



PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

**REPORT TO THE MONITORING OFFICER
NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONDUCT OF CLLR JOHNO LEE RESULTING FROM FOUR
SEPARATE WRITTEN COMPLAINTS MADE BETWEEN
NOVEMBER 2024 & FEBRUARY 2025**

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Investigating Officers**

26th August 2025

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Allegations	4
3. Background	5
4. Methodology	8
5. Findings	10
6. Conclusions	23
7. Recommendations	24
8. Organisational Learning	26
Appendices	27

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by East Midlands Councils under the Council's Procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints in relation to Elected Members as approved by the Audit & Governance Committee on the 25th September 2024.¹
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to detail the outcome of an independent 'fact finding' investigation into four written complaints made against Cllr Johno Lee submitted to the Council's Monitoring Office between November 2025 and February 2025.
- 1.3 Following an initial review of each complaint, the Monitoring Officer decided to ask East Midlands Councils to undertake an independent investigation into the allegations. The Monitoring Officer informed Cllr Lee of this decision by email on the 24th March 2024.
- 1.4 Given the nature of the complaints the four investigations have been undertaken concurrently and our conclusions presented in this single report. Because Cllr Lee and two of the witnesses were also candidates in this year's County Council elections, the investigation was paused for a period between mid-April and mid May 2025. We have at all times emphasised to those involved that the investigation is and should remain confidential.
- 1.5 During the course of the investigation a substantial amount of additional material relating to Cllr Lee's alleged conduct on other matters was brought to our attention. In addition, we were made aware of a number code of conduct complaints made by Cllr Lee against other councillors, and of Cllr Lee's intention to take legal action against at least two other councillors and separately against the Council itself.
- 1.6 In order progress the investigation in a timely and reasonable manner, we have touched on these matters only insomuch as we believe them to be relevant to the four complaints originally referred to us by the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- 1.7 Following consideration of this report it is for the Monitoring Officer to determine what, if any, further action is required.

¹ [231024Procedure-for-dealing-with-Code-of-Conduct-Complaints.pdf](#)

2. Allegations

2.1 Details of the four complaints are summarised below:

- **Complaint Number 20241126:** This complaint was made by Cllr Mike Pringle and relates to Cllr Lee's alleged conduct at a meeting of the Council's Policy and Performance Improvement Committee which took place on the evening of the 25th November 2024.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- **Complaint Number 20250205:** This complaint was made by Cllr Forde but also supported by the Chief Executive and relates to a 'Facebook' post published by Cllr Lee the 29th January 2025 detailing the alleged poor performance of the Council, the substance of which was repeated by Cllr Lee at a meeting of Balderton Parish Council on the same day.

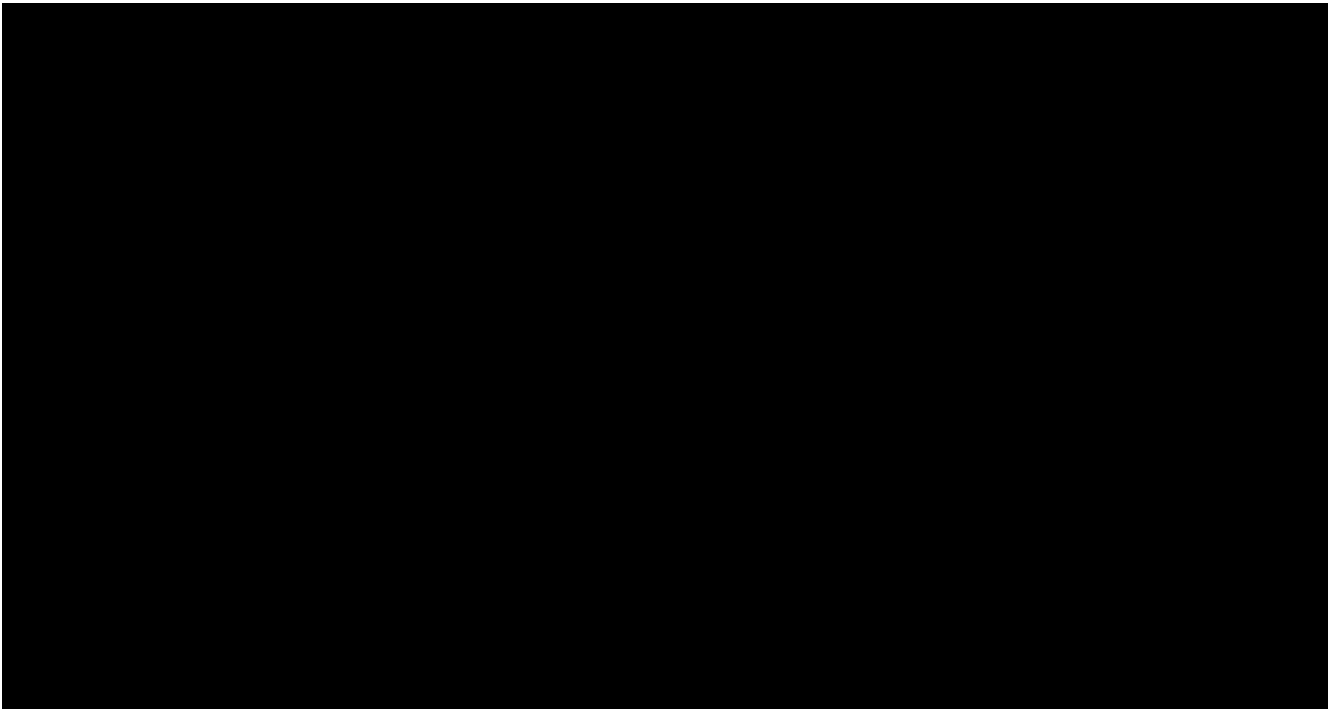
3. Background

- 3.1 Cllr John Lee was first elected to Newark & Sherwood District Council in May 2015, representing the ward of Balderton North and Coddington just to the east of the town of Newark-on-Trent. At the time the alleged events took place he had been a district councillor for over nine years. Up until May 2023 Cllr Lee had been a member of the Council's ruling group (although he did not hold a cabinet position), but since then has been in opposition following a change in political control.
- 3.2 Cllr Lee was also elected to Nottinghamshire County Council in May 2021 representing the Balderton division and retained his position at the County Council elections held on the 1st May 2025. He was Vice Chairman of the County Council in 2024-5.
- 3.3 Although Cllr Lee sits as 'Conservative' at the County Council, he told us that he had resigned from the District Council's Conservative Group in November 2024. We understand he has sat as a 'Non-Aligned Independent' on the District Council since January 2025. Whilst the reasons for of Cllr Lee's exit from the Council's Conservative Group are not relevant to our investigation, it appears that the split was acrimonious on both sides and to a degree remains so.
- 3.4 Between June 2024 and August 2024 and then again between August 2024 and October 2024, we were told that the Council's Chief Executive put in place what is described as a 'Single Point of Contact' arrangement for Cllr Lee, whereby he was prevented in contacting individual officers of the Council and instead had to direct any questions or issues via Democratic Services.
- 3.5 We understand this arrangement was in response to what the Chief Executive described as Cllr Lee's '*inappropriate use*' of his resources to raise numerous unsubstantiated claims of wrong-doing or incompetence which were impacting on operational performance as well as having negative impact the on the mental wellbeing of some individuals. In particular, he highlighted unfounded claims of fraud made by Cllr Lee to the Police & Crime Commissioner in relation to the District Council's use of Government 'Safer Streets' funding, and of unfounded claims of interference in a planning decision.
- 3.6 The Chief Executive told us that his decision to impose the 'Single Point of Contact' arrangement was only taken following careful consideration and after speaking with the Council's political group leaders. We were also told that there

were no restrictions on Cllr Lee's access to council premises, facilities or resources during this period.

3.7 After a total period of six months the 'Single Point of Connect' arrangement was lifted, since when the Chief Executive reported to us that Cllr Lee's interactions with officers have shown some improvement. However, Cllr Lee still disputes the arrangement which he believes represents evidence of his mistreatment by the Council. He also told us that he had instructed solicitors to take action against the Council for the illegal deprivation of his resources.

3.8 Given that Cllr Lee has decided to take legal action against the Council, there is nothing further that we can contribute as part of this investigation. However, it does explain some of the friction that undoubtedly exists between Cllr Lee and the Council.



3.12 Cllr Lee made us aware of comments made on Facebook initially by Cllr Forde on the 17th May 2025 relating to his earlier military service in Iraq, which Cllr Lee has referred to the Monitoring Officer under the Council's Code of Conduct. Cllr Lee also informed us that that he had instructed solicitors to pursue claims of defamation against Cllr Forde and against Cllr Jean Hall in relation to these comments.

- 3.13 The facts relating to the matter in question are fully in the public domain and contained in the report of the Baha Mousa Public Inquiry chaired by the Rt Hon Sir William Gage and published in September 2011².
- 3.14 The Monitoring Officer subsequently referred Cllr Lee's complaint against Cllr Forde to this investigation. However, given that Cllr Lee is progressing legal action, we have concluded that it would be inappropriate to assess this complaint further under the Council's Code of Conduct at this stage.
- 3.15 Finally, we observe that the events set out in the Public Inquiry report appear to be well known and are likely to have had a negative impact on perceptions of Cllr Lee in the eyes of a number of his fellow councillors, and as a result may have influenced their interpretation of some of his behaviour.

