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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich
dewis iaith.*

*We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please
let us know if your language choice is Welsh.*



Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513

Gofynnwch am / Ask for:

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date:

Dear Councillor,

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB on **Thursday, 9 May 2024 at 10:00**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council on 1 September 2008.
3. Ombudsman Investigation Under S69 of the Local Government Act 2000 3 - 406
4. Urgent Items
To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council's Procedure Rules, and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643696

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Attendees:

G Walter

P Baker

R Lynch

S Maughan

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Meeting of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 MAY 2024
Report Title:	OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATION UNDER S69 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	MONITORING OFFICER
Responsible Officer:	LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework. The Procedure for the Investigation of Complaints is supplementary to the Procedural Rules applicable to the Standards Committee.
Executive Summary:	To undertake the hearing into the conduct of Cllr Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To undertake the hearing into the conduct of Cllr Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000 all allegations and breaches of the Member Code of Conduct are submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) for investigation in the first instance.
- 2.2 The Ombudsman may determine a matter be referred to the Authority's Monitoring Officer for investigation or may as in this case undertake the investigation and refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer for consideration by the Standards Committee.
- 2.3 The Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committee) (Wales) Regulations 2001, as amended, set out the functions of the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee in relation to investigations and determinations.
- 2.4 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman) has investigated a complaint against Cllr Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council. The Ombudsman determined that the Member may have breached the Code of Conduct, in particular,

the following paragraphs of the Code:

6(1)(a) – Members must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or authority into disrepute;

(7a) – Members must not in their official capacity or otherwise, use or attempt to use their position improperly to confer on or secure for themselves, or any other person, an advantage or create or avoid for themselves, or any other person, a disadvantage;

10(2)(c)(i) – Members must regard themselves as having a personal interest in any business of their authority if a decision upon it might reasonably be regarded as affecting their wellbeing or financial position, or that of a person with whom they live, or any person with whom they have a close personal association;

11(1) - Where Members have a personal interest in any business of their authority and they attend a meeting at which that business is considered, they must disclose orally to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest before or at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent;

14(1)(a) - Where Members have a prejudicial interest in any business of their authority they must, unless they have obtained a dispensation from their authority's standards committee withdraw from the room, chamber or place where a meeting considering the business is being held;

14(1)(c) - Where Members have a prejudicial interest in any business of their authority they must, unless they have obtained a dispensation from their authority's standards committee not seek to influence a decision about that business;

14(1)(e) - Where Members have a prejudicial interest in any business of their authority they must, unless they have obtained a dispensation from their authority's standards committee not make any oral representations (whether in person or some form of electronic communication) in respect of that business or immediately cease to make such oral representations when the prejudicial interest becomes apparent.

- 2.5 The Standards Committee determined on 9 April 2024 that the Member should be given the opportunity to make representations either orally or in writing in respect of the findings of the investigation and any allegation that he has failed, or may have failed, to comply with the relevant Members Code of Conduct.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer wrote to the Member on 10 April 2024 providing information on the determination of the Standards Committee and providing a copy of the adopted procedure and requesting him to provide information within 14 days in readiness for the hearing. On 26th April 2024, the Member confirmed in writing that he would be attending the hearing and calling Cllr Ian Spiller as a witness and provided written representations attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 The Monitoring Officer subsequently wrote to the Ombudsman confirming that the matter would proceed by way of hearing and providing the written submissions received from the Member. The response from the Ombudsman is attached as **Appendix 2**. Officers from the Ombudsman's Office will be in attendance at the hearing to make representations to the Committee.
- 3.3 The adopted procedure is appended to this report (**Appendix 3**). The Monitoring Officer will advise the Committee as to process. The Committee has previously considered the confidential report of the Ombudsman (**Appendix 4**) and the

Appendices File (**Appendix 5**) and is to undertake the hearing at its meeting on 9 May 2024.

