



## Paul Athans

Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Hazel Grove

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Chief Executive  
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3 July 2024

Dear Mr Cullen,

My I start by congratulating you on your new role. Unfortunately, my first letter to you is not one I ever thought I would need to write.

I write regarding the use of derogatory comments by one of the Stockport Metropolitan Borough Councillors, namely Cllr. Lisa Smart.

Cllr. Smart was caught on a doorbell camera by a resident of Hazel Grove Constituency, making a derogatory 'joke' about Liverpool to a Liverpoolian voter whilst out canvassing. The full details of the incident can be found in numerous news outlet reports, including:

- [The Daily Mail](#)<sup>1</sup>
- [The Daily Telegraph](#)<sup>2</sup>
- [The Manchester Evening News](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [The Liverpool Echo](#)<sup>4</sup>
- [BBC News](#)<sup>5</sup>
- [Stockport Nub News](#)<sup>6</sup>

I have been contacted by outraged residents who, like me, feel that Cllr. Smart's comments were totally unacceptable. One Romiley resident described her comments as "grossly offensive".

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13568491/Fury-Liberal-Democrat-hopeful-MP-caught-doorbell-camera-making-anti-Liverpool-slur-canvassing.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/06/26/lib-dem-jokes-with-liverpudlian-about-nicking-stuff/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/lib-dems-hazel-grove-candidate-29427176>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/candidate-accused-making-derogatory-jokes-29426402>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd11xprd6ryo?xtor=AL-73-%5Bpartner%5D-%5BBBC+England%5D-%5Bheadline%5D-%5Bnews%5D-%5Bbizdev%5D->

<sup>6</sup> <https://stockport.nub.news/news/general-election-2024/lib-dems-hazel-grove-candidate-offers-fulsome-apology-after-anti-liverpool-comments-233517>

These comments came to light at the same time as a leaflet was being distributed by Cllr. Smart attacking me for being from Liverpool. Not only is this hypocritical (her website suggests she is from London<sup>7</sup>) but it also demonstrates a very negative and nasty pattern of behaviour.

It is public knowledge that you are from Liverpool, and I am sure there are many employees of SMBC that are also from Liverpool. I am concerned how Cllr. Smart expects to have a working relationship with the Chief Executive of the Council when she holds such anti-Liverpool views.

I believe that Cllr. Smart's actions are a clear breach of the SMBC Code of Conduct for Councillors, specifically CP1 – 2.8 Respect for Others, and formally request that this incident is investigated and / or referred to the Standards Committee.

Just over eight years ago, Jo Cox MP was tragically murdered. The Jo Cox Foundation produced the Civility Pledge (Use a civil and constructive tone in debate. Act with integrity, honesty and compassion. Behave respectfully towards others, including those I disagree with). It is a shame that Cllr. Smart does not extend that civility towards me or the people of Liverpool.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Athans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Paul Athans**

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<sup>7</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20110929165109/http://lisasmart.org.uk/>