² [The Baha Mousa Public Inquiry report - GOV.UK](#)

4. Methodology

4.1 We reviewed the four complaints against the Member Code of Conduct, undertook background desktop research and reviewed relevant audio-visual material supplied to us by the Council, in particular:

- A video recording of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee of the 25th November 2025;
- [REDACTED]
- An audio recording of the meeting of Balderton Parish Council of the 29th January 2025.

4.2 From this we generated a series of issues and questions that informed a first round of interviews with the following:

- Mr John Robinson (the Council's Chief Executive): 9th April 2025
- Cllr Mike Pringle: 9th April 2025
- Cllr Simon Forde: 9th April 2025

4.3 Given the proximity of the County Council elections, we paused the investigation for a period, and then interviewed the following:

- Cllr Jane Buxton (Chair of Balderton Parish Council): 29th May 2025
- [REDACTED]
- Cllr John Lee: 4th June 2025

4.4 All of the interviews took place in the ground floor rooms of Castle House in Newark, the Council's headquarters building.

4.5 Following each interview we produced a written record of the discussion, a final version of which was then agreed by each interviewee as representing a 'reasonable record'.

4.6 We understand from the Monitoring Officer that no response was received from [REDACTED] in relation to an invitation to interview. Whilst unfortunate, we have still been able to reach clear conclusions in all four complaints.

4.7 Cllr Lee also asked us interview three other councillors whom he believed would corroborate his allegations that he was being treated unfairly by the Council and

targeted by the current political leadership. However, we were originally remitted by the Monitoring Officer to undertake an investigation into the four complaints against Cllr Lee. It was not clear to us how widening the investigation in way suggested by Cllr Lee could have added any additional information relevant to these complaints.

- 4.8 In accordance with the Council's procedure, a draft version of this report was sent for comment to Cllr Lee, and relevant extracts to Cllr Pringle, Cllr Forde and [REDACTED]. On the advice of the Monitoring Officer, we also sent the draft report to the Council's Chief Executive given that he is supporting one of the complaints made against Cllr Lee. A schedule of the comments received and our response to each is set out in Appendix 7.

5. Findings

- 5.1 Based on the methodology set out under Section 4 our findings are detailed below. We have addressed each complaint in turn, concluding with a decision based on a reasonable and genuine belief on the balance of probabilities.

Complaint Number 20241126 made by Cllr Mike Pringle

Summary of Complaint

- 5.2 Cllr Lee's conduct at a meeting of the Council's Policy & Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) on the 25th November 2024, which is chaired by Cllr Pringle, was in breach of the 'Nolan Principles'.

Investigation

- 5.3 Newark and Sherwood District Council is Cabinet led. The PPIC is a scrutiny committee but not a decision-making body.
- 5.4 The matter to which the complaint relates concerns a discussion about the proposed use of 12 stone sculptures made by a local artist Robert Kiddey and which were originally part of a Willford Power Station building demolished in the early 1980s. Similar sculptures by the same artist feature as part of the County Hall building in West Bridgford.
- 5.5 The 'Kiddey Stones' had been placed in storage for a number of years. The new administration at the Council was keen to find a way to display them in a way that promoted local heritage and to create a visitor attraction, and proposed that they should be displayed in the public area in front of Castle House in Newark. To inform its decision the Council undertook a public consultation exercise³.
- 5.6 The purpose of the discussion at the PPIC meeting was to consider the outcome of this consultation, which it appears had not demonstrated clear support for the proposition, and to highlight issues for consideration by the Cabinet when it met the following month to resolve a decision. A number of councillors raised concerns about the proposal and made alternative suggestions, including Cllr Forde.

³ [Kiddey Stones - Public Consultation | Newark & Sherwood District Council](#)

- 5.7 Cllr Lee was not a member of the committee and ordinarily would not have been allowed to speak. However, Cllr Pringle exercised his discretion as chair of the committee to agree to Cllr Lee's request to contribute. In doing so Cllr Pringle felt that he was being inclusive to Cllr Lee. In contrast, Cllr Lee said that Cllr Pringle would have felt he had no choice, as he knew that Cllr Lee would have reported any refusal on his social media - which we have no doubt would have been the case.
- 5.8 Unfortunately a technical fault meant that the meeting could not be 'live-streamed' in the normal way. However, a video recording was made – albeit one with variable sound quality and from a fixed camera position. We reviewed the video as part of the investigation, and then again with Cllr Lee.
- 5.9 In his interview, Cllr Lee appeared to concede that his comments were not consistent with terms of reference for the committee but contended that he was reflecting the views of his constituents in a passionate manner and was acting within the laws of 'free speech'. He said that the comments referencing Cllr Hall (who was not a member of the Committee and was not present at the meeting) were as result of previous comments made by her on social media about the Kidney Stones.
- 5.10 In his interview, Cllr Lee explained further his approach by saying:
- "We will use this decision for the next 10 years about the waste of money on the stones in our leaflets. This won me the election at County. I'm making the point that my residents said no – that was my point and purpose in speaking."*
- 5.11 Cllr Pringle clearly regretted his decision to allow Cllr Lee to speak in what he felt had otherwise been a constructive meeting and struggled to bring him to order. The episode concluded with Cllr Lee leaving abruptly but continuing to direct comments towards Cllr Pringle from off camera.
- 5.12 Cllr Forde told us that that he could not remember a word of what Cllr Lee said but could only recall that he sat staring at him throughout '*with a mad look in his eye*' - which Cllr Lee denies and which is difficult for us to substantiate from the video evidence.
- 5.13 Cllr Lee told us that after the meeting he was directed by his then Group Leader to apologise to Cllr Pringle, which he did, but that his apology had been rudely rebuffed. Although this was not confirmed by Cllr Pringle, there appears to have been heated exchanges between the two on more than one occasion.

- 5.14 From Cllr Pringle's perspective, Cllr Lee's conduct at the meeting was '*shameful*' and symptomatic of a wider pattern of behaviour which he believes brings the Council into disrepute.

Decision: This complaint is upheld

- 5.15 The Council's Code of Conduct defines respect as: '*...politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and the written word. Debate and having different views are part of a healthy democracy...You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack*'
- 5.16 Cllr Lee clearly knew that he was speaking out of order, and yet he persisted and made what we can only conclude to be a personal attack on another councillor who was not a member of the committee or even present at the meeting. Whilst Cllr Lee can expect a measure of protection for his political 'freedom of expression' under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, in our view his rhetoric and demeanour went beyond what was reasonable in the context of the meeting and Cllr Pringle was right to attempt to bring him to order.
- 5.17 The Council's Code of Conduct makes it clear that councillors: "*...can hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this code of conduct.*" (our emphasis).
- 5.18 Cllr Pringle's attempts to bring Cllr Lee to order were not in our view an infringement of Cllr Lee's rights of 'freedom of expression', merely an attempt to keep discussion within the Committee's terms of reference and maintain good order. Cllr Lee has plenty of other opportunities to express his political views outside of the Council's formal proceedings.
- 5.19 If Cllr Lee had been new to local government, then his behaviour might have been more understandable. However, at the time of these events Cllr Lee had held public office over nine years and was both a District and a County Councillor (and was Vice Chairman of the County Council), and as a result we believe he knew exactly what he was doing.
- 5.20 Accordingly, we conclude Cllr Lee did not treat Cllr Pringle or Cllr Hall with respect and that he did not lead by example in a way that secures public confidence in the role of a councillor - and that as a result Cllr Lee's conduct brought the Council into disrepute.

5.21 At his interview Cllr Lee offered to make a further, formal apology to Cllr Pringle, which we welcome – and which he has subsequently told us has been made

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Gender	Should take action	Should not take action
Men	95%	5%
Women	95%	5%

[illegible]

[illegible]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A horizontal bar chart with three groups of bars. Each group is preceded by a small black square. The bars are black and vary in length. The first group has 5 bars, the second has 6 bars, and the third has 5 bars.

Complaint Number 20250205: made by Cllr Forde and supported by the Chief Executive

Summary

- 5.53 This complaint relates to a post published on the 'Johno Lee' Facebook page on the 29th January 2025 detailing the alleged poor performance of the Council, the substance of which was then repeated by Cllr Lee at a meeting of Balderton Parish Council on the same day. The allegation is that the information in this post is entirely false and brings the Council into disrepute.

Investigation

- 5.54 The post in question was made on the 'Johno Lee' Facebook page on the 29th January 2025 and is contained in Appendix 4 of this report. It purports to detail 10 specific service failures quoted directly from the Council's 2024-2025 Quarter 2 Performance Report⁴. Cllr Lee then clarified to the Monitoring Officer in an email of the 13th February 2025 that the quotes came from an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report⁵ - and then later on the same day that the quotes came from both reports.

- 5.55 Cllr Lee also wrote to the Monitoring Officer:

"Just to clarify, I did not personally make or post the information on social media. The information was researched and prepared by [my] administrative team, and it was posted in the Johno Lee Facebook page by them"

- 5.56 Cllr Lee explained the detail of the post as part his District Councillor's report to a meeting of Balderton Parish Council which also took place on the 29th January 2025, and at which Cllr Forde was also present.

- 5.57 We reviewed an audio recording of this meeting with Cllr Lee at his interview. We heard the Chair of the Parish Council challenge Cllr Lee on the relevance of the post to the agenda of the meeting and to the work of the Parish Council. In the recording Cllr Lee can clearly be heard saying that *"I have gone through the report with a fine-tooth comb"* to extract the information contained in the post.

