

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5**

**CONDUCT COMMITTEE**

**Date**            **26 JUNE 2013**

**Title**            **Member Conduct Complaint – Councillor Keppel-Spoor**

**1. PURPOSE/SUMMARY**

To consider a complaint under the member code of Conduct against Councillor Keppel-Spoor of Benwick Parish Council.

**2. KEY ISSUES**

- A complaint has been raised by Mrs Gobie Treasurer of Benwick in Bloom about the Conduct of Councillor Kepple-Spoor.
- Councillor Kepple-Spoor has been offered the opportunity to provide an initial written response to the complaint; this is attached.
- The Conduct Committee is asked to consider the complaint and determine if it discloses a likely breach of the member code of conduct.

**3. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. Members consider the complaint and response and determine the initial consideration of the complaint.

<b>Wards Affected</b>	All
<b>Forward Plan Reference No.</b> (if applicable)	NA
<b>Portfolio Holder(s)</b>	
<b>Report Originator</b>	Ian Hunt, Chief Solicitor
<b>Contact Officer(s)</b>	Alan Pain, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer Ian Hunt, Chief Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer
<b>Background Paper(s)</b>	

## **1. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION**

On the 28<sup>th</sup> March a complaint was raised by Mrs Gobie Treasurer of the Benwick in Bloom Committee about the comments made by Councillor Keppel-Spoor at a parish Council meeting. A copy of the complaint is attached.

Councillor Keppel-Spoor was given the opportunity to respond to the complaint and a copy of this response is attached.

## **2. CONSIDERATIONS**

Members must consider the complaint against the member code of conduct.

Members must consider whether or not there is a reasonable prospect of the complaint being proven based on the information held. In considering this members are to be aware of the fact that should an investigation occur further evidence or detail can be sought.

Members are advised that where a complaint contains a number of elements they may chose to consider each element separately or take the whole complaint together.

Where members consider that there is a reasonable prospect that a breach of the code of conduct has occurred they should give consideration as to whether or not there should be an investigation of the complaint. Members should consider the following points in determining whether an investigation should occur:

- Has the Complaint already been investigated, or is it already the subject of investigation?
- Is the Complaint more appropriately dealt with through another regulatory channel?
- Is the complaint about something which happened so long ago that there would be little benefit in taking action now?
- Is the complaint too trivial to warrant further action?
- Does the compliant appear to be malicious or simply tit for tat?

Where members consider that an investigation is appropriate the Monitoring Officer will be asked to make suitable arrangements for such an investigation. Members are asked to give any particular comments on the scope or direction of the investigation.

If members do not consider that there is a potential breach of the code of conduct or that there is no reasonable prospect of any breach being disclosed or that the complaint does not merit further investigation then no further action is taken in respect of the complaint save for notifying the member and the complainant.

Mrs Valerie Gobie  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

28<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Mr Ian Hunt,  
Monitoring Officer

Dear Mr Hunt,

I am Valerie Gobie a member of The Benwick in Bloom group. We are a collective of people in the village of Benwick who have set up the group to bring colour and vibrancy to the village, and also to enter the Anglia in Bloom yearly competition.

We work together with Street Pride and the Benwick Parish Council. At the Parish Council meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2013 we were updating the council on our progress to date and plans for our next steps.

We were discussing the painting of the flower tubs and with reference to the one next to the village sign that we have been prevented from painting as Counsellor Keppel-Spoor had put a notice on it saying "do not paint this pot", She in turn passed a comment saying she did not like the fact that "newcomers come into the village and start taking over". (This was recorded on tape by the Clerk Mrs K. J Pool taking the minutes).

As a group we would like to lodge a formal complaint against Counsellor Keppel-Spoor on the following grounds:-

- . The members of the group have been residents of the village for an average of five year's.
- . The comment was derogatory to any progress by any group within the village.
- . We feel the counsellor has overstepped the line as a Cllr and her support to maintain the village and work with groups in the village as she stated in her election campaign leaflet.

As a group we request an apology from counsellor Keppel-Spoor at the next Parish Council meeting and in future hope she works with us in the interest of the village.

Regards

[REDACTED]

Treasurer  
Benwick in Bloom

L. P. Keppel-Spoor  
Hope Cottage  
1 Lilyholt Road  
Benwick March Cambs.  
PE15 0XQ  
Tel 01354 677494  
[linda.keppel-spoor@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:linda.keppel-spoor@tiscali.co.uk)

14<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Mr Ian Hunt  
Chief Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Fenland District Council  
Fenland Hall  
County Road  
March  
Cambs  
PE15 8NQ

Dear Mr Hunt

With reference to your letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> April 2013 regarding a complaint received about my conduct at a Parish Council Meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

I refute the allegation, as a newcomer myself of 28 years standing, not having been born in Benwick, it is not an expression I use.

At the meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> March, Benwick in bloom presented photo's of the tub they had painted next to the war memorial without consulting the council and again stated they were taking over the tubs. I said I had been looking after the tubs for four or five years and that I wasn't prepared to stop doing it and that I had previously told them they couldn't take them over as I wished to carry on with what I had started. I did not at any time mention "newcomers". I did object to painting the tub white, we had wooden tubs because that is what we wanted "Wood". Councillor's supported my continuing maintaining these tubs. Wooden tubs require the occasional wood preservative application, blending with the natural environment. Once painted they require on-going maintenance and are now not in keeping with the area's in which we had them placed.

