

# Complaint about an elected Councillor's Conduct Form

## Your details

### 1. Please provide us with your name and contact details

|                    |        |
|--------------------|--------|
| <b>Title:</b>      | Mr     |
| <b>First Name:</b> | Tony   |
| <b>Last Name:</b>  | Renouf |

### 2. Please tell us which complainant type best describes you:

- Member of the public
- An elected or co-opted member of an authority
- Member of Parliament
- Local Authority monitoring officer
- Other council officer or authority employee
- Other (please describe)

If 'other' please state:

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### 3. Please provide us with the name(s) of the Councillor(s) you believe have breached the Code of Conduct and the name of their authority:

| Title | First name | Last name | Council or authority name |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Mr    | James      | Spackman  | Woolhampon Parish Council |

### 4. Please explain in detail what the Councillor has done that you believe breaches the Code of Conduct. You also need to state which areas of the Code of Conduct you believe the Councillor has breached. It is important that you attach any supporting information to this form. Use a separate sheet if there is insufficient space.

Cllr James Spackman was co-opted onto the Parish Council in September 2014 following his clearly expressed interest coupled with regular attendance at previous Parish Council meetings over an 18 month period. He was subsequently elected in May 2015.

Since his election, he has been involved in a number of incidents all of which, without exception, have proved to be based on what I and other Parish Councillors believe to be lies or misinformation and as such has breached the Code of Conduct and brought the Parish Council into disrepute. Examples cited are as follows:

1. June 2015. (email copies marked 1 + PC Minutes of Part2 August meeting)



In an email and verbal exchange between Cllr Spackman and Cllr Wright (Vice Chairman) on an unrelated issue, Cllr Spackman alleged that in a conversation with Cllr Lovell, which took place at the Douai Fun Day, Cllr Lovell had made a slanderous statement about criminal behaviour in The Angel Inn, Woolhampton. Cllr Spackman subsequently discussed this with the then landlord of The Angel Inn maintaining that he had actually had the conversation with Cllr Lovell during the Parish Council meeting in June.

In July, the landlord of The Angel attended the meeting to ask for Council's response to the alleged remarks made by Cllr Lovell in the Parish Council meeting which he considered could be slanderous. It was agreed that the Council would investigate the allegation which clearly had potentially serious implications for its reputation.

#### 2. August 2015 – April 2016 (Minutes + email marked 2)

A Part 2 meeting was held in August to consider (1) the allegation that a slanderous statement had been made in the Parish Council meeting and (2) a Special Resolution to remove Cllr Spackman as the Council's representative on the AWE Liaison Committee.

The allegation was dismissed by all the members present and the Clerk. Cllr Spackman withdrew as the Council's representative before a vote was taken.

A request by Cllr Spackman that the minutes of the Part 2 meeting should include additional statements which had not been made at the meeting was rejected unanimously by members who then formally adopted the original minute. Asked for a response Cllr Spackman stated (January 2016) that he would respond following the outcome of a complaint to the Monitoring Officer he had made.

At a later meeting in April 2016 Cllr Spackman denied that he said he had made a complaint but stated that the minute was incorrect and claimed that he had said that he was considering making a complaint.

#### 3. December 2015/January 2016 (email copies + extracts from Woolhampton PC and Midgham PC Minutes + Planning letter marked 3)

The issue of the inadequacy of the Woolhampton Sewage Treatment Works is long running. As the problem is likely to be exacerbated by any new development both in the village and neighbouring parishes the Parish Council wrote to Gary Lugg, Head of Planning, copied to Midgham PC and Brimpton PC drawing his, and their, attention to the Council's concerns.

Cllr Spackman alleged that at a meeting of Midgham Parish Council he attended the Chairman Cllr Lombardo referred to the letter sent to the Head of Planning as '*silly*'. In response to my enquiry asking him to elaborate Cllr Lombardo denied having said that.

Subsequently asked for an explanation Cllr Spackman did not respond.

#### 4. January 2016(emails +Minutes marked 4)

The issue of the lack of a footpath up Woolhampton Hill, for which an s106 allocation had been made from the Douai School development, was taken up with WBDC. At a meeting with Highways it was admitted by them that the survey of the viability of the footpath could not be undertaken until 2017 at the earliest due to lack of resources. Reluctantly it was agreed at the November meeting that the item should be removed as a 'Standard Agenda Item' until we were informed that a survey was to be started.