- 5.58 Cllr Lee told us that he was unhappy with his treatment by the Chair of the Parish Council and had made a Code of Conduct complaint, which we understand has been rejected by the Monitoring Officer. Of Balderton Parish Council more generally, Cllr Lee told us:

"We treat them as a hostile parish council. By we, I mean the Conservatives. It was a Conservative Parish Council previously and we want to get them out."

⁴[C:\Users\traceym\AppData\Local\Temp\mso18C4.tmp](#)

⁵ [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report](#)

5.59 In Cllr Buxton's view Cllr Lee is disruptive and uncooperative. She told us:

"...he doesn't appear to acknowledge the role of a parish council in terms of its responsibilities and, as he is a dual hatter and a county councillor he appears to want to take control of everything that's going on and have a say in it...We try to work with him and point out our standing orders and the framework in which the Parish Council operates."

5.60 On the 24th March 2025 the Monitoring Officer wrote to Cllr Lee by email confirming that:

"...we have undertaken an exercise to compare your social media post with the corporate peer challenge report, and the performance report you referenced. The outcome was that no correlation was found between your post and the documents."

5.61 As a result the Monitoring Officer advised Cllr Lee to remove the post pending a further investigation, which Cllr Lee failed to do.

5.62 At his interview, we asked Cllr Lee if he could think of any other Council report that the quotes in the post could be drawn from. He could not.

5.63 As part of our investigation we also undertook an analysis of the Cllr Lee's post against both documents - the results are set out in Appendix 5 of this report. Like the Council, we could find absolutely no reference to any of the 10 quotes detailed in the post in either report. In all but one case the page numbers referenced dealt with other matters entirely and in two cases the relevant pages simply did not exist.

Decision: This complaint is upheld.

5.64 The Council's Code of Conduct highlights that: *"...behaviour that is considered dishonest and or/deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute."*

5.65 From the evidence, we are clear that the information posted on the 'Johno Lee' Facebook page on 29th January 2025 relating to the Council's performance was entirely fictitious and therefore calculated to unfairly damage the reputation of the Council. Nor was the post more generally reflective of either the 2024-25 Quarter 2 Performance Report or the Corporate Peer Challenge Report - which highlights under paragraph 5.1.1 that: *"NSDC provides well and effectively run services"*.

5.66 Whilst we agree that the post was very likely made and posted by Cllr Lee's administration team, it was published under his name. In addition, Cllr Lee

clearly endorsed the content and was happy to claim the credit for it when speaking to Balderton Parish Council on the same day it was published.

- 5.67 The fact that the post was published on the 'Johno Lee' Facebook page which does not reference Cllr Lee's role as a district councillor is irrelevant. Applying the Code of Conduct, if an individual who is a councillor makes statements relating the performance of that council, then we are clear that any reasonable person knowing both these facts would conclude that that individual was acting as councillor.
- 5.68 Accordingly, we find that Cllr Lee brought the Council into disrepute through first publishing fictional information about the Council's performance on the 'Johno Lee' Facebook page on the 29th January 2025, failing remove that information when advised to so by the Monitoring Officer on the 24th March 2025, and further by repeating verbally it at a meeting of Balderton Parish Council on the 29th January 2025.
- 5.69 At his interview Cllr Lee offered to remove the post if it was found to be inaccurate. Whilst welcome, given that the Monitoring Officer advised Cllr Lee to do the same as long ago as the 24th March 2025, we can give only very limited weight to this as a mitigating factor.

6 Conclusions

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6.2 As a result, we conclude that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Cllr Lee **did** breach the Council's Code of Conduct for Members as approved by the Audit & Governance Committee on the 25th September 2025 in relation to the following complaints:

- **Complaint Number 20241126** made by Cllr Mike Pringle
- **Complaint Number 20250205** made by Cllr Forde and supported by the Chief Executive.

6.3 As referenced in Section 4, a draft copy of our investigation report was sent to Cllr Lee for comment (on the 28th July 2025). It was made clear in the covering email that, consistent with the Council's procedure for Code of Conduct investigations, the draft report and the investigation itself should remain strictly confidential.

6.4 Subsequently, our attention has been drawn to an email written by Cllr Lee to four parish councils on the 29th July 2025 which clearly references aspects of the draft investigation report in a partial and misleading manner, and to a Facebook

post by Cllr Lee (made on or around the 29th July 2025 and subsequently removed) which does similar. Both are set out in Appendix 8.

6.5 The Council's Code of Conduct makes it clear that councillors should not disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone unless the disclosure is:

- *reasonable and in the public interest; and*
- *made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and*
- *you have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release*

6.6 In our view none of these tests have been met and as a result, Cllr Lee's email and Facebook post of the 29th July 2025 both represent a further breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Based on the consideration of the evidence received during this investigation, we recommend this the following complaints should be escalated to the Monitoring Officer.

- **Complaint Number 20241126** made by Cllr Mike Pringle
- **Complaint Number 20250205** made by Cllr Forde and supported by the Chief Executive
- In addition, we conclude that Cllr Lee further breached the Council's Code of Conduct by publicising aspects of the draft investigation report by email and on Facebook on the 29th July 2025.

7.2 It will be for the Council to determine what further action is required.

7.3 We welcome the Cllr Lee's apparent willingness to settle the original two complaints informally. However, against this we note that Cllr Lee had opportunities to make the same offer to the Monitoring Officer some months ago but chose not to. In addition, we believe that weight should be given to Cllr Lee's relative experience and seniority as a councillor, both with the District Council and with the County Council.

7.4 As noted at the start of this report, we received a substantial amount of additional material relating to Cllr Lee's alleged conduct on other matters. Whilst we have not formally investigated these matters, the volume and consistency of the allegations suggests that the two complaints we have upheld are likely to be symptomatic of a wider pattern of behaviour which is bringing the Council into disrepute, as well as consuming a disproportionate amount of officer time.

8 Organisational Learning

8.1 Based on the evidence received during this investigation we have not identified any areas where the Council might wish to consider changes to current practices and arrangements.

8.2 However, we do believe the investigation has re-enforced comments made in the LGA Peer Corporate Peer Challenge, a document which Cllr Lee himself initially referred us to. Specifically, under Section 5.3 Governance and Culture:

“Whilst relationships between councillors, and between councillors and officers is generally respectful and constructive, the Peer Team heard that there were examples where behaviour was felt to be unacceptable. Senior officers and councillors spend significant time addressing the conduct of a small number of individuals, some of whom appeared unwilling to respond to professional and peer advice. The Audit and Governance Committee has already agreed to explore how to strengthen the application of the Code of Conduct, something which the Peer Team supports to mitigate the risk of the reputation, effectiveness and positive culture of the Council being undermined.”

8.3 And then later under the same section:

“Being in opposition means constructively challenging to ensure the best outcomes for communities, and not automatically opposing everything that the administration puts forward.”

8.4 It appears to us that both these comments are consistent with the evidence we have received relating to Cllr Lee’s behaviour.



Andrew Pritchard BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI,
FAcSS, FRSA



Samantha Maher MA, FCIPD

Appendices

1. Letter from the Chair of Balderton Parish Council to the Monitoring Officer dated the 11th December 2024
2. Email from [REDACTED] to the Monitoring Officer 31st January 2025
3. Post made on the 'Johnno Lee' Facebook page on the 29th January 2025
4. Analysis of post made on the 'Johnno Lee' Facebook page on the 29th January 2025
5. Email exchange between Cllr Lee and the Monitoring Officer 13th February 2025
6. Email exchange between Cllr Lee and the Monitoring Officer 24th March 2025
7. Schedule of comments received on the Draft Report.
8. Email from Cllr Lee & Facebook post by Cllr Lee 29th July 2025

[The page contains a large, solid black rectangular area, likely representing redacted content or a placeholder for an image.]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 January 2025 09:09
To: Sue Bearman <Sue.Bearman@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk>
Subject: Clarification on Facebook Page Admin

[CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe]

Good morning Sue,

I'm writing to you this morning to clarify the management and administration responsibilities of the Johno Lee Facebook page, particularly in relation to recent questions that have been asked.

For the past six months Johno has delegated the management of his social media presence to a small team of independent administrators. There are currently three of us including myself and another primary admin based in Bolton named [REDACTED]. We have full access to the page's analytics and linked accounts (Johno Lee, Jonathan Lee and David Lee).

Johno retains admin privileges through his Jonathan Lee account, but he has minimal direct involvement. His role is limited to providing a briefing on Mondays, during which he outlines key messages or topics he wants covered. From there, we schedule posts to ensure a consistent and active presence throughout the week.

Our role includes:

- Posting Conservative-aligned content in support of Johno's campaigns.
- Critiquing Labour and opposition groups based on publicly available information from NSDC, Newark Advertiser, Spotted pages, and local community groups.
- Managing interactions and comments, with Johno only engaging occasionally on specific topics where his expertise is required.

We became aware of the recent complaint after removing an individual who falsely claimed to be a Conservative voter while attempting to undermine Johno's campaign.

Upon investigation, we identified that this individual had a Labour sign at their residence and had publicly declared their intention to vote Labour. When confronted with this, they pushed back, and we responded by sharing a screenshot of their own statement showing Labour support. This individual did not take issue with the accuracy of the evidence but was unhappy with its exposure. Following this, they were removed from the page for attempting to mislead others about their political stance and disrupt the campaign.