- 3.4 Standards hearings are held in public unless the Committee is satisfied that it is appropriate to exclude the public for the discussion of exempt information under the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The categories of exempt information for these purposes includes information about an individual, provided the Committee is satisfied that the public interest in exempting the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. This means that the Committee will firstly be required to decide whether the hearing (or any part of it) should be conducted in public or private. It should be noted that the Committee is required to produce a report on the outcome of the investigation, which is to be published by the Monitoring Officer after the conclusion of the matter in accordance with the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees)(Wales) Regulations 2001.
- 3.5 The Committee will need to consider Stage 1 – Findings of Fact and consider whether there are any significant disagreements as to the facts contained within the PSOW investigation report. Having made your finding of fact (or if there is no disagreement on the facts) the Committee will then need to consider whether the Member has breached the Code of Conduct. Should the Committee decide that, on the evidence, there is a breach of the Code then the Committee will need to consider the appropriate sanction. Attached as **Appendix 6** is the Adjudication Panel of Wales Sanction Guidance. Should the Committee decide that, on the evidence there is no breach of the Code then that will be the end of the adjudication.
- 3.6 After making its final determination, the Committee is required to give notice of its determination to the Member concerned and the Ombudsman and to produce and publish a report on the outcome of the investigation. If the Committee finds a breach of the Code, the Member may apply to the Adjudication Panel for Wales within 21 days from receiving notice of the Committee's determination for permission to appeal. If permission to appeal is granted, the Adjudication Panel for Wales may either uphold the Committee's determination, recommend a different sanction to the Committee for reconsideration or overturn the Committee's determination.
4. **Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**
 - 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.
5. **Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**
 - 5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report. This report

also assists in the achievement of the following well-being objective under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-

A county borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community.

- 5.2 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no climate change implications.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee continue with the hearing, relying on the information in the Ombudsman investigation report and in accordance with the adopted procedure.

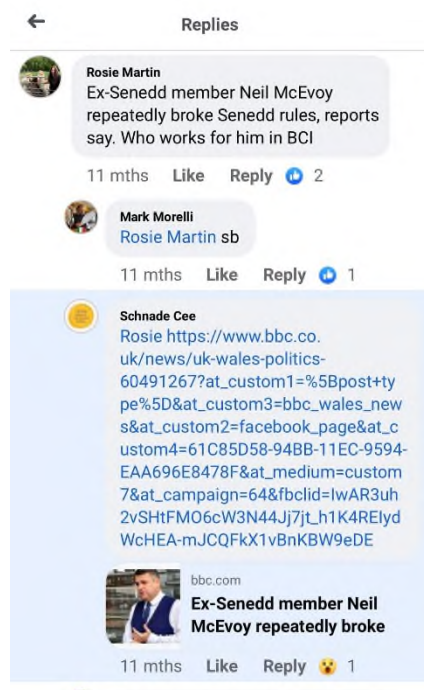
Background documents:

None

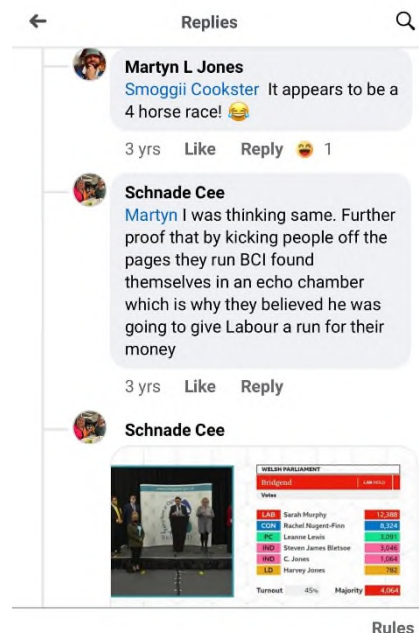
Firstly, I request that my hearing is postponed pending further information that I have requested from the Public Services Ombudsman's Office.

