



COMPLAINT FORM : CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

A. Your details

1. Please provide us with your name and contact details. Anonymous complaints will only be considered if there is independent evidence to substantiate the complaint.

Title:	Mr
First name:	Adrian
Last name:	McNeece
Address:	[REDACTED]
Contact telephone:	
Email address:	
Signature:	
Date of complaint:	2 November 2015

Your address and contact details will not usually be released unless necessary or to deal with your complaint.

The following people may see this form:

- Monitoring Officer of the Council
- Standards Committee members
- Council's Independent Person(s)
- The subject member(s)
- the Parish Clerk (if applicable)

If you have serious concerns about your name and a summary, or details of your complaint being released, please complete **Section C** of this Form and also discuss your reasons or concerns with the Council's Monitoring Officer.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Please tell us which complainant type best describes you:

- A member of the public
- An elected or co-opted Member of the Council
- An independent member of a Standards Committee
- A Member of Parliament
- A Monitoring Officer
- Other council employee, contractor or agent of the Council
- Other ()

2. Equality Monitoring Form - please fill in the attached form.

B. Making your complaint

3. Please provide us with the name of the Member(s) you believe have breached the Council's Code of Conduct:

Title	First name	Last name
Cllr	James	Cartwright

4. Please explain in this section (or on separate sheet(s)) what the Member is alleged to have done that you believe breaches the Code of Conduct. If you are complaining about more than one Member you should clearly explain what each individual person has done, with dates / witnesses to substantiate the alleged breach.

It is also important that you provide all the evidence you wish to have taken into account. For example:

- You should be specific, wherever possible, about exactly what you are alleging the Member said or did. For instance, instead of writing that the Member insulted you, you should state what it was they said or did to insult you.
- You should provide the dates of the alleged incidents wherever possible. If you cannot provide exact dates it is important to give a general timeframe.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- You should confirm whether there are any witnesses to the alleged conduct and provide their names and contact details if possible.
- You should provide any relevant background information or other relevant documentary evidence to support your allegation(s).

Please provide us with the details of your complaint. Continue on a separate sheet if there is not enough space on this form.

I am complaining about Cllr James Cartwright's comments on his Twitter account page made at 15.19hrs on 29 October 2015. Specifically, he published a tweet stating;

"@davebromage @ScotRamsay @StortSkeptic @galdam 27% no religion. #thick and #illiterate"

His comments were inappropriate to members of the public, and he has treated non-religious members of the public with a cavalier lack of respect. His comments suggesting that people of no religion are **thick** and **illiterate** could not be designed to be more offensive or discriminating. He has shocked and offended myself and others who hold secular or atheist views.

His comments came less than 24 hours after the council defeated a motion to end the saying of prayers (Christian) by the council on council premises. Given that the council defeated the motion by 42 votes to 5, prompting my resignation as a councillor. I view Cllr Cartwright's comments to be provocative, offensive and disrespectful. His comments were made at a very sensitive time, following a debate on the exclusion of religious observance at East Herts District council.

I was offended, and other residents of East Herts were offended. I would be happy to provide names, and contact details if necessary. However I trust my complaint is sufficient to warrant an investigation and review of Cllr Cartwright's errant conduct

I refer to The Code of Conduct ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B';

Page 1 – Introductory declaration subscribed to by all members

As a member or co-opted member of East Hertfordshire District Council I have a responsibility to represent the community and work constructively with our staff and partner organisations to secure better social, economic and environmental outcomes for all.

In accordance with the Localism Act provisions, when acting in this capacity I am committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieving best value for our residents and maintain public confidence in this authority.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ACCOUNTABILITY: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Page 3 - Dealing with representations or enquiries from residents, members of our communities and visitors fairly, appropriately and impartially.

Page 4 – Behaving in accordance with all our legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within this authority’s policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the authorities resources.