It is important to stress that this issue was not a failure of the page's administration but a deliberate attempt by the complainant to interfere with its operations.

As part of our work, I also receive payment for producing video content that is distributed via Facebook and YouTube channels to reinforce Johnno's messaging.

We've always made it clear that the page has nothing to do with Councillor Lee.

The page currently reaches an average of half a million views every 30 days, significantly surpassing our target of 30,000. This success demonstrates the effectiveness of independent administration in engaging with the electorate while allowing Johnno to remain focused on his responsibilities without unnecessary distractions.

If further clarification is required, I am happy to provide additional details.


Make it clear Johnno is very hands off and will interact every so often, but mostly it's the admin team that are engaging these days.

Thank you for reading today.


Warm regards,





You don't have to take my word for it—this report contains the Council's own self-assessment, acknowledging where they are failing to meet targets.


 Full report here : Newark and Sherwood District Council 2024-2025 Q2 Performance Report


Here's what the Council admits is NOT working:


 Litter bin collection delays, leading to overflowing bins across the district.


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Analysis of Facebook Post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 2025

Post Extract	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report	Q2 Performance Review Report 2024-25
<p>Page 8: Litter bin collection delays, leading to overflowing bins across the district.</p> <p><i>“The report highlights delays in emptying litter bins, leading to waste accumulation and hygiene concerns.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 8 outlines the Peer Challenge process and makes no reference to litter.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 8 details 2 examples of customer suggestions and makes no reference to litter.</p>
<p>Page 9: Inconsistent grass cutting & shrub maintenance, leaving public spaces overgrown and neglected.</p> <p><i>“There are noted inconsistencies in grass cutting schedules and shrub maintenance, resulting in some public spaces appearing overgrown.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 9 sets out general feedback on Local priorities and outcomes and makes no reference to grass cutting and shrub maintenance.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 9 sets out examples of the Council receiving complements on its services, and makes no reference to grass cutting and shrub maintenance</p>
<p>Page 10: Weed control below target, leading to overgrown pavements and public areas.</p> <p><i>“The council’s weed control efforts have not met the desired targets, leading to overgrown pavements and public areas.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 10 sets out further feedback on local priorities and outcomes, and gives an overview of performance, which notes that ‘NSDC provides well and effectively run services’. There is no reference to weed control.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 10 deals with measures to Improve Health and Wellbeing. There is no reference to weed control.</p>
<p>Page 11: Poor maintenance of garage sites, with sites left in bad condition for long periods.</p> <p><i>“Several garage sites are reported to be in substandard condition, with delays in necessary repairs.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 11 provides further summary feedback on the performance of council services which is generally positive. There is no reference to the maintenance of garage sites.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 11 details further measures to Improve Health & Wellbeing. There is no reference to the maintenance of garage sites.</p>
<p>Page 12: Waste collection delays, including missed bin collections and slow fly-tipping enforcement.</p> <p><i>“Instances of missed bin collections and slow responses to fly-tipping incidents have been highlighted as recurring issues.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 12 refers to organisational and place leadership – which is described as ‘strong and respected’. There is no reference to waste collection.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 12 details further measures to Improve Health & Wellbeing. There is no reference to waste collection.</p>
<p>Page 14: Slow housing repair response times, leaving tenants frustrated.</p> <p><i>“The council has not met its response targets for social housing repairs, causing dissatisfaction among tenants.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 14 deals with the role of councillors and the scrutiny function. There is no reference to social housing repairs.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 14 details further measures to Improve Health & Wellbeing. There is no reference to social housing repairs.</p>
<p>Page 16: Limited investment in affordable housing, failing to address local demand.</p> <p><i>“The report criticizes the lack of new affordable housing initiatives, despite a growing demand in the district.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 16 deals with financial management and audit. This includes the discussion of the finances of the Council’s housing development company Arkwood Developments – but there is no reference to a lack of affordable housing initiatives.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 16 details some of measure that the Council to tackle homelessness and the effects of homelessness and does not criticize the Council for a lack of investment in affordable housing initiatives.</p>
<p>Page 18: Town centre remains stagnant, with no clear economic growth strategy.</p> <p><i>“There is little progress in revitalizing the town centre, with business footfall remaining low.”</i></p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 18 makes references to flexible working and details next steps of the Peer Review process. There is no reference to the condition of the town centre.</p>	<p>Quote not found</p> <p>Page 18 details KPIs relating to housing and planning. There is no reference to the condition of the town centre.</p>
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From: Johnno Lee <Johnno.Lee@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk>
Sent: 13 February 2025 19:43
To: Sue Bearman
Subject: Re: FB post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 17.39

OFFICIAL

Subject: Clarification on Report References and Political Page Independence

Dear Sue,

I am writing to confirm that the information referenced in the recent post is factually correct, as it is drawn directly from two Newark & Sherwood District Council reports:

1. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report (18.02.25)
2. Newark & Sherwood District Council 2024-2025 Q2 Performance Report

The peer review report itself references performance issues and cites the Q2 Performance Report, which includes details on service delivery concerns. The post highlights these documented failures and presents them with their correct sources and reference points.

While this was produced by the administration and published without my prior knowledge, I support its validity based on the evidence provided by the admin team. Their work in compiling and presenting this data appears to be proper and accurate, and I see no reason to dispute the findings.

I acknowledge that this post takes a political stance, as it critiques the Labour-Independent-run council. However, this is not written in any capacity as an elected member, but rather as a political comment on council performance. The post is not misleadingâ€”it is based entirely on the councilâ€™s own reports.

Clarification on the Political Page & its Role

The Facebook page is a right-leaning political page, and as such, the admin team frequently shares content directly from CCHQâ€™s â€œShare to Winâ€™ platform.

For context, Share to Win is a Conservative Party platform designed to help supporters easily share party-approved content on social media to promote key messages and campaign material. This is a standard practice across Conservative digital networks, and the admin of the page regularly shares posts from this platform.

Additionally, the page is often asked by other Conservative elected members and party members to share content on their behalf, something that has been done regularly. In fact, much of the criticism of Balderton Parish Council has come from Conservative members and former District Councillors who will be standing against them in the next election. However, I am not willing to disclose their names, as that is not my place to do so.

The District Council's Role in Political Pages

The district council must understand that the Facebook page with my name on it is a political page and has nothing to do with the council.

The council has had no involvement in the page for many years, and it is entirely independent from Newark & Sherwood District Council. The appropriate route for any concerns about content on the page would be to contact the page admin directly, rather than involving me in what is ultimately a matter between the council and the page's administrators.

Concerns About Political Interference

If the district council believes any specific point in the post is factually incorrect, the admin team is more than willing to correct it. However, given that the information comes directly from council-published documents, any interference in this post would raise serious concerns about the council interfering in political communications.

I am also aware that the district council does not intervene in other political Facebook pages, which makes this situation particularly concerning. If there is an official reason for the council's involvement in this matter, I would appreciate a clear explanation of exactly what is being challenged and on what basis the council is seeking to intervene.

Best regards,

Johnno

From: Johnno Lee
Sent: Thursday, February 13, 2025 2:45:08 PM
To: Sue Bearman
Subject: Re: FB post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 17.39
Dear Sue,

Just to clarify, I did not personally make or post the information on social media. The information was researched and prepared by administrative team, and it was posted on the Johnno Lee Facebook page by them. I reported this information back to the Parish because I believed it was very useful to the residence to see what is working and what isn't.

Best regards,
Johnno

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

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Upon reviewing the concerns raised, I would like to clarify that the information shared in the Facebook post dated 29 January and the comments made during the Balderton Parish Council meeting were sourced directly from the Newark and Sherwood District Council's own reports. Specifically, the details were drawn from the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge report published in January 2025, which is publicly available on the Council's website.

The administrative team took every step to ensure that the information was accurate and provided the appropriate references for transparency. Likewise, at the Parish Council meeting, I presented this information in response to requests, believing it to be correct as it was taken directly from the Council's own documentation.

If any part of this information is incorrect, I would appreciate clarification on exactly which details are inaccurate. If the District Council can indicate the specific inaccuracies, we are more than happy to amend or correct the information. However, we presented it in good faith, believing it to be accurate at the time, based on your own report.

Given that this information originates from the District Council's report, I do not understand why the Parish Council is raising a complaint. Our intention has always been to ensure transparency and to share publicly available data with the community.

I look forward to your response.

Best regards,

Johnno

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Sue Bearman
Sent: Thursday, February 13, 2025 1:01:03 PM
To: Johnno Lee
Subject: FW: FB post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 17.39

OFFICIAL

Dear Johnno

I have received a complaint about a Facebook post, which I am told is in your name dated 29 January (see below), and similar comments made at a Balderton Parish Council meeting on 29 January. The complaint is that the information published, and communicated at the Parish meeting, is false and misleading.

Under the procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct (the Code) complaints, it is my responsibility to review every complaint received, and after consulting with the Council's Independent Person, decide whether it merits formal investigation, whether informal resolution is appropriate, or whether no further action should be taken.

The first step with complaints is the jurisdictional test; was the councillor acting as a councillor at the time and if proven would the issue complained about amount to a breach of the Code.

In order to decide what action to take I have considered the criteria set out in the complaints procedure. My initial view is that the complaint contains sufficient evidence to demonstrate a potential breach of the disrepute provision of the Code, and that it is in the public interest to consider the matter further.

