncements cross the boundary of acceptable respectful debate and are incendiary and offensive.

3.10 Having considered each of the alleged breaches of the Code there is evidence of a prime facie case that Councillor Williams has breached paragraph 3 (j) of the Code.

4. Recommended Action

It is therefore recommended that this matter be considered by the Ethics Committee to determine if there has been a breach as this investigation purports.

[Redacted signature]

.....Julie Newman, Monitoring Officer

Date: 11/09/20

Enclosure 1

The form **Councillor complaint** has been submitted.

The reference number is **FS218457546**.

This form was created by the E-Communications team. If you'd like to make any changes to this form, please email webeditors@coventry.gov.uk.

Please consider the complaint I have described in this form and in the evidence attached. I understand and accept that the details will normally be disclosed to the Member, particularly if the matter goes forward for investigation. I understand the complaint will be processed in accordance with the Council's Complaints Protocol. Please tick to confirm.: Yes

Date: 17/06/2020

Name of individual(s) : Glenn Williams

Name of their Authority(ies): Coventry City Council

Do you work for the Authority(ies) listed above? : No

Are you are a Member of the Authority(ies) listed above?: No

1. WHO is the complaint about? - if it is more than one person name them all. :
Councillor Glenn Williams

2. WHY are you complaining about them? - say what went on, how you felt about it and why you think it is unacceptable or inappropriate. : Glenn Williams is a known racist, xenophobe, misogynist, and homophobe. He does not represent me or most people in my ward. We are aware that petitions have been made against Cllr Williams before but during this time of racial tension and what is perhaps the largest civil rights movement in history, it is unacceptable that Cllr Williams still holds office.

In 2016 Glenn Williams expressed racist and xenophobic sentiments and was suspended from the Conservatives however was still allowed to stand as an Independent.

Furthermore in 2020 Glenn Williams expressed homophobic sentiments at a council meeting.

His twitter account, which is not a personal account, is filled with messages of hate and expressing sympathy with Donald Trump, a known racist and misogynist.

I feel disgraced that he still is allowed to represent me and my fellow Coventry residents whilst holding these views. It is unacceptable to be in a position of authority and care and hold such prejudiced and biased beliefs.

3. WHICH part of the Member's Code of Conduct are you alleging has been broken? Please be specific and if necessary, reference the paragraph. : '1(b)

Integrity: I will not place myself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence me in the performance of my official duties.' - Williams is clearly influenced by Donald Trump and US politics.

'1(c) Objectivity: I will make choices on merit, in carrying out public business, including when making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits' - Due to William's bigotry I do not trust that he will make objective decisions based on merit as he has prejudiced views towards people of colour, immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, women, and the working class.

'1(d) Accountability: I am accountable for my decisions and actions to the public and must submit myself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to my office.' Williams has faced numerous calls to resign, petitions, complaints but still hold office despite what the public, the people he serves, think.

'1(e) Openness: I will be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions I take. I will give reasons for my decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest or the law clearly demands.' - after being asked questions on his work twitter account he responds with 'I'm not required to give you a response.'

'3(f) [I will] (f) Be accountable for my decisions and cooperate when scrutinised internally and externally, including by local residents.' See above, 1(d).

As stated on the Coventry City Council Website, "The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of their 'protected characteristics', which are:

age
race
disability
sex
gender reassignment
sexual orientation
religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief)
pregnancy and maternity
marriage or civil partnership"

With this in mind, Williams has breached 3(h): 'Behave in accordance with all my legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within the Council's policies, protocols and

procedures, including on the use of the Council's resources.'

'3(j) Always treat people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with and those I work alongside' He has not treated the republic with respect. It would be hard to find a defence against racist and homophobic views.

4. WHAT did they do? If it relates to their language or behaviour write down what they actually said/did as you need to say what they did that was unacceptable to you : -he does not "believe in multiculturalism"

- he claimed non-English speaking immigrants were "taking over" the country and should "go home"

- he said Enoch Powell, who incited violence against immigrants in his 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech, was right

- he then said "I stand by anything I say and I can defend myself on anything I say" which is NOT an apology, breaching 1(d) in the Council's Code of Ethics.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-36905045>

- he said 'that the UK will be "overrun with kebab shops" if Turkey joined the EU'

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/tory-councillors-whatsapp-messages-said-8422031>

- he said two women kissing was 'pornography'

- he said the city should teach 'traditional family values' and 'not how to be promiscuous' in response to inclusive sex education

<https://attitude.co.uk/article/coventry-city-councillor-called-to-resign-after-suggesting-lgbtq-people-are-promiscuous/22647/>

He tweeted this about anti-racist protesters, in response to a question asking how people would deal with them: 'Glenn Williams

@Glenn_Williams1

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Jun 6

WATER CANNONS!! Khan really is the worst Mayor, ever!' This features a photograph of Margaret Thatcher, referencing the horrendous treatment of striking miners in 1984.

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If only the press would spend as much time, indeed ANY time, reporting on the SCANDAL of illegal immigrants arriving on our shores in swarms!

5. WHEN did this take place? Be specific on the dates and times otherwise it becomes very difficult to investigate (if that is what happens) : July 2016, January 2020, dates of tweets are included above.

6. WHERE? - be specific where it all took place - give the address and also the details of the venue - was it in a meeting room/corridor/in the street/in the pub etc. :

On Whatsapp, in council meetings, on his Twitter public platform.

7. WITNESS - who else was there and heard what went on - you need to name the persons who can potentially be asked questions about the incident : This was all public.

8. Evidence (if this applies). Attach to this form copies of any correspondence, documents, names and details of witnesses and any other evidence that you feel is relevant to your complaint. Please avoid sending us large amounts of background information that only relate indirectly to your complaint. :

Your ethnic origin: White

Enclosure B



Appendix 1 -
UPDATED.pdf

Enclosure C

<https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=161&MIId=11059&Ver=4>

Enclosure D

<https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s47628/04a%20-%20Appendix.pdf>

Enclosure E

<https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=161&MIId=12295&Ver=4>