Page 4 - Always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with and those I work alongside.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

C. Confidentiality of complainant and the complaint details

Only complete this next section if you are requesting that your identity is kept confidential

5. In the interests of fairness and in compliance with the rules of natural justice, we believe Members who are complained about have a right to know who has made the complaint and the substance of the allegation(s) made against him / her. We are, therefore, unlikely to withhold your personal details or the details of your complaint unless you have good reasons to believe that you have justifiable grounds, for example:
- to believe you may be victimised or harassed by the Member(s) against whom you are submitting a written complaint (or by a person associated with the same); or
 - may receive less favourable treatment from the Council because of the seniority of the Member against whom you are submitting a written complaint in terms of any existing Council service provision or any tender / contract that you may have or are about to submit to the Council.

Please note that requests for confidentiality or requests for suppression of the personal and complaint details will not automatically be granted. The Assessment Sub-Committee will consider the request alongside the substance of your complaint and the Monitoring Officer will then contact you with the decision. If your request for confidentiality is not granted, we will usually allow you the opportunity, if you so wish, of withdrawing your complaint.

However, it is important to understand that - in exceptional circumstances, where the matter complained about is very serious - we may proceed with an investigation (or other action) and may have no choice but to disclose your personal and complaint details, because of the allegation(s) made, even if you have expressly asked us not to.

Please provide us with details of why you believe we should withhold your name and/or the details of your complaint:

(Continue on separate sheet(s), as necessary)

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

D. Remedy sought

7. Please indicate the remedy or remedies you are looking for or hoping to achieve by submitting this complaint.

1. A personal letter of apology from Cllr Cartwright to myself for the offence he has caused.
2. A public apology by Cllr Cartwright at the next full meeting of the council.
3. A press release apology by the council to local media organisations.
4. A suitable sanction by the council against Cllr Cartwright for his behaviour, as a demonstration that his disrespectful conduct has consequences, and that he must be seen to be accountable for his conduct.

(Continue on separate sheet(s), as necessary)

E. Additional information

8. Complaints must be submitted in writing. This includes fax and electronic submissions. Frivolous, vexatious and politically motivated tit-for-tat complaints are likely to be rejected.
9. In line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, we can make reasonable adjustments to assist you if you have a disability that prevents you from making your complaint in writing. We can also help if English is not your first language.
10. If you need any support in completing this form, please contact the Monitoring Officer as soon as possible.

Monitoring Officer Contact details:

The Monitoring Officer – Simon Drinkwater
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Monitoring Form – Local Assessments of Complaints Standards Committee - Assessment Sub Committee

Working towards equal opportunities

East Hertfordshire District Council is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in both employment and service provision. We seek to ensure that no person receives less favorable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, or ethnic origins, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, religion, trade union involvement or political belief or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese or other ethnic group
White British	White and Black	Indian	Caribbean	Chinese
White Irish	Caribbean	Pakistani	African	Other
Any other White background	White and Black African	Bangladeshi	Any other Black background	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed background	Any other Asian background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Categories used are those utilised by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

Do you have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on your ability that you wish to declare under the Disability Discrimination Act?

Yes No

Adrian McNeece

@AdrianMcNeece

Workplace Strategist, Interiors Photographer,
Artist & Still an Atheist

Hertford, UK

867 FOLLOWING

1,008 FOLLOWERS

- Tweets
- Media
- Favourites

in reply to @james_cllr



Adrian McNeece @AdrianMcNeece 41s

@james_cllr Dismayed James's
assertion that non Christians or
atheists are thick/illiterate
@davebromage @ScotRamsay
@StortSkeptic @galdam

Reply Retweet Favorite

You Retweeted



Cllr J Cartwright @james_cllr 7h

@davebromage @ScotRamsay
@StortSkeptic @galdam 27% no
religion. #thick and #illiterate

Reply Retweet 1 Favorite



Edit profile

Adrian McNeece

@AdrianMcNeece

Workplace Strategist, Interiors Photographer,
Artist & Still an Atheist

📍 Hertford, UK

867 FOLLOWING

1,008 FOLLOWERS

- Tweets
- Media
- Favourites

↻ You Retweeted



Scot Ramsay @ScotRamsay

41m

The view of one of my local
Councillors who claims he is a
Christian.