Before reaching a final view on how to proceed I am inviting your initial feedback. I am minded to refer for investigation but will wait for your response before making a final decision. I also need to consult with the Independent Person.

Further details about the process are published here - <https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/media/nsdc-redesign/documents-and-images/your-council/your-council/councillors-and-committees/member-code-of-conduct/231024Procedure-for-dealing-with-Code-of-Conduct-Complaints.pdf>

I would be grateful for your initial response to the complaint. Please could you provide within 7 days of the date of this email.

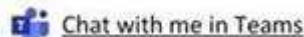
Do not hesitate to contact me in the meantime if you have any questions.

With Kind Regards

Sue Bearman
Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services

Monitoring Officer

Working days Monday to Friday | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]
sue.bearman@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk | www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk



Our Legal Service Commitment -

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Please quote this reference in your reply: 20250205

Subject: Re: FB post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 17.39

OFFICIAL

You don't have to take my word for it—this report contains the Council's own self-assessment, acknowledging where they are failing to meet targets.

Full report here: Newark and Sherwood District Council 2024-2025 Q2 Performance Report

Here's what the Council admits is NOT working:

- ✗ Litter bin collection delays, leading to overflowing bins across the district.
Page 8 – “The report highlights delays in emptying litter bins, leading to waste accumulation and hygiene concerns.”
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From: Johnno Lee <Johnno.Lee@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 March 2025 17:50
To: Sue Bearman
Subject: Re: FB post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 17.39

OFFICIAL

The post wasn't written by me. It was written by my admin after research on their behalf. It was put as a political post and was nothing to do in my capacity as an elected member or something. I've stated to you on more than one occasion as this information was granted from public access and not through my role as an elected member.

I believe this information was taken from two independent reports

And as I wasn't acting in a formal capacity and elected member, the district council has no formal ability to ask anything to be removed from a page that not associated with my role my position as a counsellor .

However, if you do have any issues with anything posted, you have the admin communications you can contact them directly

Johnno

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Sue Bearman
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 8:00:00 AM
To: Johnno Lee
Subject: RE: FB post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 17.39

OFFICIAL

Dear Johnno,

Firstly – apologies for the delay getting back to you on this complaint.

Following your initial response, we have undertaken an exercise to compare your social media post with the corporate peer challenge report, and the performance report you referenced. The outcome was that no correlation was found between your post and the documents.

Accordingly I consulted with the Independent Person and they agreed with my recommendation to refer this matter for investigation.

In the meantime, you may wish to consider deleting the post to lessen the possible harm it has caused. You may also wish to consider changing arrangements with your admin team, so that you can review posts in your name, before they are published. Such posts are caught by the District Council's code of conduct if they are in your name and relate to you acting in your District Council capacity, or to District Council matters.

As stated below, the remit of the investigation is to consider if there has been a potential breach of the disrepute provisions of the Code of Conduct.

I will email separately regarding the investigation.

With Kind Regards

Sue

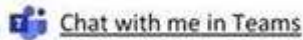
Sue Bearman

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With Kind Regards

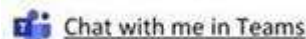
Sue Bearman

Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services

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Subject: Re: FB post by Cllr Lee of 29 January 17.39

