

## **Cheltenham Borough Council Standards Committee – Censure**

### **Complaints against Councillor Dennis Parsons**

The Standards Committee met today to discuss breaches of the Code of Conduct by Councillor Dennis Parsons arising from his comments at a meeting of the Council on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The meeting was especially called to deal with this very serious matter.

The Standards Committee expressed its outrage at the use of racist language by Councillor Parsons and was shocked by his suggestion that the killer of George Floyd was a victim. The Committee notes with sorrow the enormous damage caused to the Council by Councillor Parsons during the discussion of a motion that demonstrated the Council's unanimous support for Black Lives Matter and our total opposition to any kind of racism. The Standards Committee shared the upset expressed by so many members of the public in Cheltenham and wished to make it clear that Councillor Parsons spoke only for himself and not for any other member of the Council. The Committee agreed that it was not acceptable for community leaders to stay silent on matters related to racial equality and that it is incumbent upon us to demonstrate by actions and words our opposition to any kind of racism.

Having formally submitted requests for the availability of stronger sanctions, the Committee was disappointed not to be able to explore firmer sanctions for this serious breach. Members were of the view that they would, as a minimum, have wished to have imposed a period of suspension from the Council.

The Standards Committee is charged with promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct within the Council. In the absence of any stronger sanction, the Committee trusts that Councillor Parsons will treat this censure and the requirement for intensive training with the seriousness which it deserves.

Councillor Max Wilkinson

Chair of Standards Committee

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

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**COUNCILLOR DENNIS PARSONS**



[cllr.dennis.parsons@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.dennis.parsons@cheltenham.gov.uk) 07540 398914

25 June 2020

Mr. Mayor

At the Cheltenham Borough Council meeting on 15 June, I made comments that were completely inappropriate and should not have been said. I am therefore writing to offer my sincere and unreserved apologies to the Council (Councillors & Officers) and to the public for this gross error of judgement on my part.

I am very, very sorry for the offence and distress which I have caused and, having seriously reflected on this, can confidently say that it will never be repeated.

As an elected member of the Council, I know that, on this occasion, I have fallen short of the high standards of conduct expected of a Councillor and for that I am truly sorry and wish to place my apology on record through this letter.

I particularly acknowledge with deep regret the detrimental impact that my huge misjudgement has had on the Council's reputation at a time when so much good work is being done.

I am copying to the Leader and to the Chief Executive Officer.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Dennis Parsons

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