CLlr J Cartwright @james_cllr

@davebromage @ScotRamsay
@StortSkeptic @galdam 27% no
religion. #thick and #illiterate



Home



Notifications



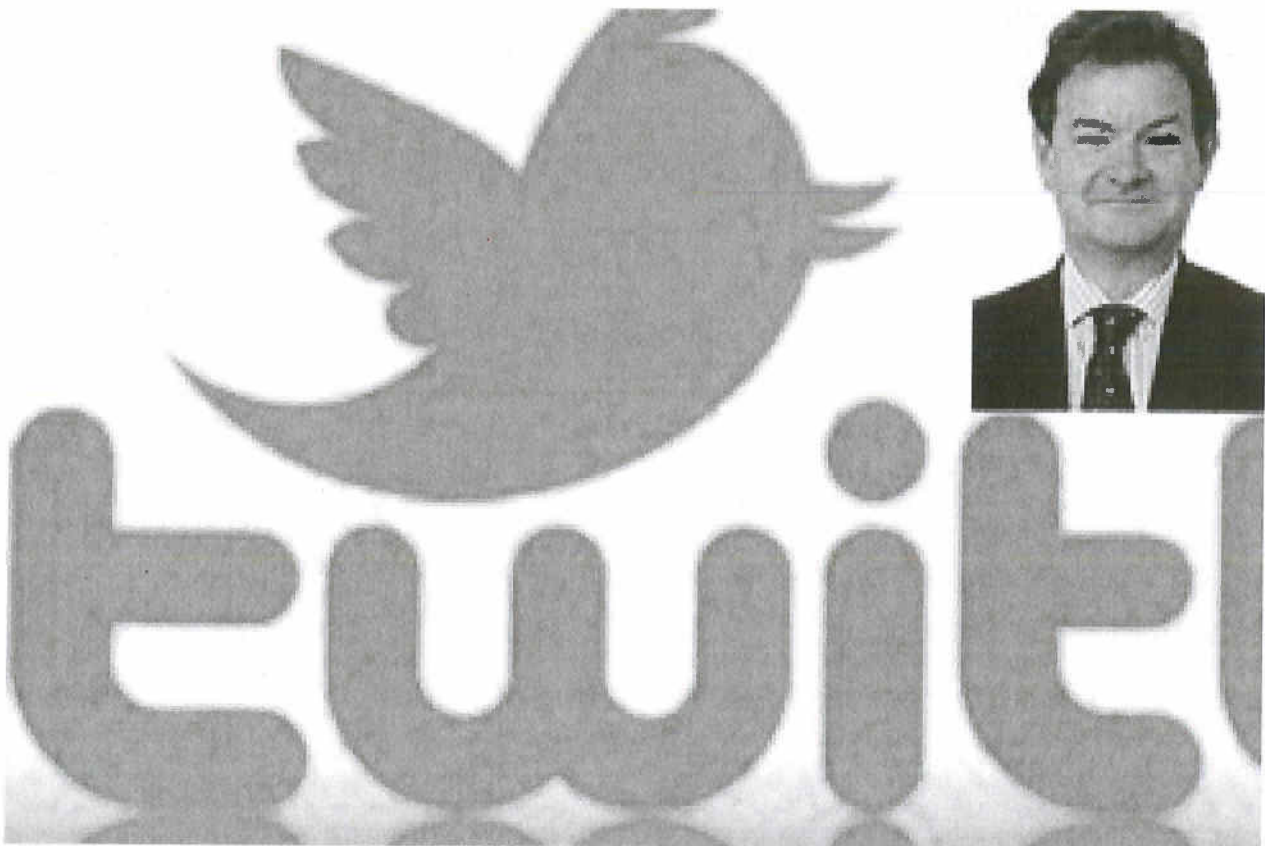
Messages




Me



East Herts councillor James Cartwright labels Twitter opponents 'thick', 'illiterate' and 'pathetic'



(/photos/article/28106759)

 Cllr James Cartwright was embroiled in a spat on Twitter over a failed motion to remove prayers from before the start of EHDC meetings

🕒 Yesterday at 9:17 PM

💬 2 comments

By Herts & Essex Observer

A complaint has been made alleging that a member of East Herts District Council breached the authority's code of conduct for councillors by calling non-religious opponents on Twitter "thick", "illiterate" and "pathetic".

