

NDC2/18

**Complainant: Thomas Tunney on behalf of Newbury Constituency Labour Parties
Executive Committee**

Subject Member: Dominic Boeck

Cllr Boeck has expressed opinions regarding transgender people, in this case embodied by Eddie Izzard, whose profile has increased by election to the Labour Party NEC. These opinions have been expressed publicly on Cllr Boeck's social media account (Twitter) and refer to a generalised opinion of a transgender individual's merits, contribution and ability, as well as endorsing the characterisation of transgender people as mentally ill.

I have provided screenshots with the offending posts highlighted.

The first (Marked as A) offers endorsement of the view that Mr Izzard's capability as a politician is directly related to his chosen gender identity. The retweet offers no other context than two photographs of Mr Izzard. No comment is made as to his actions, policies, political record, beliefs or opinions.

This is an attack based purely on the way Mr Izzard defines himself and infers a connection between objective "weakness" and Mr Izzard's gender identity and sends an appalling message to transgender residents and staff, stating that transgender individuals are less capable or "weaker" than those who do not identify as such. It is my view that Mr Izzard should in fact be celebrated as an exemplar, regardless of political orientation.

The second post in the same screenshot adds a rejoinder to the comment by "@timothywookey" that Mr Izzard would be rejected by voters on account of his status as a "cross dressing transvestite" [sic] - the rejoinder offered by Cllr Boeck is that "And he's not even funny!". Clearly the tone of the original post is sarcastic and identifies the reason for Mr Izzard's (speculative) failure to connect with "working class blue collar workers in the north" partly on his gender identity. Cllr Boeck clearly conveys his support for the underlying point by using the rejoinder - he is augmenting the post rather than taking issue with it. The irony is not lost that Cllr Boeck's directly preceding post decries antisemitism and discrimination against Jewish people based on publicly-available posts on social media.

The second screenshot (Marked as B) retweets an opinion offered by the "BrexitTory_" account that clearly equates transgender identity with mental disorder in the context of a news story about an individual that was asked to leave a lecture hall in the US for claiming there were only two genders. Cllr Boeck does not offer any advisory text on his Twitter profile that "retweets do not equal endorsement", so I must conclude that he supports the view that transgender people are mentally ill, contrary to medical evidence, common sense and basic human empathy.

I cannot understand how a major employer can be seen to be taking their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 seriously when elected members of the Council publicly express endorsement for opinions that are deliberately designed to undermine transgender people and paint them as mentally ill, worthy of ridicule simply by dint of their appearance, or otherwise less capable than those who are not.

Clearly, this behaviour also falls short of the members Code of Conduct in Part 13 of the Council Constitution that draws attention to the Nolan principle of Respect for others, namely "Councillors should promote equality by not discriminating against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability."

Further, Appendix H clearly states that "Councillors and Co-Opted Members must not engage in bullying or intimidating behaviour or behaviour which could be regarded as bullying or intimidation."