



**St. Helens Council**

TO: Standards Committee

**Democratic Services**

Town Hall  
Victoria Square  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA10 1HP

Contact: Joanne Griffiths MBE  
Tel: (01744) 673219

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Our Ref: JG/  
Your Ref:

12 December 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Standards Committee – 12 December 2017**

Please find attached the Independent Persons's report and comments.

Yours faithfully,

**Joanne L Griffiths**

Joanne Griffiths  
Democratic Services Manager

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**ST. HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report into Complaints Alleging Breach of Council's Code of Conduct  
made against Cllr Gomez-Aspron**

**Report and Comments of Independent Person**

**December 2017**

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Peter Hughes Monitoring Officer  
St Helens Council Town Hall  
St Helens  
WA10 1HP

Dear Mr Hughes

RE: Alleged breaches of Council Code of Conduct made against Councillor Gomez-Aspron

On the 28th November I received a copy of the Report on the Investigation into Complaints alleging Breaches of the Councils Code of Conduct made against Councillor Gomez-Aspron. There was additional information supplied on numerous dates after this and an additional complaint added to the report on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

Due to the number of complaints, my report is written in bullet points

#### Complaint Number 1

- Publication of a picture of a Newton Resident parked outside a Primary School on Councillors Council Twitter account – This issue had been resolved, the Monitoring Officer had spoken with Councillor and an agreement to remove the picture was reached. For an unknown reason Councillor reposted a redacted version which caused the situation to reignite. The Monitoring Officer had informed the resident that the picture had been removed and as a result of the picture being reposted was not only a waste of the Monitoring Officers time but a breach of the Councils Code of Conduct Paragraph 1.2.
- Inappropriate Comments on Newtonian Network Facebook Page (Councillors Personal Facebook page) – A list of individuals names with one singled out with references to an ASBO and Harassment Order and a reference to an element of the Newton Community – Breach of treating others with respect section 1.2
- Disturbance at residents address – Police Matter.

#### Complaint Number 2

- Relates to a complaint about Councillor publicly humiliating a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, alleging that they are infatuated with him and reposting screenshots of the 3<sup>rd</sup> party comments on different forums which they are not part of. – Posted to Newtonian Network – Breach of section 1.1

Complaint Number 3

- Inappropriate & Inflammatory remarks re Florida Farm – This was a controversial planning application that had created a significant amount of local debate. Councillor, even if he is a supporter of the development, should understand that there are residents who are not. All though pleased that the development got the go ahead he should of treated the objections of residents with the diplomacy they deserved. Breach section 1.1 & 1.2
- Inappropriate Remark on Council Twitter “I’ve probably been with a few dogs in my time” – A hideous comment – Breach of section 1.1 and 1.2.

Complaint Number 4

- Inappropriate Remark on Council Twitter “I’ve probably been with a few dogs in my time” – As above – Breach of section 1.1 and 1.2.

Complaint Number 5

- Tweet regarding Granada Reports Interview using Council Twitter account – Use of emoji to imply something – Breach of code section 1.1 & 1.2.

Complaint Number 6

- Posting of a personal picture of a resident with a derogatory comment - Unable to comment, the complainant was sent this by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, Councillor says that his original post has been altered but only provides a picture created after his interview with the DMO.

Complaint Number 7

- Inappropriate Comments posted on Newtonian Facebook – I understand that there are Police Information Notices issued to Councillor and the Complainant . The notices are issued for a reason, I do not know the reason for issue but feel that it is inappropriate for Councillor to discuss the situation on a Public Forum. The Police Information Notice, as I understand, can form part of future legal proceeding. Breach section 1.1

Complaint Number 8

- Inappropriate and patronising comments on Newtonian Network re raising the flag at Earlestown Town Hall – From the context of the thread provided I found Councillor to be in breach of the code Section 1.2

Complaint Number 9

- Abusive and mocking comments, taunts and goading re RAFFD – The use of the emoji in a derogatory manner - Breach of code section 1.1 and 1.2
- Name calling a Councillor – Councillor denies that this happened.
- Facebook Post with spelling and grammar errors – breach section 1.1 and 1.2
- Comment on Council Twitter – Calling members the “usual idiots” – Breach section 1.1 & 1.2
- Simpsons Profile picture on Council Twitter account – Breach section 1.2

Complaint 10

- Comments on Personal Twitter account re Parkside Public Meeting – breach section 1.1
- Picture posted on Twitter & Newtonian Network – I do not feel that there is a breach, the complainant was at the meeting and states that they are not members of PAG.

Complaint 11

- Inappropriate comments on personal twitter account, email response to complaint using council email account – Breach of code section 1.1 and 1.2

Complaint 12

- Inappropriate language on personal Facebook account posted to a public forum – Breach of code section 1.1 and 1.2.
- Comment regarding Haydock Industrial Estate and residents not wanting jobs – Breach of Section 1.1 & 1.2

Complaint 13

- Inappropriate, malicious and defamatory comments on Newtonian Network – Breach of code 1.1

There are numerous breaches, I believe, of the Code of Conduct namely section 1,1.1 and 1.2. Elected Members should also follow the Seven Principles of Public Life and I feel that councillor is failing under Accountability and Leadership.

The tone, language and use of childish emoji's in Councillors Tweets, posts and emails are unprofessional. They fail to meet the standards set out in Council code of conduct therefore he fails the residents he represents and St Helens Council.

I believe that the complaints have been investigated appropriately and the Complaints Procedure followed.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Kelly

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