Cllr James Cartwright, the Conservative member for Puckeridge and chairman of Standon Parish Council, is the subject of an official protest by a former fellow Tory who put forward a motion to have prayers removed from before the start of EHDC's seven full meetings a year.



Get found with Google advertising.

Start now


With £75 credit.


Google AdWords


Following a 2-5 defeat of the motion by councillors in a secret ballot last Wednesday evening, atheist Adrian Mc Eece, the member for Hertford Heath who proposed the motion, resigned from the council and then from the Conservative Party.


A heated debate about the decision erupted on Twitter, during which Cllr Cartwright, who had previously tweeted how he respected the views of others, appeared to lose respect for one or two electors.

In his complaint to EHDC about Cllr Cartwright, Mr Mc Eece references the following series of tweets:

 **Dave Bromage** 29 ct
 @davebromage
 james cllr Scot amsay StortSkeptic galdam 6
 Christian, 7 non-tian. basic maths. You're not in charge of
 council budgets, right

 **Cllr J Cartwright** Follow
 @james_cllr
 davebromage Scot amsay StortSkeptic galdam 27
 no religion. thick and illiterate
 :19 PM - 29 ct 2015
 2 1

 **Cllr J Cartwright** 29 ct
 @james_cllr
 davebromage Scot amsay StortSkeptic galdam 27 no
 religion. thick and illiterate

 **Cllr J Cartwright** Follow
 @james_cllr



Cllr J Cartwright
james cllr

1 ov

davebromage Scot amsay StortSkeptic galdam
apologies if my tweet re thick and illiterate offended any
atheists - it was directed 1/2

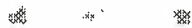


Cllr J Cartwright
james cllr

Follow

davebromage Scot amsay StortSkeptic galdam at
only one and taken (conveniently) out of conte t - many of my
friends are atheists 2/2

10:00 PM - 1 ov 2015



Dave Bromage
davebromage

1 ov

james cllr Scot amsay StortSkeptic galdam Just me
then Even though you are claiming Christian prayers are
inconclusive of all faiths



Scot Ramsay
Scot amsay

Follow

Entirely untrue james cllr You called me thick, reiterated
that you meant me, and subse uently called davebromage
thuck and illiterate

10:02 PM - 1 ov 2015



Scot Ramsay
Scot amsay

1 ov

Entirely untrue james cllr You called me thick, reiterated that
you meant me, and subse uently called davebromage thuck
and illiterate



Cllr J Cartwright
james cllr

Follow

Scot amsay no - meant just for you - apologies to anyone
else to whom it was not intended and mis uoted out of conte t.

10:06 PM - 1 ov 2015



Mr Mc eece said: "His (Cllr Cartwright's) comments were inappropriate to members of the public, and he has treated non-religious members of the public with a cavalier lack of respect.

"His comments suggesting that people of no religion are thick and illiterate could not be designed to be more offensive or discriminating. He has shocked and offended myself and others who hold secular or atheist views.

" view Cllr Cartwright's comments to be provocative, offensive and disrespectful. His comments were made at a very sensitive time, following a debate on the e clusion of religious observance at East Herts District Council."

He cited accountability of members, including a clause which members must abide by, which is to be "always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public engage with and those work alongside".

Mr Mc eece asks for a personal apology from him, a public apology at the ne t full council meeting , a press release apology by the council to local media and a "suitable sanction" against Cllr Cartwright so he is "seen to be accountable for his conduct".

ike Mr Mc eece, Cllr Cartwright, 51, was first elected to the district council in May. A Church of England Christian, he works as director of operations at a Sainte nion Catholic School in ondon.