The ladies from Benwick in Bloom were asked to consult with council before undertaking anything in the village but have ignored this and acted on their own.

When I was first made aware by my Chairman that a complaint had been received via email to him, I suggested he directed them to yourself. I also emailed the clerk, as our meetings are recorded I requested she keep the recording in case you need it. (email enclosed)

I enclose a copy of my Election leaflet that says "I have belonged to or supported most of the groups in the village". "That I wanted to continue with the roadside planting project I initiated".

I did put a notice on the tub which reads "do not paint this tub" at the time we did not know who was painting them.

As to a resolution, I would suggest that the ladies from Benwick in Bloom consult Council as they were asked initially and wait to receive a written reply before undertaking any work in the village this will avoid any confusion. I don't feel that I should apologise for something I have not said.

Yours Sincerely

  
L P Keppel-Spoor

Encs.

## **Linda Keppel-Spoor**

---

**From:** Lyn Keppel-Spoor <linda.keppel-spoor@btinternet.com>  
**Sent:** 20 March 2013 21:56  
**To:** 'Tony Richardson'; Kristine Poole  
**Subject:** RE: Parish council meeting 5th March  
  
**Importance:** High

Hi Tony / Kris

I did not say anything like that, this is something they have accused people in the village of thinking, they said it to my neighbour about two months ago.

Kris please be sure to keep the tape from last month's meeting I want to listen to it. I know I reiterated that when they said originally they wanted to take over the tubs I had told then I didn't want them to, as I wished to continue doing them.

I have never said what they are accusing me of. Has this gone to the standards committee? These are false allegations.

Regards Lyn

**From:** Tony Richardson [mailto:~~anthony.p.richardson@btinternet.com~~]  
**Sent:** 20 March 2013 14:57  
**To:** linda.keppel-spoor@btinternet.com  
**Cc:** Kris Poole  
**Subject:** Fw: Parish council meeting 5th March

Lyn

For your information, I received the following from Benwick in Bloom and following our complaints procedure, passed it to Kris to action accordingly.

As yet I am not sure as to whether it has already been passed to the Standards Committee.

Best regards

Tony R

**From:** Benwick In Bloom Group  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 06, 2013 12:30 PM  
**To:** anthony.p.richardson@btinternet.com  
**Subject:** Parish council meeting 5th March

Hi Tony,

With reference to last nights meeting, we the "Benwick in Bloom" group are a little concerned regarding a remark made by Councillor Keppel Spoor suggesting that she didnt like the fact that new comers come into the village and start taking over!!! This is not what we are about, we all moved to Benwick because this is where we want to be, and our aim is to put Benwick into Bloom, refresh our

village and do what we can to improve it and hopefully adding to a greater community spirit.

We feel that this comment is offensive and is certainly not very welcoming. It is our wish to work with the community for the community and especially the Parish Council, and therefore feel that an apology for such remarks should be made.

We are awaiting confirmation from the probation service Alan Moore and his Pay Back Team to come along on the 12th March to tidy up the footpath edges  
Some time ago I emailed the parish council regarding the revamp of the Bus Shelter, but have as yet had no reply, perhaps you can look into this for us please.

Jill

No virus found in this message.

Checked by AVG - [www.avg.com](http://www.avg.com)

Version: 2013.0.2904 / Virus Database: 2641/6191 - Release Date: 03/20/13

## Benwick Parish Council Election 2011

Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup>

# LYN KEPPEL-SPOOR

Hi, I am Lyn Keppel-Spoor and I am seeking re-election on the Parish Council, many of you will know me already, having actively served on the Parish Council as a Councillor for the past 8 years, with an additional 3 ½ years prior to that as Clerk to the Council. This gives me a firm understanding of Council Policy and Procedure.

I am the only Councillor standing for re-election who has had 100% attendance at meetings in the past four years, in addition to which I have attended many outside meetings on behalf of Council. I secured funding for the village hall windows and the planting within the village. I instigated and secured the paint and with other volunteers painted the footbridges.

I have taken the time to get involved with and support all aspects of village life since moving here 26 years ago, I have at one time or another belonged to or supported most of the organisations in the village. I am currently a Trustee of Turf Fen Charity and also one of the members of the Benwick Residents Association who put on the annual Dickensian Market. Seeing the community come together at events like this is brilliant.

Benwick is like Marmite you either love it or hate it. I love the village and the people but realise there are still some facilities that could be of benefit to everyone if added to the village:

If re-elected I would like to be able to work towards:-

- Increasing public open space, to improve the social side of life. It would provide somewhere to hold events, fundraise, and generally meet and socialise with other members of the community
- Continuing to work towards a 7½ tonne weight restriction (with access only) to protect our roads and homes from the ill effects of constant vibration. (Benwick is unique having been built on a peat rodden with moving silt subsoil our roads and houses were never designed for the weight or number of vehicles now passing through our village).
- Improving public transport links to allow opportunities for work especially for the younger members of our village.
- Continuing with the roadside planting project I initiated and carry on working alongside the community payback teams who have assisted in tidying areas of our village.
- Further tidying the areas near the river.
- Preserving the older properties in order to keep some of the original character.

I am always approachable and welcome anyone to come to me with any problems they have, that the council can tackle. I will always work to improve the village for its residents and ensure that your council tax is never wasted.

Printed and Published by Lyn Keppel-Spoor  
Hope Cottage, 1 Lilyholt Road, Benwick, March, Cambs PE15 0XQ  
01354 677494 linda.keppel-spoor@tiscali.co.uk

