

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: MC05 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 used racist language before, during or after a formal council meeting. It was considered that the language used was deeply offensive and discriminatory and contrary to the principles of respect, equality, and inclusion that the Parish upholds. Furthermore, use of such language damages the integrity of the Council and fosters an environment of intolerance and disrespect.

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

Respect

2.3 As a member:

2.3.1 I will treat others with respect.

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

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.

Having considered the complaint and the subject Member's response, the Monitoring Officer has concluded whilst the word used amounts to disrespect that it would not be an appropriate use of public funds to spend time or resources looking into the complaint any further. The subject Member was aware of the word they had used and on at least one or more occasions corrected themselves during the discussion. Furthermore, it was established during the factfinding of complaint (MC04) that the Parish Manager and Chairman acted on the incident and that other Parish Councillors showed leadership and challenged the use of such language.

Notwithstanding this it is recommended that action, other than investigation be taken in that equality and diversity training be organised for the subject Member within a reasonable time period.

Views of the Independent Person

An Independent Person, Mr Laurie Faulkner, was consulted and agreed with the Monitoring Officers findings and that a proportionate response to this complaint would be for the subject Member to be offered timely and appropriate training.

Karen Widdowson

Monitoring Officer

21.02.2025