It has been very widely and publicly reported that a senior member of the PSOW staff was first suspended and subsequently resigned after it emerged that she had made derogatory statements on social media under a fake identity. Much of that press coverage has been centred around "anti-Tory" messages, however the senior officer in question, Ms Sinead Cook made numerous derogatory comments about me personally during my time as a candidate and Councillor on Facebook forums. These were not as "salacious" as those that were reported on the news, however, they were equally biased and showed that she was prejudiced against me, under what she believed to be a "safe" pseudonym.

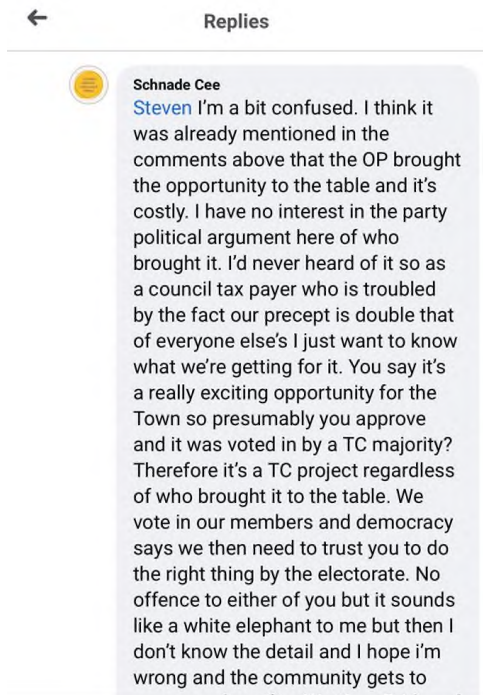
Evidence



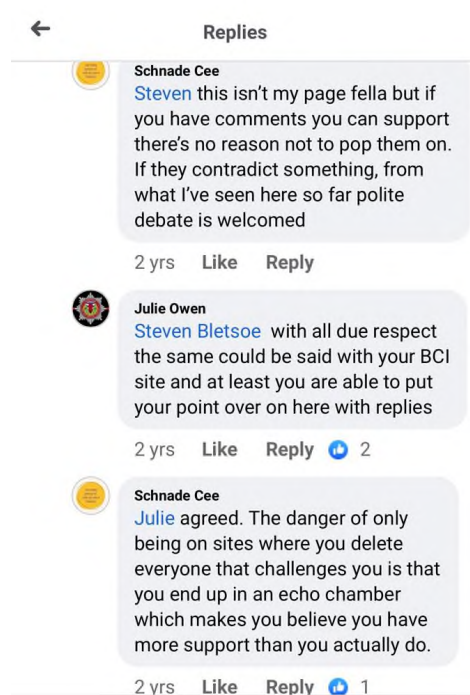
Community Councillor Rosie Martin states that there is a person "in BCI" who works for Neil McEvoy MS (at the time). Mark Morelli states "sb", referring to Steven Bletsoe. Schnade Cee (Sinead Cook) then links to a story about Neil McEvoy MS. This was on a Facebook forum.



Martyn L Jones talks to a person called Smoggi Cookster (Sinead Cook) stating that it appears to be a "4 horse race" which is in relation to a claim from the BCI Group that the Senedd election was a "2 horse race". Schnade Cee (the name that Sinead Cook changed to) responds as shown, including a link to my result, where I finished fourth.



Schnade Cee (Sinead Cook) engaging with me over the administration of a social media page Tyr Ardd by Bridgend Town Council and stating that it was a “white elephant”



Schnade Cee (Sinead Cook) engaging in an online debate with me over the purchase of

where she goes on to again restate her “echo chamber” statement



Schnade Cee (Sinead Cook) engaging with me in a negative way over my Senedd campaign.

These five instances are a small selection of over 50 occurrences where the senior officer at the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales office has either been critical of either myself, my group or my employer (at the time) under what they thought was a protected fake identity.