An East Herts District Council spokeswoman said Mr Mc eece's complaint about Cllr Cartwright would be considered in the ne t few weeks by a standards sub-committee, made up of three East Herts councillors from the standards committee and an independent person. The sub-committee will decide whether an investigation by the full standards committee is appropriate.

 **Have your say**

 **Report**

 **Related Articles**

East Herts council prayers: Member who quit after failed motion now resigns from Conservative Party (<http://m.hertsandessexobserver.co.uk/East-Herts-Prayers-Member-left-council-failed/story-28079521-detail/story.html>)

East Herts councillor resigns as vote to remove prayers before meetings lost in landslide (<http://m.hertsandessexobserver.co.uk/East-Herts-councillor-resigns-vote-remove-prayers/story-28077804-detail/story.html>)

East Herts District Council to vote on scrapping Christian prayers from meetings (<http://m.hertsandessexobserver.co.uk/East-Herts-District-Council-set-vote-motion/story-28070901-detail/story.html>)

**ium=bytaboola&taboola_utm_content=grid-2x2-mobile:grid-2x2-mobile:)
ium=bytaboola&taboola_utm_content=grid-2x2-mobile:grid-2x2-mobile:)
From the Web**

(<http://lotto.co.uk/national-lottery-changes> utm source taboola utm medium referral)
ew otto Changes That Affect Your Chances nfographic
otto

(<http://lotto.co.uk/national-lottery-changes> utm source taboola utm medium referral)
(<http://www.moneysupermarket.com/c/videos/whats-the-best-type-of-car-fuel/008578/> / utm source taboola utm medium referral)
hats The est Type f Car uel
MoneySuperMarket

(<http://www.moneysupermarket.com/c/videos/whats-the-best-type-of-car-fuel/008578/> / utm source taboola utm medium referral)
(<http://www.theguardian.com/heineken-rugby/2015/aug/26/meet-the-heineken-legends-jonah-lomu> utm source taboola utm medium referral)
ill Carling n Jonah omu: "He Destroyed Me"
The uardian for Heineken

(<http://www.theguardian.com/heineken-rugby/2015/aug/26/meet-the-heineken-legends-jonah-lomu> utm source taboola utm medium referral)
(<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/health/medical/tattoo-with-a-hidden-message-highlights-the-invisible-battle-faced-by-people-with-depression/ar-AAAdmHliAA51YEsrcrefrssCDTA17>)
This oman's Tattoo Has A Hidden Message And t s oing iral

 MS



PatrickNewman

4/11/15 :4 AM

Bigotry and intolerance is clearly not the preserve of non-Christian religions. It is the natural order of things in a world of science that there is no god but religion is a convenient crutch for many people and they should be allowed their illusion if they find it satisfying.



konnichiwa

4/11/15 :1 AM

To be frank Cllr Cartwright more fool you for engaging those idiots on twitter but if you must watch for Atheist Humanist stock phrases like "tyranny of the majority" as that means -- WE won't be calling it tyranny if WE ever become the majority we'll call it DEMOCRACY until then...booo we're the minority shouting "tyranny of the majority" until WE get what WE want...



News



Sport



What's On



Directory (businesses)



Tory councillor stands down in 'prayers before meetings' row

■ "It's time the council took a good look outside of its bubble of privilege": See Letters, p10&11

Apology demanded over comments on Twitter

By Tom Durham
tom.durham@hertsandessexnews.co.uk

A 'TORY' member of East Herts District Council has quit after his motion for prayers to be dropped from before the start of meetings of the full council was defeated by a landslide.

The day after last Wednesday's 42-5 vote of refusal in a secret ballot of councillors at the authority's chamber in Hertford, atheist Adrian McNeece also resigned from the Conservative Party.

He has since lodged a formal complaint against a former Conservative colleague, who supported the status quo, over comments on Twitter.

