



Councillor for Hale Barns & Timperley South Ward
Leader of the Trafford Conservative Group

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Date 18th October 2024

Leader of Trafford Council

Dear Councillor Ross

I am writing on behalf of my group, and the residents we represent, to express our disgust at the comments made by Councillor Thomas during the debate on my group's motion held in full council on October 16, 2024. As you know, Councillor Thomas referred to the residents which my group and I are honoured to represent as living in 'Ivory Towers', and made the bald assertion that they could well afford the loss of the Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA).

Putting aside my party's position on the WFA - namely that its removal is unnecessary, pernicious and counterproductive - and the fact that the Labour Group's position is apparently to support its removal, the remarks made by Councillor Thomas are simply beyond the pale. Robust political debate is par for the course - and indeed what our residents rightly expect from the vibrant democratic institution we both serve. However Councillor Thomas's smear was factually wrong, and an example of extreme bigotry and prejudice which is unbecoming of a Trafford Councillor. His behaviour is also at odds with the overall decency which - though we disagree on much - I have come to respect in the Labour Group.

I have had countless pieces of correspondence in recent days from residents in Hale Barns and Timperley South, Bowdon, and Manor wards (as well as from wards not represented by my group across the borough) who regard Councillor Thomas's bigotry as inflammatory, and contrary to the values of inclusivity and respect that our code of ethics strives to uphold.

Our council and its representatives must foster an environment where all residents feel valued and heard, regardless of their financial circumstances or the area of the borough in which they live. The comments made have not only caused distress among community members but have also cast a shadow over the council's mission statement and commitment to "Building a Winning Culture."

To date, Councillor Thomas has shamefully refused to offer an apology for his remarks.

In view of this I am asking, as leader of the Labour Group, that you confirm what action you will take to discipline this Councillor. At the very least, residents my group represents expect an oral apology to be delivered in full council. Were the shoe on the other foot, I have no doubt that your group would expect me to suspend or remove the whip from a Conservative member - I therefore request robust action to be taken forthwith, commensurate with the hurt and distress to which Councillor Thomas's overt prejudice to my residents has given rise.

I can confirm that I have already submitted a complaint to the legal officer, and I look forward to your prompt response. My group and I will not accept bigotry and prejudice being levelled at our hardworking residents - and I anticipate your swift assistance in setting this matter straight.

Sincerely,

Cllr Nathan Evans
Leader of the Trafford Conservative Group