Given the above I submitted the following email to the Public Service Ombudsman:-

On today's date of Monday 11th March 2024 and under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 I am making a full Subject Access Request to your organisation under the terms below:-

My name is Steven James Bletsoe, residing at [REDACTED]. I have used email addresses [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in correspondence with your office.

I have been elected to Bridgend Town Council for the Morfa Ward since May 2017, to Litchard Ward of Coity Higher Council since May 2022 and Bridgend Central of Bridgend County Borough Council since May 2022.

I am requesting all internal and external communication of any nature that would relate to myself from Public Services Ombudsman for Wales employee Sinead Cookster since my election to public office or the commencement of the employee with the PSOW office, whichever is earlier.

Under the guidance from the ICO I am advised to consider stating the reason for my request. I have extremely important reasons for this request, which I would insist are kept confidential. If they are required to justify my application then I would be willing to discuss further and why I wish for them to remain confidential in the first instance.

To confirm and for clarity. I request all correspondence sent by PSOW employee Sinead Cookster, both internally and externally, including any private messaging services that may be used between PSOW employees.

Please let me know if I can clarify my request any further as this is an extremely important matter that the Ombudsman herself may require to be made aware of and intervene. I will be making Welsh Government, the Minister and Shadow Minister for Local Government and the Standards Commissioner aware of my request.

Thank you in anticipation

On 10th April I received a response from the Public Services Ombudsman stating:-

We aim to share information wherever it is possible and lawful to do so. However, we must comply with the law we work to. A search of our internal systems has been undertaken for all information held about you in relation to your specific request. This has included a search of our case management system, emails, team meeting notes, staff supervision notes and conversations on Teams. We do not use private messaging services and therefore do not hold or have any access to any private messaging services that PSOW employees may use outside of work.

We hold information about you because you either made a complaint to us or we received a complaint that you had allegedly broken your local authority's Code of Conduct. A summary of the cases we hold linked to your name is provided at the end of this letter. This also shows whether any of the requested information is held on those specific records. As you will see from the summary Mrs Cook had some involvement in 5 of the 16 cases. This was for the purpose of case allocation and participation in internal case discussions and progression. She was the case owner for case reference 202301955.

Read the Privacy Notice on our website to find out more about how we process your personal information. I can confirm that we hold information about you relevant to your request in:

- *Correspondence directly between you and Mrs Cook. This is related to one case (202301955) and a copy of the correspondence is attached.*

- *Correspondence with external parties for the purpose of considering complaints raised with us. In terms of Mrs Cook's communications with external parties this*

Page 3 of 4 was limited only to case reference 202301955. She sent a copy of the decision letter to the Council's Monitoring Officer and the Accused Member. Copies of this correspondence is included in the attached, although I have redacted the postal address for the Accused Member.

- *Internal communications for the purpose of documenting case discussions and progression as required by our complaints processes.*

We are unable to share any internal communications with you. The LGA requires that our consideration of complaints to be carried out in private. We are therefore only able to share information if it is for one of the reasons set out in section 69E.

None of those reasons is satisfied to enable me to share the information with you. The DPA says that we do not have to share information if to do so would likely prejudice our ability to carry out our function.¹ Internal discussions remain ongoing until the final decision on the complaint has been agreed and issued. Disclosure of this information would therefore prejudice our being able to consider complaints effectively in the future. Where required by the legislation a copy of the final decision has been shared with you. Where we have investigated a complaint against you we have shared with you the evidence we obtained as per the requirements of the LGA.

On 14th April, I requested a review of the decision as follows:-

Good afternoon and thank you for the email responding to my request.

I would like to formally request a review of the decision to exempt items from your response on the basis of being in the Public Interest. I acknowledge the need to protect certain individuals from releasing their information, however, given that PSOW employee Sinead Cook was suspended from her position given her public social media posts, which include direct references to me and the confirmation that she has been involved in cases brought by me and about me then I believe that the Public Interest in the emails that relate to me far outweigh any rights to exemption.