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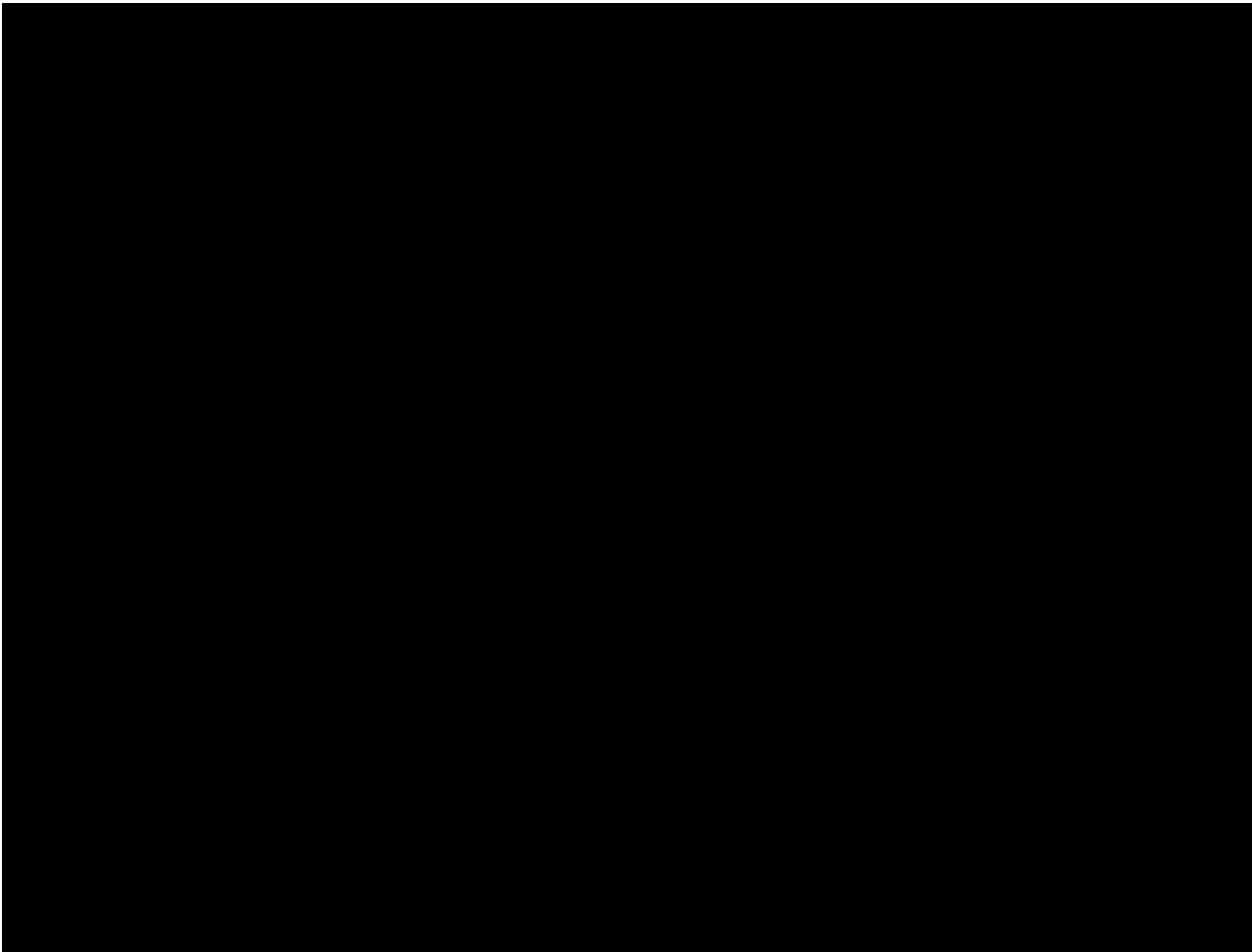
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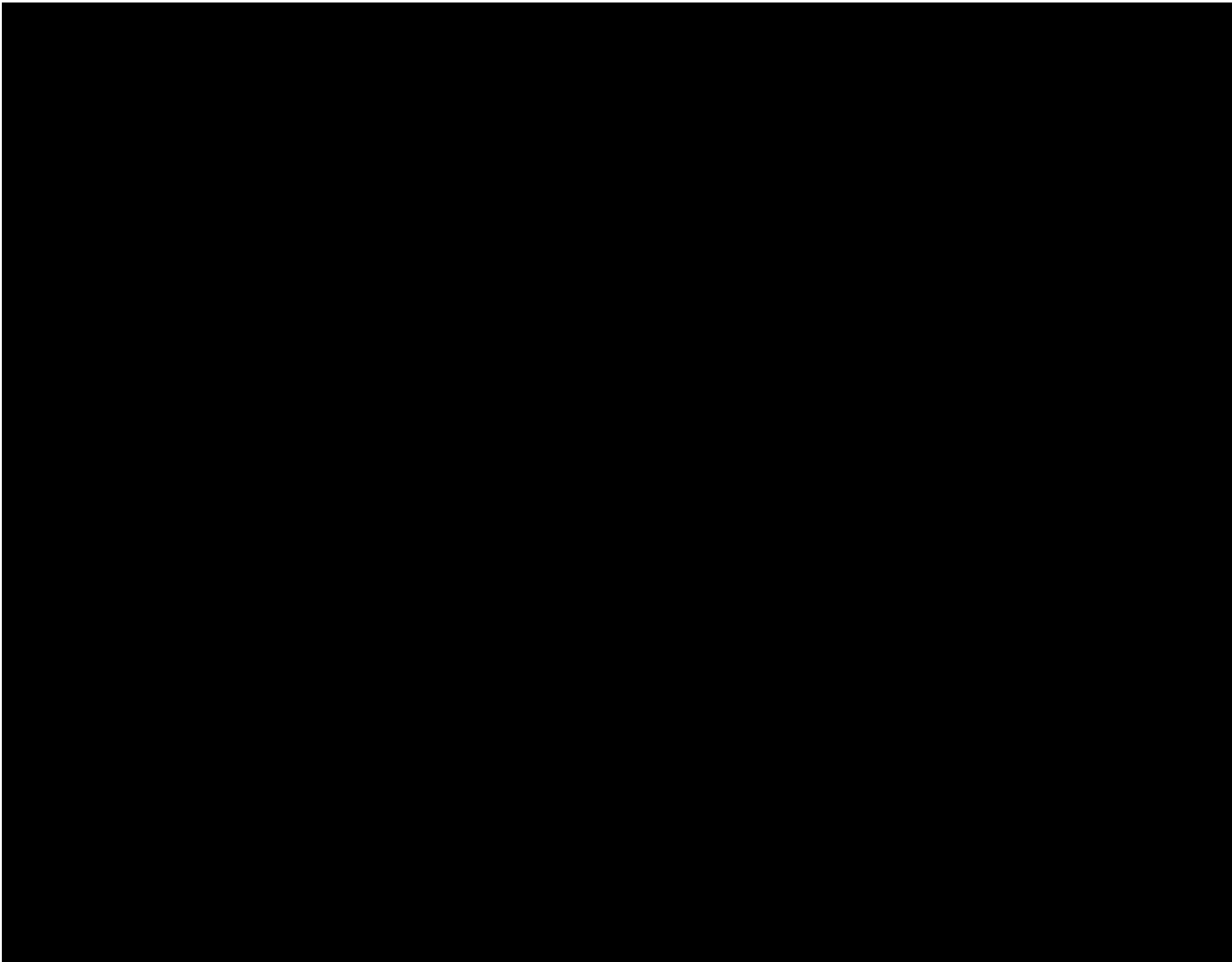
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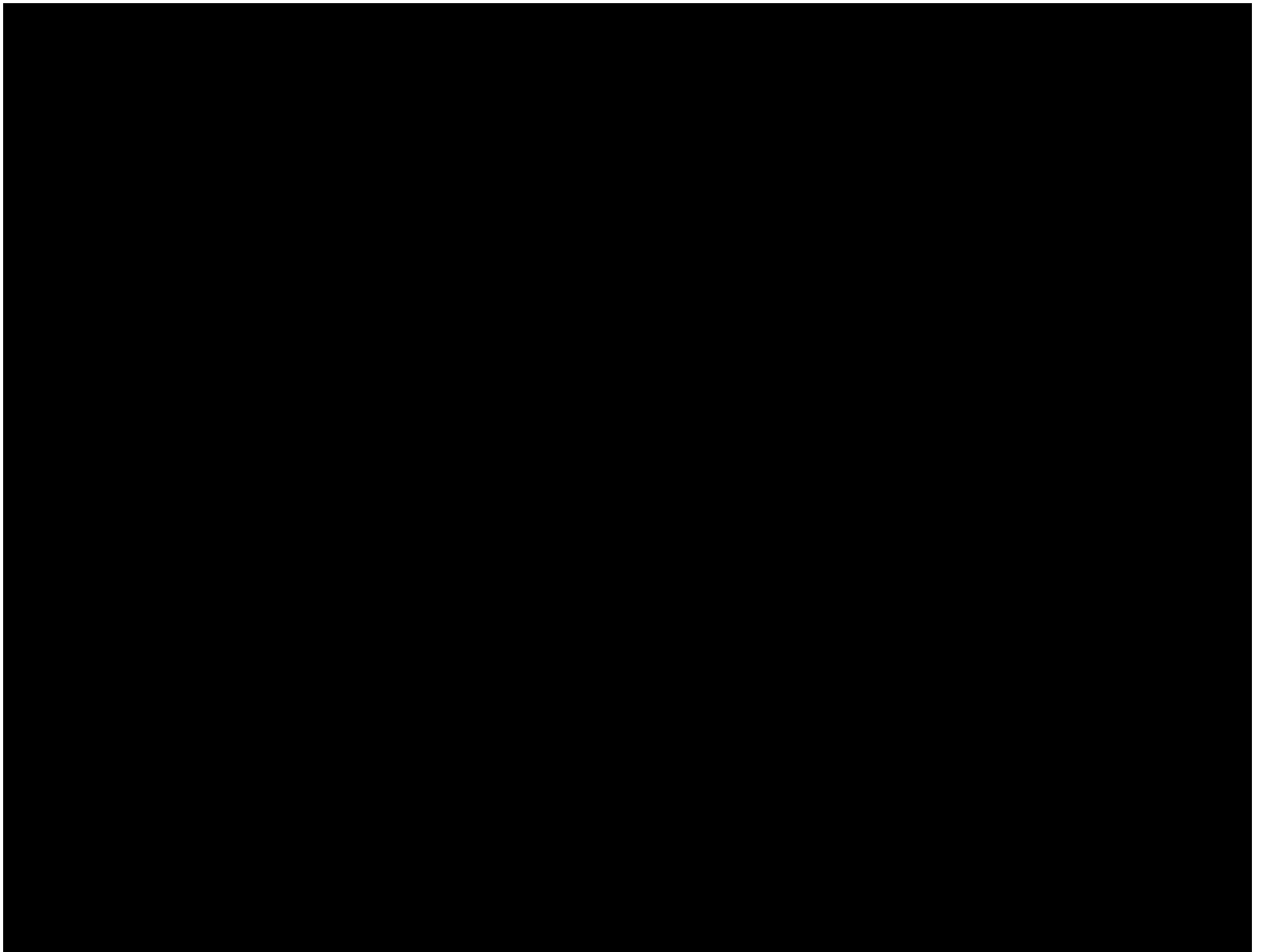
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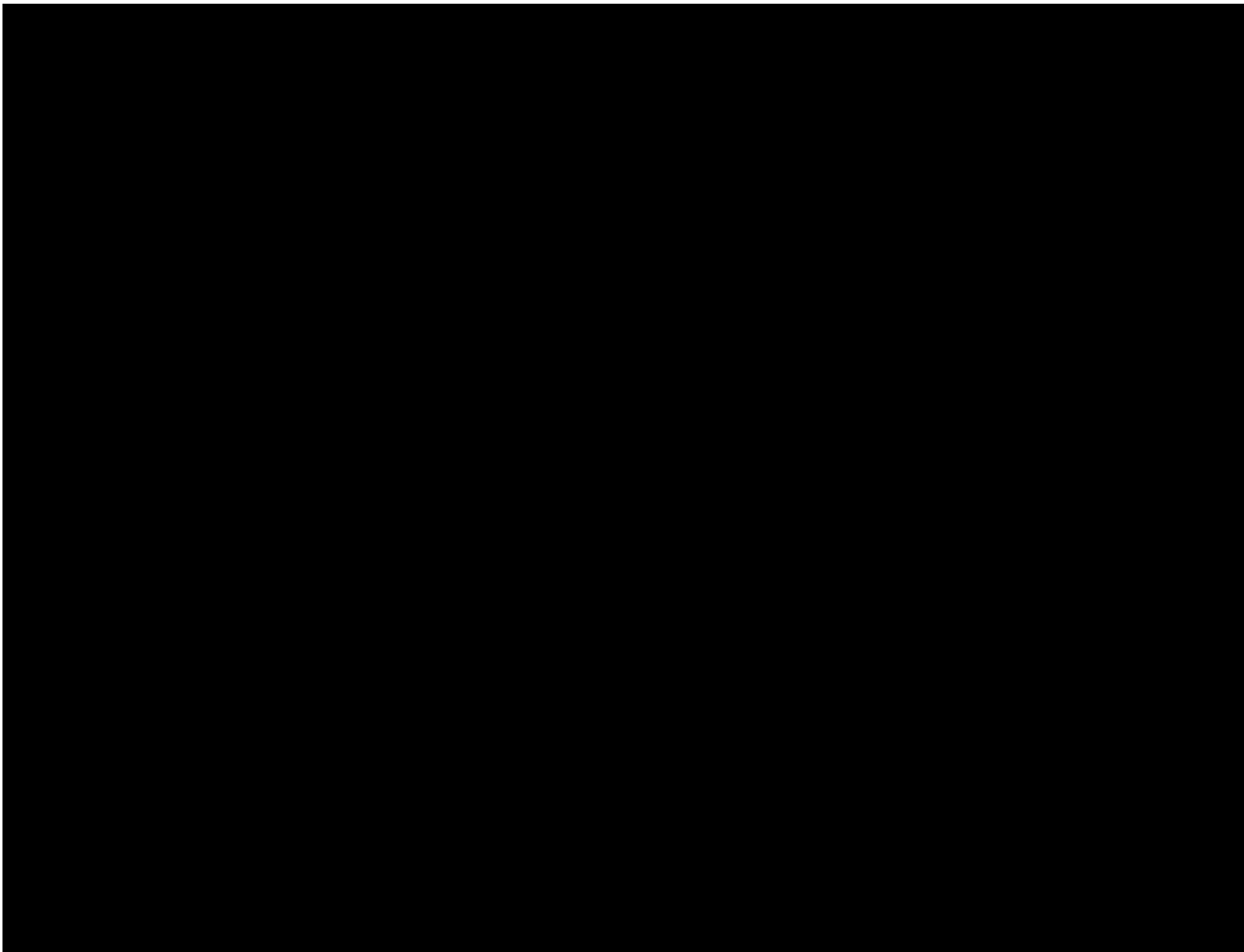