Despite being absent from the November meeting Cllr Spackman issued misleading information on his Facebook stating that '*the Parish Council had abandoned its efforts for a*



*footpath on Woolhampton Hill*'. This was not corrected despite a request for him to do so.

5. March 2016 (Report marked 5)

Following his attendance at the District Parish Conference Cllr Spackman wrote to Martin Dunscombe, WBDC Communications Manager to complain about his treatment at the Conference. Cllr Spackman claimed that his name had been removed from the attendance list for me to attend in his place. I considered this so serious that I contacted Mr Dunscombe for an explanation. It became clear that Cllr Spackman's allegations were a complete fabrication. My report to the Parish Council was based on the email exchange.

6. June 2016 (emails + Minutes marked 6)

In his emails to Mr Dunscombe Cllr Spackman stated that there were '*serious worries about the Chairperson of our parish*' and that he (Mr Dunscombe) could '*rest assured that these and other concerns about Cllr Renouf's conduct will be discussed in greater length*'

On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016 Cllr Spackman in an email to me copied to all members and the Clerk stated '*That you actively disrupted the meeting in these ways from your position of Chair to prevent any other outstanding examples of your misconduct from being raised is symptomatic of, and intimately connected to your failure over the course of many years to reach any sort of satisfactory resolution on behalf of residents relating to sewage problems in Station Road etc.*'

I considered that the comments made to Mr Dunscombe and the allegation to members were serious enough for me to offer my resignation in the event that members believed that I was guilty of misconduct.

The Vice-chairman Cllr Elliot Wright proposed that the matter should be resolved by Votes of Confidence both in the Chairman and Cllr Spackman. In the discussions, Cllr Spackman declined to offer evidence to support his claims despite a number of requests and as a consequence all other members present voted unanimously in favour of the Chairman.

On the basis of both the report on the email exchange between Mr Dunscombe and Cllr Spackman and in the absence of supporting evidence a Vote of No Confidence in Cllr Spackman was unanimously passed.

It was agreed that Cllr Spackman should not represent the Parish Council in any forum, represent the Council at meetings of neighbouring Parish Councils or lead on a possible Neighbourhood Plan for Woolhampton.

7. October 2016 (emails + minutes marked 7)

In October 2016 Cllr Spackman emailed me, copied to all members and the Clerk, asking me to confirm the resignation of Cllr Eve Burke who had been co-opted in April 2016. His assumption was allegedly based on there being no published information on her on the website which, he advised, was mandatory.

The website is managed by the Clerk, Mr Steve Brady, to whom the question should have been addressed. It should be noted that the Clerk, at the September meeting, had provided an update to the Council on the website in which he had acknowledged that the site was not up to date. However, following the receipt of further training which he had requested from the website designer, the website would be updated and comply with the requirements of the Transparency Code.

The devious manner in which the question was put was clearly aimed at and failed to treat with respect the Clerk who has worked for the Parish Council for 20 years and is an exemplary Officer. Cllr Burke was also caused some distress which should be perceived as



bullying.

8. January 2017 (emails marked 8)

In September 2016, a communication purporting to be from the Woolhampton Neighbourhood Watch Group was forwarded to Members by Cllr Spackman. The Group stated that *'Woolhampton continues to experience higher levels and more serious crimes compared to neighbouring parishes'*.

Because of its seriousness, Cllr Spackman was asked for the name of the originator. He refused to give the contact at the time of the email and subsequently at the January 2017 meeting when he was pressed by members for the information. He claimed that he was unable to share the information due to *'data protection'*.

Mrs Angela Money, Neighbourhood Watch Area Co-ordinator has since confirmed that the Woolhampton Neighbourhood Watch Group does not exist (telephone conversation Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February).

The incidents listed above show a pattern of behaviour which illustrates failure to treat fellow councillors with any respect coupled with a desire to undermine the reputation of the Chair.

This complaint is made with the unanimous support of all the Members who feel that a line needs to be drawn.

In my personal opinion, Cllr Spackman's behaviour shows him to be unfit to hold public office.

