

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT HEARINGS PANEL  
HELD AT NELSON TOWN HALL  
ON 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2020**

*PRESENT –*

*Mrs P. Higginbottom – Chairman (In the Chair)*

***Members of the Panel:***

*Councillor G. Adam  
Councillor Z. Ali  
Councillor B. Newman  
Councillor K. Turner  
Councillor G. Waugh*

***Subject Councillor:***

*Councillor A. R. Greaves*

***Officers present:***

<i>Philip Mousdale</i>	<i>Monitoring Officer</i>
<i>Howard Culshaw</i>	<i>Head of Legal Services</i>
<i>Lynne Rowland</i>	<i>Committee Administrator</i>



**1. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

The meeting stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

**2. INVESTIGATION REPORT**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report of an investigation into complaints made by Craig McBeth, Karl Hopkins, Rose Berry and Peter Tapper against Councillor A. R. Greaves.

It was reported that on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019 at the Council's Colne and District Committee meeting, there was an item of business to consider a planning application for extensions and alterations at the former St Bartholomew's School, Exchange Street, Colne.

The application had been submitted by the Madina Mosque and had been the subject of local controversy. An online petition with over 1300 signatures against the development had been submitted and there had been a demonstration in Colne town centre a few weeks previously.

Immediately following the meeting, the Monitoring Officer received a complaint from Craig McBeth which stated that Councillor Greaves had insulted a member of the public who was filming the meeting, in an unprovoked attack, by calling him a Nazi.

On 11<sup>th</sup> August 2019 a video clip of the incident was posted on Facebook by Mr McBeth. This was followed on 14<sup>th</sup> August by an article in the Lancashire Telegraph which referred to the complaint made and included a quote from Councillor Greaves in which the word was repeated.

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The day after the publication of the article, the Monitoring Officer received further complaints about the use of the word Nazi from Karl Hopkins, the member of public at which the comment was directed, Rose Berry and Peter Tapper.

Mr McBeth and Mr Hopkins also submitted complaints to the Standards Officer of the Liberal Democrat Party which had been forwarded on to the Council's Monitoring Officer on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

Following a discussion with the Council's Independent Person and in accordance with the Council protocol on complaints against councillors the Monitoring Officer wrote to Councillor Greaves with details of the complaints. Councillor Greaves and the complainants were informed that an investigation of the complaint would be carried out.

A summary of the Monitoring Officer's interviews with Councillor Greaves and the complainants was set out in the report, along with his findings, as follows -

- 1. There are two complaints here. The first is the calling of Karl Hopkins a Nazi at the meeting itself. The second is the repetition of that word and the further related comments which then appeared in the press article.*
- 2. The backdrop was the planning application and the controversy it generated. The antagonism between Councillor Greaves and Craig McBeth was also a feature. However this is not really the issue. Karl Hopkins was not involved in any of this.*
- 3. There is no doubt he was entitled to film the meeting. He did not speak or otherwise get involved in the meeting until the incident when he defended his right to do so.*
- 4. No doubt Councillor Greaves considered his wearing of the Tommy Robinson T shirt to be indicative of his political views and that the position where he was standing was inflammatory.*
- 5. In my view the word Nazi has an unequivocal meaning. It is likening someone to a member of the German political party led by Adolf Hitler which committed great atrocities. It is not a catch all to criticise opposing even extremist political views. It is unacceptable and disrespectful for a councillor to use it towards a member of the public in a meeting.*
- 6. The repeated use of the word in the comments to the reporter for the press article comes across as deliberate and unrepentant. In my view this also was unacceptable and disrespectful.*

The Council's protocol for recording of Council meetings was also submitted.

The Monitoring Officer concluded that there was sufficient evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and that the matter should be considered by a Hearings Panel of the Council.

The Panel carefully considered the investigation report of the Monitoring Officer and viewed two video clips that had been posted on Youtube. The first clip called Colne Mosque Planning meeting Part 1 was viewed from 22.30 minutes. The second, called Mosque Planning meeting 2 was approximately 25 minutes long and was watched in full.

Councillor Greaves presented his defence in relation to the specific complaint. He also provided information on incidents prior to and following the meeting. There were no witnesses called to give evidence.

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On the evidence provided in the Monitoring Officer's report, the Youtube clips and Councillor Greaves' representations at the meeting, the Panel confirmed the findings set out in the report; concluded that this amounted to a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors; and imposed the following sanction –

**SANCTION**

That the findings in respect of Councillor Greaves' conduct be published.

**3. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCILLORS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF BREACHES OF THE CODE**

A copy of the Council's arrangements for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct were noted. Also attached was the Code dealing with the conduct expected of members and voting co-opted members of Pendle Borough Council when acting in that capacity.

CHAIRMAN \_\_\_\_\_