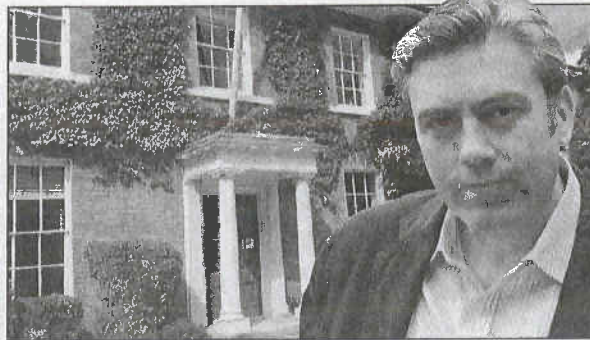
Mr McNeece, who was elected as member for Hertford Heath in May, had hoped to abolish the decades-long practice of inviting a Christian priest to conduct prayers before meetings. He said that he had felt "excluded" during prayers held at his first meeting of the full council.

No part

His motion read: "The meetings of East Herts District Council should be conducted in a manner equally welcoming to all attendees, regardless of their individual religious beliefs or lack of belief. Religious worship should therefore play no part in the formal or informal business of council meetings, on council premises."

The vote focused on three lines of text which appear on every full council meeting agenda, which read: "Prayers will be said before the meeting commences. Those members who do not wish to participate will be invited to enter the chamber at their conclusion."

Mr McNeece described his shock at the strength of opposition among fellow councillors, citing a Herts & Essex Observer Twitter poll which showed 92 per cent of 347 voters supported his stance. Three of EHDC's



QUIT: Adrian McNeece has resigned from East Herts District Council

50 members, all of whom are Conservative, were not at last Wednesday's vote.

Since then, a heated social media exchange between supporters of the motion and EHDC's Puckeridge member, Cllr James Cartwright, on the side of the status quo, has flared up. Mr McNeece has lodged a council members' code of conduct complaint with EHDC against Cllr Cartwright for suggesting people of no religion were "thick" and "illiterate".

Mr McNeece has asked for a personal letter of apology for "the offence he has caused", a public apology at the next full meeting of EHDC, a press release to local media and a "suitable sanction" for Church of England Christian Cllr Cartwright, who works in a Catholic school in London.

Speaking to the Observer after the result, Mr McNeece said: "The separation of government and religion is essential. I'm extremely saddened that such a huge number of councillors voted against the motion.

It suggests to me that they are making the decision based upon political expediency rather than political honesty"

Prayers take place at full meetings of Herts and Essex county councils and at Sawbridgeworth Town Council. They do not occur at meetings of Bishop's Stortford, Uttlesford and Harlow councils.

An EHDC spokesperson said: "It is important to make it clear that prayers are held before full council meetings, of which there are approximately seven in a year. They are not held as part of the actual meeting, they are entirely optional and they are not held before any other of the very many council committee meetings."

Council leader Linda Haysey said: "The manner and timing of the option is to be reviewed to ensure that councillors who do not wish to take part do not feel uncomfortable or excluded."

Mr McNeece's departure means a by-election will be held in Hertford Heath.

Dave Bromnage Trash talking...

DEAR God, my black bin split in August. I ordered a replacement online but as yet it hasn't arrived.

Rats are sniffing around, so could you please remind East Herts District Council about it at its next meeting, as it listens to you more than local residents? Amen.

Welcome to the new way of doing things in Britain's Bible Belt.

At least, that's the conclusion I've drawn from EHDC's 42-5 thrashing of atheist upstart Adrian McNeece and his request that prayers are not held before official meetings.

And it's certainly something we can infer from the post-vote Twitter gloatfest of the self-appointed mouthpiece of the council's overwhelming Christian majority, Cllr James Cartwright.

It is all deeply troubling.

Magnanimity

"42-5! 42-5!" parroted Puckeridge representative Cartwright, like a rugby fan untroubled by the concept of magnanimity in victory.

