

## Statement from St Cleer Parish Council

27 February 2019

### With regard to the complaints by Mr Johnson

As Parish Councillors we are all bound by a Code of Conduct, sometimes referred to colloquially as the Nolan Principles for Public Life and they speak to honesty, transparency and service. We are bound to be civil, respectful and to represent the Community we serve with integrity and honesty. We are however entitled to publish our own opinions, as long as they are set out respectfully.

There is a definition which says 'Integrity is doing the right thing even when nobody is looking'. The 13 Councillors who serve on St Cleer Parish Council are all motivated to do the right thing. We are not perfect, but we are motivated to support St Cleer to the best of our collective responsibility. We will and do make mistakes, but that's how you learn. No politician in this country is required to be an expert but they are expected to represent the views of their community and to simply 'do the next right thing'.

Being a councillor to us means making a decision for the greater good not to build your own self-importance or ego. There was and is need for St Cleer to modernise our Parish Council. This is fact and well accepted among the Council. Change will only come with buy in, agreement and time.

St Cleer Parish Council have made many changes over the last year, some are visible others are in the background but all are equally as important in the grand scheme of things.

To be entirely factual, there was one amongst us that challenged the status quo by asking good questions and bringing forth good ideas, this would have in itself driven change. In our opinion that person could not accept or work in a team with diverse opinions, did not accept challenge and has ultimately focussed on his own subjective view of 'being right' rather than doing the right thing, in the right way.

This person fundamentally and clearly, doesn't seem to (or more importantly didn't want to) understand the concept of democracy or corporate decision making. Hence a misplaced concentration on always 'being right' whilst trying to pick off individual Parish Councillors 'to blame' for whatever decision that this person disagreed with. This has manifested in an ongoing public commentary of personal comments which are denigrating. This is not the behaviour that is expected from an Officer or a Gentleman.

Agree or disagree with Brexit, there has been a democratic decision made and 'we are where we are'. The government of the day is liable collectively for the situation and the way to change it is to change the corporate decision by reasoned debate and persuasion. Two votes of 'no confidence' have come and gone and the matter remains. We don't wish to comment on Brexit, but to just show Politics simply is, well Politics.

Fake news is a term that we are all becoming far more familiar with. This is misinformation seemingly repeated often enough to become 'believed'. It seems to us, that St Cleer has its very own manufacturer of fake news, and it is time to challenge it. Head on.

This person doesn't live in St Cleer, is not an elector, doesn't contribute financially to our parish, yet continues to seek to undermine, harass and bully the Parish Council using a range of tactics the Americans are becoming very familiar with.

Of late we are told he has published information to the effect that one of us is likely to be imprisoned or fined £5,000 for being corrupt, that he has referred this matter to the Police and will take this to the Ombudsman. Well we are aware that the Police are not interested in the matter and have yet to hear from the Ombudsman who has been mentioned against St Cleer a number of times.

This relates to his latest complaint to Comwall which was not proven or 'found'.

The truth is that several of us have been exonerated of any breaches of the Code, we are of no interest to the Police (even in relation to Drink Driving) yet verbose publication indicates Machiavellian collusion with Cornwall Council which is downright insulting to all involved.

It is this very code and system that independently judged **this individual** a bully. This individual then chose to consider it 'nugatory' when it was applied to him, with sanctions and censure and he has subsequently stated he left 'public life' to avoid these very constraints. Perhaps because it found against him and that does not fit his view of the world.

This most recent complaint, like all of his others, has cost the Parish time and money, that is **our money out of our taxes**. It's hard to put an accurate value on the time and effort it has taken to deal with these complaints. Many of which are simply vexatious. Legal definition 'denoting an action or the bringer of an action that is brought without sufficient grounds for winning, purely to cause annoyance to the defendant'.