Any correspondence from individuals to Sinead Cook can be fully redacted, however, given the clear and obvious prejudice against me which has been played out in public, under a fake name, and the PSOW's public declaration that her office "now needs to rebuild trust in the work of the organisation on complaints against Councillors" then I would state that this release of redacted information is part of that process.

If my request for a review is unsuccessful then I will immediately refer this matter to the Information Commissioners Office for their consideration as their website states that "If there is a plausible suspicion of wrongdoing, this may create a public interest in disclosure. And even where this is not the case, there is a public interest in releasing information to provide a full picture. Arguments based on the requester's identity or motives are generally irrelevant"

As I have stated, Sinead Cook was suspended, she later resigned. There is a very large public interest in the accusation that the PSOW has had Senior Members of staff with a political bias, there is clear plausible suspicion of wrongdoing and clear public interest. Therefore I formally request a review of your decision to exempt the information.

Thank you and I look forward to a timely response to this request.

On 17th April I received the following response

Dear Councillor Bletsoe

Thank you for your request to review the handling of your data subject access request received on 15 April 2024, which is currently being considered. You should expect a response by 15 May 2024.

With kind regards

On the 16th April 2024 I wrote to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales asking:-

For the attention of Michelle Morris

Thank you for your letter dated 9th April 2024, I have noted all of its contents.

In relation to the opening paragraph:-

"It may also be helpful for me to confirm that Sinead Cook has not managed our Code of Conduct Team since the end of August last year. She had no involvement in your case after this time and in accordance with our investigation process, more senior officers oversaw the investigation."

Can you please confirm:-

why Ms Cook was removed from the Code of Conduct Team at the end of August,

what involvement she had in my case up until that time

and who were the more senior officers who oversaw the investigation

Thank you for this, as the information is required for my representation to the Standards Committee of BCBC in May.

I have not yet received a response.

Therefore, given that there is evidence that the Senior Investigator at the Public Services Manager was suspended, later resigned and there is a full Independent external investigation into her conduct and influence during her time at the office. Plus, the confirmation that Sinead Cook had direct input into this case up until August 2023 I believe that the information I have requested has a material impact into the investigation and the report. This is why I requested the information and continue to make the case for it to be released. If the review is unsuccessful then I will immediately refer the matter to the Information Commissioner Office and request that my hearing with the Standard Committee is postponed until that information is made available to me and members of the committee.

The legal test for bias, applied by the courts in the United Kingdom, is whether a "fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that there was a real possibility that the decision maker was biased". It is therefore the perception of bias that matters. Sinead Cook's conduct has serious ramifications my case. Given the senior role she held, the public can't have confidence in any decisions taken by the Ombudsman while she was in the post and overseeing my investigation up until August 2023. The influence she had over others in her team, and the culture she set, means

they too, through no fault of their own, were unable to act with the impartiality required. Having made such explicit comments in a public forum, it is highly unlikely that Ms Cook would not have made similar, potentially worse comments, privately. It is therefore imperative that the information I have requested, plus a full Independent investigation into her actions whilst in her post and in charge of my complaint are carried out. The public can have no faith in the system where she has publicly expressed prejudice against myself, my group and my then employer has not shown bias against me.

I have spoken to many Councillors who find themselves in the same situation with current and recent investigations who are also considering their legal options, on the basis of bias of investigations. Therefore, and for this reason alone, I ask that the hearing is postponed until this situation is resolved to ensure openness, transparency and fairness for all involved in the process.

If the Committee is not minded to postpone the hearing then I will make myself available to participate in the proceedings as requested, on the understanding that I reserve the right to legally challenge any decision after the event. On this basis I would ask that, given the finding that I attempted to lead a Councillor in a meeting, I am able to call Councillor Ian Spiller as a material witness in the hearing so that the Committee can ask him for his version of events. I will cover the reasons why further in this representation.

For the most part in the hearing I will rely on my written submission to the PSOW office to their draft report, given that there are very few differences between the draft and final report there is very little reason to go over them all again. I hope that this response from me to the PSOW will be in your reports, if it is not, then I am happy to provide it to you.