He repeated the 'score' as though it were a justification of itself, when it merely highlighted how out of touch this 100 per cent Conservative council is.

He labelled the secularist viewpoint "pathetic" and the vote a "total waste of council time". Yet muttering platitudes into the ether is well worth both the time and council resources, of course.

Most perturbing was Cartwright's unshakable belief that the rights of the majority trump all. Channelling Eric Pickles, the gelatinous former Minister of

Faith, Cartwright goaded critics with: "You live in a Christian country - get over it!"

This sinister phrase betrays an elected member's smugness and excitement at the freedom to ride roughshod over the views of the under-represented.

Even if most Brits - including 62.75 per cent of East Herts residents, according to the 2011 Census - identify as Christian, so what? Politicians are elected by majorities but they must strive to serve the whole. Pickles' mantra holds no more water than "This is a white country - get over it!" as an excuse to tell racist jokes.

Cartwright insists the prayer session is inclusive because those it makes uncomfortable can CHOOSE (his capitals) either to join in the worship of a deity they don't believe in or stand outside. Much like Christians living in the Islamic State's caliphate are free to CHOOSE whether to convert or die.

Some American police officers have taken recently to plastering 'In God We Trust' stickers over their panda cars - a concerning move which implies these cops will "protect and serve" fellow believers over non-believers. Last week's East Herts landslide has the same effect.

It tacitly - and, in the case of Cartwright's ravings, explicitly - reinforces the notion that the opinions and concerns of East Herts' non-Christian minority aren't worth a damn.

An elected body asking, in an official capacity, for divine guidance is left wide open to accusations of prejudice. Is a Christian more likely to get a leg up on the housing register? Would a secular disco have less chance than a church

beetle drive of getting an alcohol licence approved?

I'd have previously dismissed such claims as scaremongering. But that was before the Christian majority showed so little empathy with McNeece that, when he proposed a motion asking them to desist in making him feel marginalised, they stomped on it with such vigour that he had no choice but to resign.

Let's be clear: this isn't about clamping down on religion. That Cllr Cartwright believes God will help him make wiser decisions regarding the district's recycling needs is, of course, his business.

But he hasn't been elected to a synod. Why can't he pray in the privacy of his own home?

Flake

Perhaps it's understandable. God is, after all, a notorious flake. If He can't be arsed to answer the prayers of the parents of a dying child, then there's no chance He is going to rule on bin collections unless presented with all the minutiae immediately before the vote.

It shows the danger of writing 'Christian' on the Census form just because you celebrate Christmas rather than Hannukah or Eid.

A Church of England survey last week revealed that many of these 'cultural' Christians don't even believe Jesus was a real person.

But the fact so many tick the box emboldens fundamentalist zealots in positions of power, giving them reason to believe they have a mandate to push for a theocracy. And if that happens, I'd never get my new bin.



**Hertfordshire's Premier
Mobility Retailer**

Jackson Square, Parking level 0
Riverside (behind M&S), Bishops Stortford

01279 656420

HAVE YOUR STAIRLIFT SERVICED FOR JUST £65 (Excl. Parts)

Straight Stairlift
From just **£925**
Supplied and Installed



Curved Stairlift
From just **£2995**
Supplied and Installed



Walkers & Wheelchairs Bathlifts Accessories
Daily Living Aids Servicing & Repairs Batteries
VAT Free Shopping Free Home Demonstrations
Come and visit our showroom open 6 days a week!

**Call us
today for
a free
survey**



Hockerill
Anglo-European College

Sixth Form Open Morning

for the International Baccalaureate Diploma

Saturday 14th November

Day & boarding places available
for external candidates

The Daily Telegraph
Top comprehensive nationally (sixth form) 2014

94% of applicants achieving first choice University
75% in UK went to Russell Group Universities

Registration from 0830 hrs
Presentation at 0900 hrs
Taster classes & tours
from 1000 hrs to 1220 hrs

Phone: 01279 656420 Website: www.hockerill.com