

Tory councillor suspended for posting a Facebook picture which 'compared Muslim children in burkas to bin bags'

- **Enfield councillor Chris Joannides suspended by Conservatives in Enfield**
- **Asked friends to send him football scores during meetings and complained about missing his favourite TV shows**

By Hugo



Suspended: Chris Joannides has been accused of Islamophobia after a controversial Facebook post

A local councillor has been suspended for posting a comment on Facebook comparing Muslim children wearing burkas to bin bags.

Chris Joannides also messaged friends during meetings with his constituents asking for updates on football scores and complaining about missing his favourite television programmes.

The Conservative councillor for Enfield, in north London, has denied being Islamophobic and defended his comments as 'blokeish banter'.

Mr Joannides posted a photo showing a woman and child dressed in burkas standing next to two bin bags.

He wrote underneath: 'I saw her standing there and I told her she had three beautiful children. She didn't have to get all p***ed off and threaten me. It was an honest mistake!'

In a Facebook message sent to friends during meetings with local residents, he complained about having to spend time with constituents instead of watching football on the TV.

'Please inbox the latest scores,' he wrote to one friend. 'I'll be surfing on fb during the resident's meeting.'

Another post read: 'So far I've missed the football and Dallas listening to Labour councillors rant on tonight and losing the will to live.'

Last month, he wrote: 'It's Friday night and I've just finished attending a resident's meeting... I expect to be rewarded at the ballot box for my service to the community which is eating my social life.'

Mr Joannides, who is of Greek-Cypriot heritage, insisted he took his duties seriously despite the 'blokeish banter' written on his Facebook page.

Chris Joannides shared

photo.

I saw her standing there and I told her she had three beautiful children. She didn't have to get all [redacted] off and threaten me. It was an honest mistake!



Post: Enfield councillor Mr Joannides put this photo and caption on Facebook, later describing them as 'banter'

'I am not, never have been and never will be Islamophobic,' he said this week. 'I am from an ethnic minority myself and I fully appreciate the prejudices people can get exposed to.'

'The comments I made were against Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism including the demonisation of women, something the whole world is concerned about in the light of terrorist attacks on the West since September 11.'

'I always do my best for all residents of Enfield irrespective of their political leanings, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or cultural background.'

The relevant posts have all now been deleted from Facebook, but Mr Joannides could face disciplinary action from the council after officials were shown a print-out of the comments.

He has also been suspended from the local Conservative group, while a complaint about the posts was made to the Metropolitan Police.

Michael Lavender, Tory leader on Enfield council, said: 'As soon as I was made aware of the complaint I closely examined the materials.'

'Following an immediate discussion between members of the executive, the decision was made to suspend the whip from Chris Joannides.'

'At the first available meeting of the Conservative group upon receipt of the letter, the group re-affirmed the decision to suspend the councillor.'

'A special meeting of the group will be called where the member will be invited to attend to make representations for his case.'

Local resident Samantha Cox said: 'His comments might seem harmless, but they are incredibly offensive.'

'He is comparing bin bags to Muslim children and that cannot be right, "blokeish banter" or not.'