

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 15th 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

3rd July 2020