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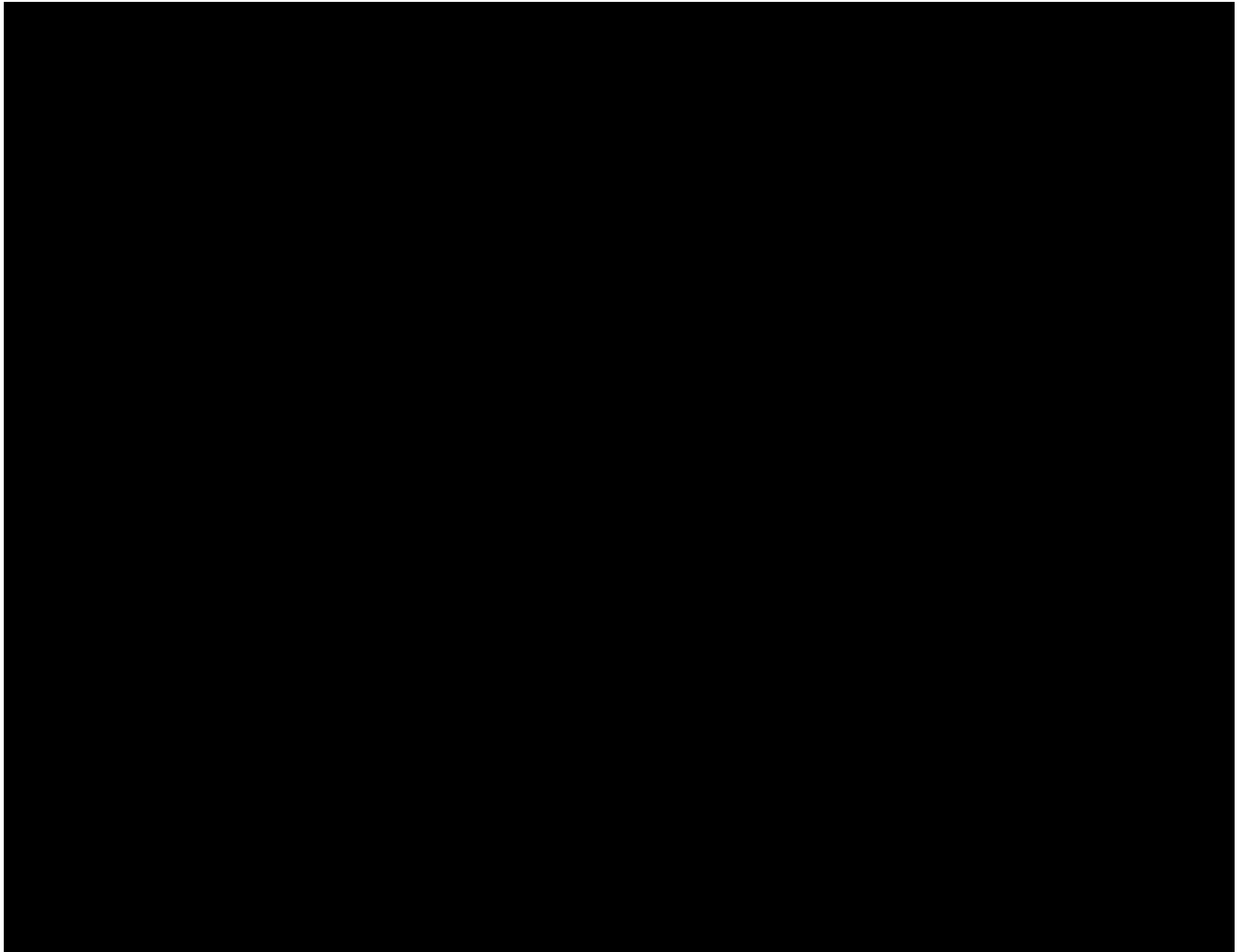
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- 📌 Page 21 – “The council has been criticized for failing to respond to complaints promptly, leading to frustration among local residents.”

