

Cllr Wendy Flynn's Speech –Annual Council Meeting

During the full council meeting of the 15th June, WE voted on a motion. Proposed by Cllr Clucas and seconded by Cllr. Willingham, it said "Cheltenham Borough Council puts on record its support for Black Lives Matter and its TOTAL opposition to ANY kind of racism." It goes on to say "Cheltenham Borough Council believes in action, not just fine words." TOTAL OPPOSITION! BELIEVES IN ACTION! We have an opportunity before us right now to put in action, not just fine words, our total opposition to any kind of racism. To not do so makes a mockery of that motion, of the democratic process, of the trust that our communities put in us. If we betray that trust we don't deserve to be councillors.

During that meeting and speaking on the Black Lives Matter motion, the then Cllr Parsons made comments that were incredibly offensive and many councillors expressed their outrage and made complaints against Cllr Parsons that resulted in a Standards Board hearing. The current Deputy Mayor was not one of those who expressed her outrage. In fact, she directed her anger at other Lib Dem councillors for calling out Parsons and accused them of being on a witch-hunt. She sent an email to all Lib Dem Councillors reiterating her feelings, an email which later found itself in the public domain and the subject of a Gloucestershire Live article.

However it was meant, Parsons speech had a racist impact. Cllr Holliday's defence of Parsons had a racist impact. The email sent by the Deputy Mayor, Sandra Holliday, and published in the Echo had a racist impact. Voting for Cllr Holiday to be deputy mayor again would be to ignore this and the harm done. Voting for Cllr Holliday to be deputy mayor again will have a racist impact. Total Opposition, any kind of racism, believes in action...that is what we voted for.

The views expressed in Cllr Holliday's email sought to excuse and even deny past racism, echoed the opinions of those who defend racism and failed to consider the hurt racism has caused and continues to cause. A mayor or deputy mayor who holds these views cannot represent the whole town and our diverse communities.