# Former Norwich councillor’s homophobic abuse spotlights challenges in public and sporting life



# Abuse Muted: The Dark Echoes of Homophobia in Public Life and Sport

In a deeply troubling incident that underscored the pervasive nature of homophobia, Michael Pendred, an 83-year-old former councillor from Norwich, directed a series of abusive remarks at police officers during a road incident. The encounter escalated into a spectacle when Pendred disregarded road closure warnings and made sexist and homophobic comments, including reference to a female officer as a “lesbian” and derogatory terms aimed at male officers. This confrontation, arising from his failure to comply with police instructions, culminated in charges of making threatening and abusive comments, to which Pendred pleaded guilty.

The incident, which took place in June 2023 on the A1151 Wroxham Road, highlights not only Pendred's evident disrespect for law enforcement but also reveals broader societal issues about the treatment of women and the LGBTQ+ community. When questioned about his behaviour, Pendred displayed a dismissive attitude, sarcastically stating “ah diddums” in response to the officers' concerns regarding harassment. This conduct reflects a troubling trend in public behaviour where disrespect for authority and intolerance coalesce, fostering a hostile environment for both citizens and law enforcement.

Pendred’s history as a politician compounds this issue. Having served as a Labour councillor for the Coslany ward from 1996 to 2022, he was dropped as a candidate ostensibly for his controversial comments. His assertion that “a good councillor is one that goes out among the people” betrays a mindset that may reinforce disruptive behaviour and, by extension, the type of public discourse that fuels intimidation in civic spaces, as highlighted by the experiences of other local politicians, such as Beth Jones. Jones, who faced significant harassment during her tenure, noted the potential harm such behaviours could pose to civic engagement, warning that they might deter future candidates from standing for election.

Pendred's case draws attention to a broader conversation about the importance of creating safe spaces for all individuals, particularly in political and public life. This need is echoed in initiatives like the Local Government Association's 'Debate not Hate' campaign, which seeks to protect public servants from abuse, fostering an environment where healthy discourse can thrive.

Moreover, Norwich is home to groups such as Proud Canaries, which represents the LGBTQ+ community and champions inclusivity within football. Established in 2013, Proud Canaries has been pivotal in promoting a culture of acceptance and confronting discrimination, setting a standard for other organisations. This movement aligns with efforts by Norwich City Football Club, which actively supports campaigns like 'Football v Homophobia', aiming to eradicate homophobic behaviour from the sport and ensure safety for all its fans. Recent actions, including support for a parliamentary ban on homophobic abuse in stadiums, underscore a commitment to combating intolerance within sporting environments, making Carrow Road a more welcoming place for everyone.

Despite such initiatives, the persistence of bigotry, as illustrated by Pendred’s comments and actions, reveals that substantial work remains. The case of Stavros Skapoullis, a banned Norwich City supporter who faced penalties for homophobic remarks at Carrow Road, further highlights the challenges faced by clubs and communities alike in eradicating such behaviour.

As society grapples with these issues, it is essential for public figures, clubs, and local authorities to actively engage in discussions that challenge discriminatory behaviour. Supporting measures to ensure diversity and inclusion is not merely a matter of policy; it reflects a moral imperative to cultivate a community that values equality and respect. With continued effort, there is hope that future generations will inherit a more inclusive and less hostile environment, fostering honesty and respect in public dialogues.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25148132.former-norwich-city-councillor-gave-police-homophobic-abuse/?ref=rss)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25148132.former-norwich-city-councillor-gave-police-homophobic-abuse/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crk0dp17re8o)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crk0dp17re8o)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proud_Canaries), [[4]](https://www.canaries.co.uk/content/norwich-city-supports-football-v-homophobia)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.canaries.co.uk/content/norwich-city-supports-football-v-homophobia), [[5]](https://www.canaries.co.uk/content/norwich-city-shows-support-for-ban-on-homophobic-abuse-in-football-stadia), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-68447017)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-68447017)
* Paragraph 7 – [[5]](https://www.canaries.co.uk/content/norwich-city-shows-support-for-ban-on-homophobic-abuse-in-football-stadia)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25148132.former-norwich-city-councillor-gave-police-homophobic-abuse/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crk0dp17re8o> - Labour councillor Beth Jones felt 'terrified' after being targeted by campaigners, receiving 150 telephone calls in a few hours and being heckled during a council meeting. She increased security at her home due to the intimidation. The Local Government Association's 'Debate not Hate' campaign aims to support those facing abuse in public life. Jones expressed concern that such intimidation could deter people from standing for election, emphasizing the need for a safe environment for councillors to serve their communities.
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proud_Canaries> - Proud Canaries is Norwich City FC's LGBT Fans & Friends Group, established in October 2013. It aims to challenge discrimination and promote inclusion in football. The group was officially welcomed at Carrow Road in February 2014 and is the second officially recognized LGBT supporters' group in the UK. They work with the club to make Carrow Road a safer and more inclusive place by promoting inclusion and challenging discrimination. Stephen Fry became the honorary president in February 2014, and Amal Fashanu is the patron.
4. <https://www.canaries.co.uk/content/norwich-city-supports-football-v-homophobia> - Norwich City Football Club supports the 'Football v Homophobia' initiative, aiming to tackle homophobia in football. The club has engaged in extensive dialogue with various fan groups to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion. They are committed to making Carrow Road a home for everyone by challenging discrimination and supporting difficult conversations. The club's ongoing work includes supporting campaigns like 'Football v Homophobia' to address and combat homophobia in football.
5. <https://www.canaries.co.uk/content/norwich-city-shows-support-for-ban-on-homophobic-abuse-in-football-stadia> - Norwich City Football Club, represented by Sporting Director Stuart Webber and defender Russell Martin, showed support for a ban on homophobic abuse in football grounds during an event at the Houses of Parliament. The club's involvement highlights its commitment to addressing and eliminating homophobic behavior in football stadiums, promoting a safer and more inclusive environment for all fans and participants.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-68447017> - A Norwich City fan, Stavros Skapoullis, 57, from Gorleston, Norfolk, was banned from attending football matches for three years after making a homophobic comment during a match at Carrow Road on 12 November 2022. The banning order was imposed by Norwich Crown Court, and Skapoullis was required to surrender his season ticket. The case underscores the club's commitment to addressing and preventing homophobic behavior within football.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-61747953> - Norwich City Football Club faced criticism from its LGBTQ+ supporters group, Proud Canaries, over a Pride campaign video featuring a wall covered with homophobic slurs. The group described the video as 'appalling hatred right in your face' and called for the club to delete the film and issue a public apology. The club stated its commitment to supporting diversity, equality, and inclusion, emphasizing ongoing dialogue with fan groups to tackle discrimination in football.