

FACT FINDING SUMMARY

Complaint from a member of Quorn Parish Council that a Member of the Council failed to observe the Member Code of Conduct.

Complaint Ref: MC04 24/25

A complaint was submitted by a member of Quorn Parish Council ('the complainant') that a Member of the Council ('the subject Member') failed to observe the requirements of the Member Code of Conduct.

The complaint alleged that the subject Member failed to address an incident involving the use of racist language by a councillor outside of a formal council meeting. It was considered that a councillor used racist language contrary to the principles of respect, equality, and inclusion that the Parish upholds. Furthermore, that the subject Members failure to act undermined the integrity of the Council and gave the message that such behaviour was tolerated.

In considering this complaint the following sections of Quorn Parish Councils Code of Conduct are relevant:

General principles of member conduct

1.9 In undertaking your role, you should:

- *uphold high standards of conduct, show leadership at all times and not misuse your position when acting as a member.*

Bullying, harassment and discrimination

2.7.1 As a member:

2.7.3 I will promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person

Appendix A - The Seven Principles of Public Life

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

It was established that following a meeting of the Environment and Facilities Committee on 19 November 2024 the sound recording device had been accidentally left on and so there was a recording of a short informal discussion about other Parish Council business. Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 members of the public have the right to report on Parish Council and Committee meetings and as such the Parish Council places recordings of formal meetings on their website. The short recording had been placed on the Parish Council website by the

Parish Council manager but was subsequently removed as it did not relate to a formal meeting.

Helpfully as the recording of the informal discussion about other Parish Council business was still available this was supplied to the Monitoring Officer as part of factfinding. Having listened to the relevant section of the recording, the Monitoring Officer noted that a racist word was used by the councillor more than once and it was further noted that the councillor on at least one of these occasions corrected themselves to say the acceptable word. The racist word used is described in the Oxford English Dictionary as offensive and derogatory.

The factfinding established that the Parish Manager acted on the incident and the subject Member also acted on the incident by speaking directly to the Councillor in question about their contributions during the informal discussion. It is also noted that other Parish Councillors showed leadership and challenged the use of language. Councillors, as public representative, have a responsibility to uphold the values of respect and inclusion and abide to their Code of Conduct. In addition, the factfinding also established that the councillor in question was aware of their language, and it was noted that on at least one or more occasions corrected themselves during the discussion.

Having considered the complaint and the subject Member's response, the Monitoring Officer concluded that the complaint does not warrant further investigation or action.

Views of the Independent Person

An Independent Person, Mr Laurie Faulkner, was consulted and agreed with the Monitoring Officer that the complaint does not warrant any further action or investigation.

Karen Widdowson

Monitoring Officer

21.02.2025