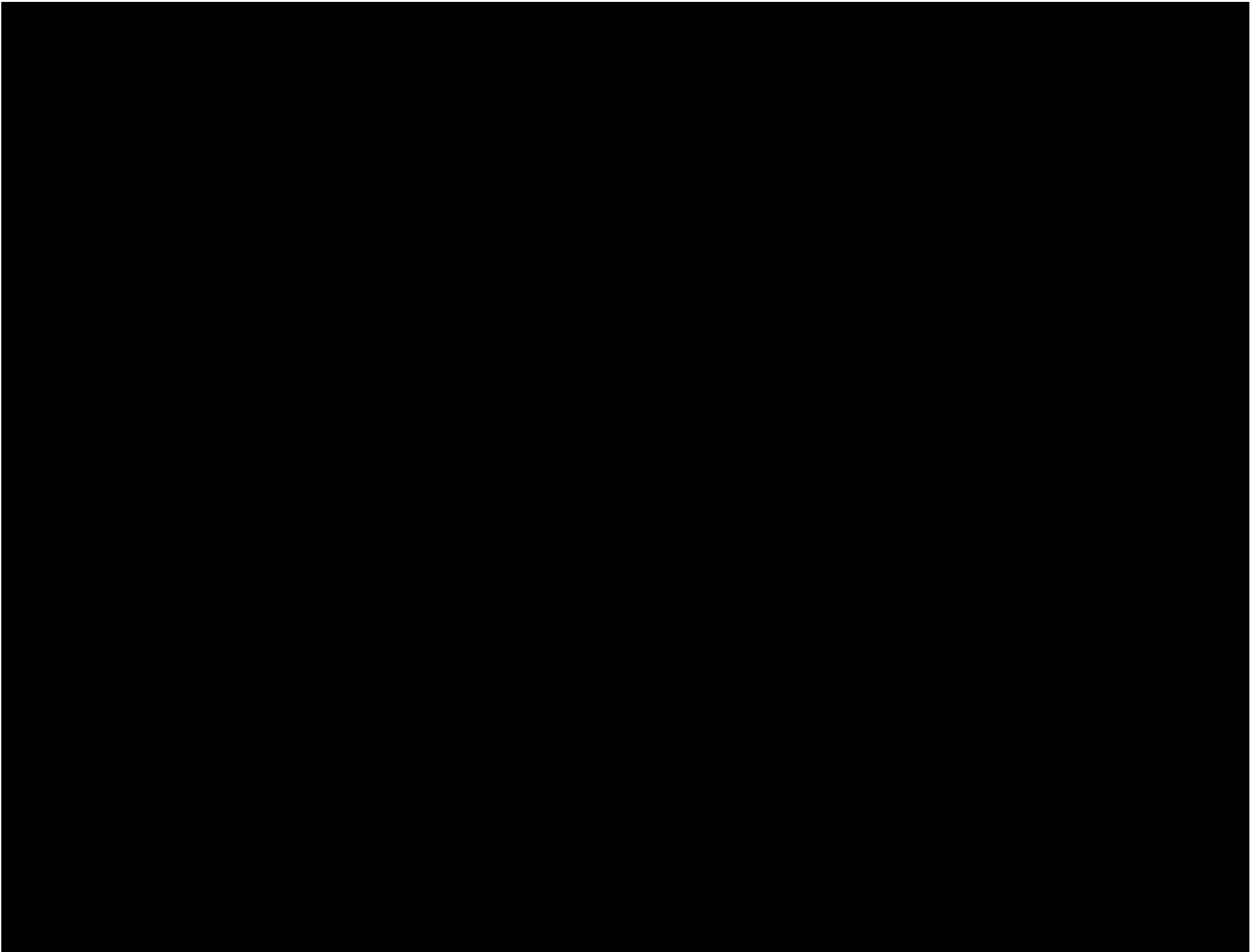


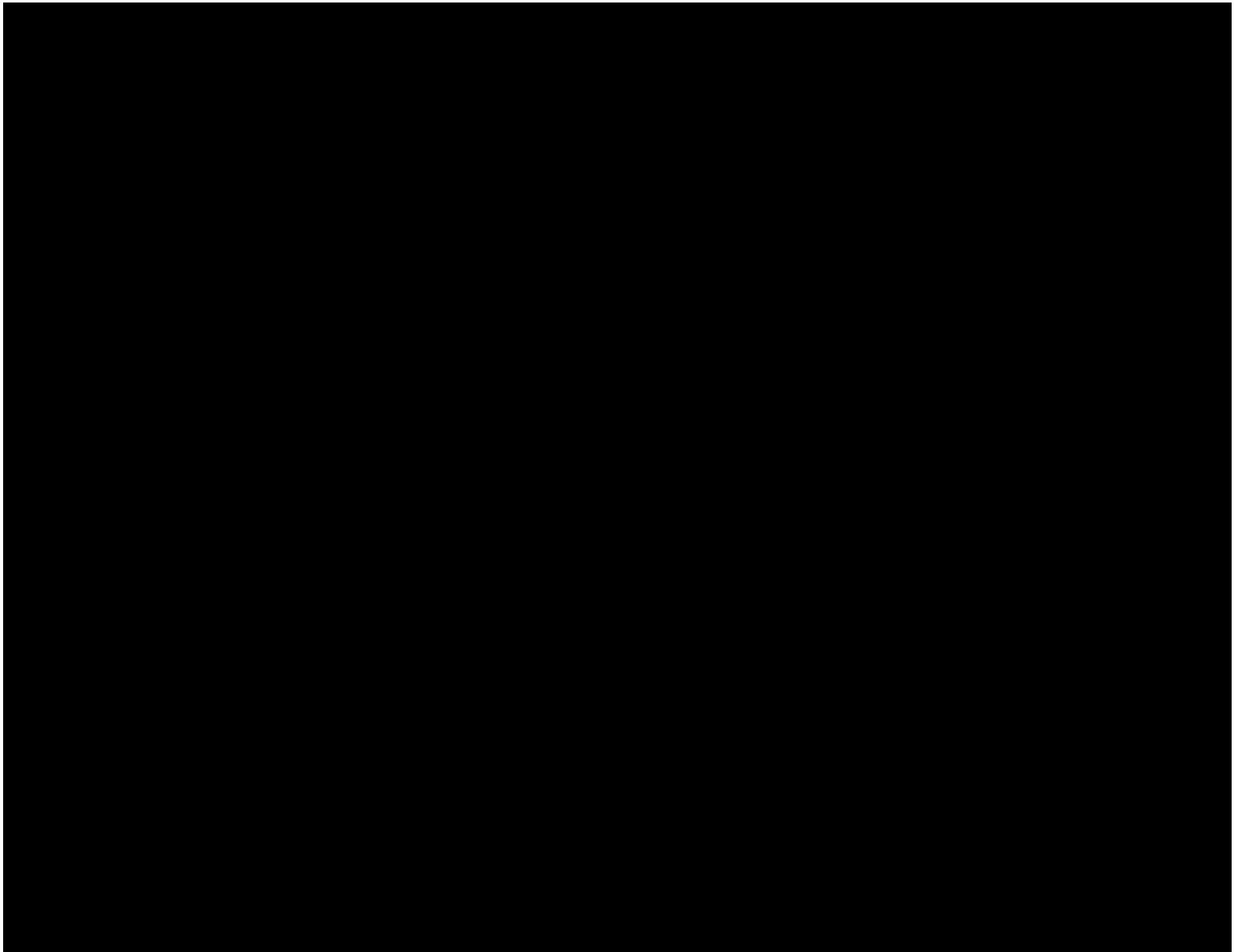


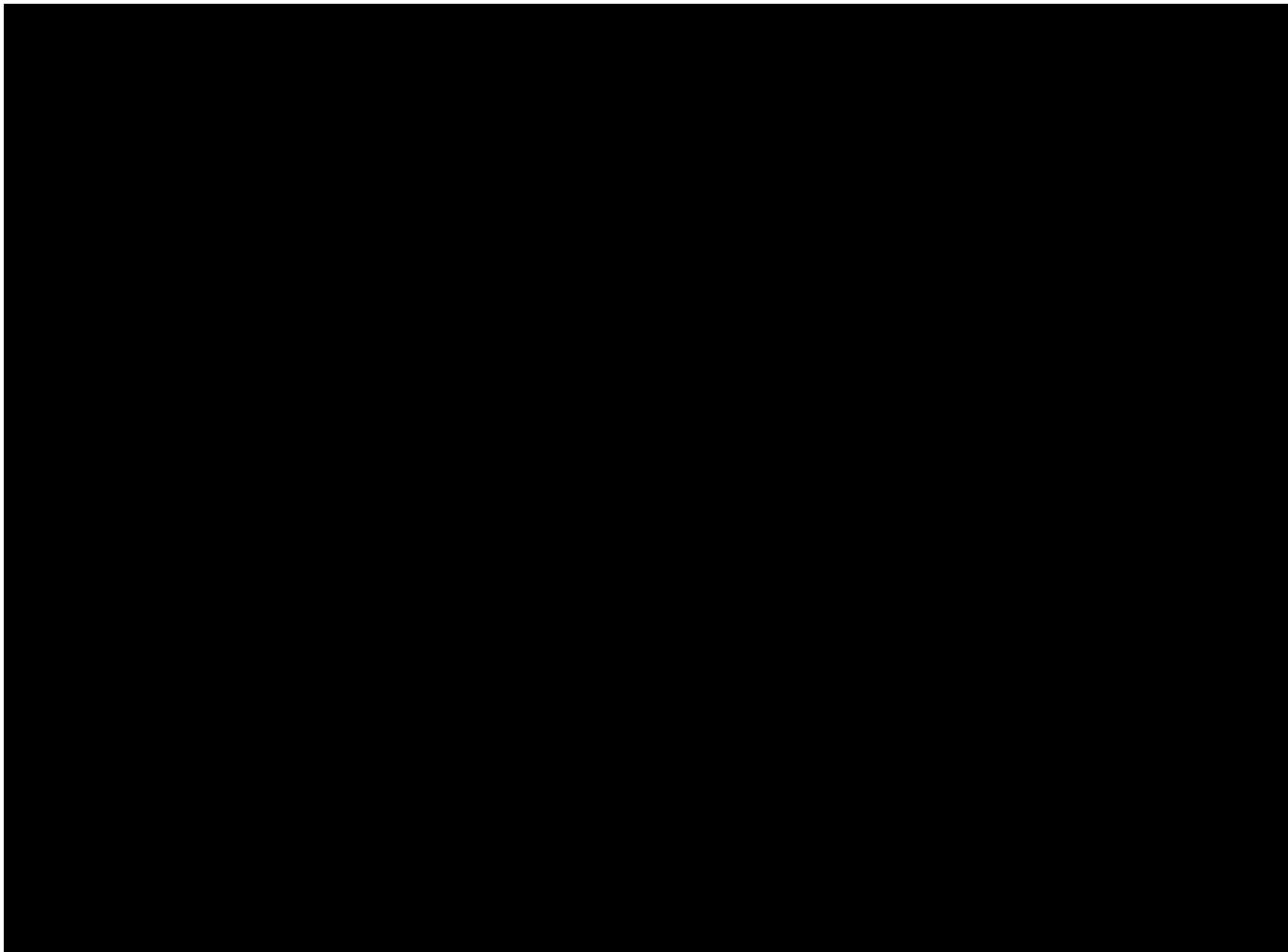














From: johno lee <johnoxlee3@gmail.com>

Sent: 29 July 2025 10:05

To: Balderton Parish Council <office@baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk>; Parish Clerk Barnby <parishclerk@barnbyinthewillows.com>; clerk@bernwood-pc.co.uk; Coddington Parish Council <coddingtonpc@hotmail.com>; P L

[REDACTED]>

Subject: Subject: Thank You for Your Support

Dear all,

I want to take a moment to thank each of you sincerely for your support, patience, and professionalism over what has been a very difficult six months.

As you may now be aware, the formal allegation of bullying made against me has been entirely dismissed. I have been fully cleared of any wrongdoing. The investigation confirmed what I have maintained from the outset: there was no bullying, no intimidation, and no breach of the councillor code of conduct.

This has been a challenging period—not just for me, but for everyone who believes in fair and honest public service. I've continued to work hard for our communities throughout, despite being the subject of what I believe was a politically motivated attempt to damage my reputation and silence my voice.

One point was upheld relating to tone in a meeting. I accept that. I care deeply about the people I represent, and in standing up passionately for them, I came across too strongly, then I will take that on board and do better. But let's be clear: the core accusation—the most serious allegation—was baseless, and it has now been exposed as such.

This has been a test of resilience and principle. And I am proud to say I have come through it still standing, still serving, and more determined than ever to represent the people who put their trust in me.

I don't believe this will be the last attempt to undermine my work. But I do believe in accountability, transparency, and the power of community. I will continue to stand up for my residents and for the values we all share—and I will do so with the same energy and commitment you've seen from me over the years.

Once again, thank you for your continued support. It has meant more than you know.

Warm regards,

Cllr. Johno Lee

County Councillor for the Balderton Division

Facebook Post by Cllr Lee retrieved on the 29th July 2025

For six months, I've been forced to live under the shadow of a serious accusation that I knew was completely false. Yesterday, I finally received confirmation that the bullying allegation made against me has been entirely thrown out. I've been cleared. The truth is now on record.

The official findings confirm what I've said from day one: there was no bullying, no intimidation, and no breach of the code. It never happened.

For half a year, I've been the target of a political smear campaign—deliberately designed to damage my name and reputation. While I've been working hard for my community, someone's been working just as hard to try and destroy me from the sidelines. They've used social media, backroom whispers, and false accusations, all in an attempt to silence me.

Well, I wasn't silenced.

And now I've been vindicated.

Let's be honest—this wasn't about bullying. This was about political tactics. They couldn't beat me in the chamber. They know they can't beat me on the ballot. So they tried to take me out another way. They failed.

Yes, I'm passionate. That's never been a secret. I speak up for my community, and I speak up strongly. One point was upheld—rudeness in a meeting.

That means I raised my voice fighting for my residents, I'll take that. Because I'd rather be guilty of caring too much than guilty of sitting silent while my community goes unheard.

But the core accusation—the one designed to finish me off—was a lie. And now it's been exposed for what it was.

This whole ordeal could have ended my political career. It could have silenced me. But it didn't. I've stood firm, I've been cleared, and I'm still here. And now I will be seeking full legal advice to explore what action can be taken. Because people who deliberately try to ruin others for political gain must be held accountable.

So to those watching from the sidelines or hoping I'd go quietly:

The gloves are off.

Not in the way my opponents operate—not with lies and dirty tricks—but with results, with truth, and with the backing of the people I serve. You won't beat me in the shadows. You'll have to face me where it counts: on the ballot paper.

I've been the victim of a six-month campaign to try and take me down.

But I'm still standing. And now it's your credibility that's in question.

Let's be clear I don't think they'll stop. I think they'll keep coming for me , but we'll keep fighting for you , and I need you to keep backing me .