No doubt there will be dissection on Facebook around the following, so be aware they are estimates

An educated assessment indicates that each complaint costs about £1,250 in terms of Cornwall Council, St Cleer Parish Council and the councillor involved. This would include the monitoring officer and his team's time, the time of the independent person assigned to the complaint and Councillors time spent talking to and preparing the facts for the monitoring officer.

A complaint doesn't just use Councillor time it also eats into time of the Clerk (that's the Clerk whose salary you pay for). Please be aware that when we are dealing with these vexatious complaints, we are not able to do what we want to and should be doing which is managing the Parish effectively.

So, to quantify that we have had 5 complaints raised by the same individual over the last 10 months or so, that is an estimated cost of £6,250. These complaints were all unfounded and were appealed or to use the correct term subject to a request for a review, again another estimated cost of £500 each £2,500 in total. All were rejected by the monitoring officer

There was however the one proved complaint, this was against this vexatious individual. It had an estimated cost of around £7,500 - a large sum but hours of work and personal time went into this not just by your Council but also Cornwall Council and Counsel. Again, a review was asked for and again this was refused another £500.

That's around **£16,750** of your money wasted collectively by Cornwall Council and St Cleer Parish Council. Approximately **£12** per St Cleer household.

**Remember he doesn't pay anything to St Cleer. He does not live in the Parish.**

This doesn't take into account any of the time to manage his vexatious demands when he was a councillor or as a meeting attender since his resignation. If anyone is wasting money in St Cleer it is not the Parish Council.

This is the work of a conspiracy theorist who clearly has, in our collective personal opinion, nothing better to do with his time other than try and create moral panics where there are none, make up stories to validate his own skewed world view and sense of self-importance, make grandiose and verbose statements and entertain some local residents with what I understand the police consider 'satire' and the local gossip refers to it as 'car crash TV'

Well from our perspective he is creating a costly disruption, no more and no less.

This costly disruption is fuelled by his social media following. The 170 or so who follow his rants on Facebook, many of whom have no connection to St Cleer

The Parish is determined to continue to do the 'next right thing' whatever comments are made in the Parish's Echo-chamber.

We wish to make it very clear Parishes should be questioned and held to account by electors of St Cleer, if we've made a mistake, we will admit it, we have nothing to hide.

If you want to know what's going on at Parish come along to the meetings or just ask us.

Get involved it's your parish.

All of us Councillors want to, and are working for, the same thing: a community that is well maintained, has appropriate amenities for all and is safe to live in.

Description	Date	Finding	Estimated Costs
Clerk against Councillor Kevin Johnson	April 2018	Breach was evidenced; Councillor censured	*£7500
Councillor Johnson appeals finding	June 2018	Appeal rejected	£500
Councillor Kevin Johnson against Mrs Harbord	June 2018	Breach not evidenced	£1250
Councillor Johnson appeals finding	June 2018	Appeal rejected	£500
Kevin Johnson against Mrs Harbord	September 2018	Breach not evidenced	£1250
Kevin Johnson appeals finding	September 2018	Appeal rejected	£500
Kevin Johnson against Mrs Watson	September 2018	Breach not evidenced	£1250
Kevin Johnson appeals finding	September 2018	Appeal rejected	£500
Kevin Johnson against Mr Webb	September 2018	Breach not evidenced	£1250
Kevin Johnson appeals finding	September 2018	Appeal rejected	£500
Kevin Johnson against Mr Webb	February 2019	Breach not evidenced	£1250
Kevin Johnson appeals finding	February 2019	Appeal rejected	£500
<b>Total</b>			<b>£16,750</b>

\* This cost included: -

- 2 police investigations (one which led to words of advice being given)
- Instruction of a firm of Solicitors and opinion of Counsel
- A substantiated internal grievance process
- Significant support from Cornwall's Association of Local Council's
- Support from the Society of Local Council Clerks
- Extensive use of the Parish's Insurance Policy's recourse to Radar Station's legal advice
- Extensive Clerk and HR Committee Councillor time
- Significant time of the Office of Cornwall's Monitoring Officer