My first concerns is around the case law quoted for justification of the investigation, and to remind you, the decision to investigate was taken whilst Ms Sinead Cook was in place of Senior Investigations Manager and had a part in this process. The case quoted is not similar to the one that I am accused of. It relates to a relationship between an elected member and a paid employee of the Council, where a financial benefit would be received. This investigation is about two elected members on their own basis, one of whom was the Chair of the Committee in question. I would present the complaint about me made to the PSOW, reference number 202301955/SC/SW, following the BCBC AGM, where I was accused of not declaring an interest in the seconding the nomination of Councillor Freya Bletsoe as Chair of SOSC2. That complaint was not investigated and it was found that there was no case to answer.

My main concern around that investigation and the report is the poor quality of investigation that has been carried out. Where there is doubt then the PSOW has consistently failed to accept my version of events, where there is conjecture it is consistently found against me, where there are gaps in evidence it has not been sought. As a brief example, there is an accusation that I colluded with Councillor Ian Spiller before the Regeneration Meeting and influenced him during the meeting. The PSOW has failed to interview Councillor Spiller to substantiate either of these accusations and whilst accepting that there is no evidence in collusion has stated that I "could" have influenced him. This is conjecture and could have easily been resolved if the PSOW had called Councillor Spiller as a witness to give evidence, they did not and assumed the resolution put forward in their report. This is why I have called Councillor Spiller as a witness, so that the Committee can undertake the investigation that the PSOW should have done. I must point out that this is **one** example of my statement that the investigation is not a complete or reliable one. There are many to be found in the report itself, they are far too many to list in the response, but are referenced in my reply to the draft report, and I will be relying on these in my hearing. I make the statement that the PSOW investigation into me shows clear bias against me, this can be evidenced and given the bias show against me by the Investigations Manager I believe that the entire investigation has been compromised.

There is reference in the findings that whilst the PSOW accepts that I was unable to seek advice from the Bridgend Town Council Clerk and Deputy Clerk on potential conflicts of interest, as per the interview and my answers, it goes on to state that I could have sought advice from the BCBC Monitoring Officer. During the investigation or the interview the PSOW did not question me on this and sought no answer as to why I did not do this, this is a yet another failure of the investigation, as there was a reason why I did not do this and the PSOW did not seek out or understand the reason why, the finding simply states that I should have done, without any investigation. This is yet further evidence of a poor investigation by the PSOW that shows clear bias against me as the investigated.

I was the Chair of the Regeneration meeting in question, under the requirements of Chairs of committees I was required to sign them as being a true and accurate record. I knew that they were not true or accurate and included inaccuracies that were taken from notes produced by a complainant in a separate complaint against a Councillor who was in that meeting. All I ever sought to do, despite what the PSOW or the complainant and witness in my case try to state was my motivation, my sole and only motivation at all times was that the minutes were a true and accurate account of the meeting that I chaired, so that I could sign them as a true and accurate account. I was (and am) a democratically elected member of Bridgend Town Council and the other Councillor in question was (and is) a democratically elected member of Bridgend Town Council. The characterisation of my motives are not true, and the poor investigation has failed to address this, instead it has chosen to decide its outcome and make their chosen evidence to fit that. No Councillor who attended that meeting was requested to be interviewed by the PSOW, evidence was provided in the format of leaked WhatsApp messages confirm that the proposed minutes were wrong. My statement that the minutes were wrong has proven to be correct, that fact has been totally ignored by the PSOW, who would rather incorrect minutes have been approved than the processes that led to that point. A major problem in my opinion. As I stated in my evidence, truth is important.

Finally, for this representation, alongside the concerns over the quality of the investigation, I also have extremely grave concerns over the precedent that this finding would set going forward for Councils. The facts are that minutes were produced by a Clerk that had inaccuracies in, inaccuracies that I knew to be wrong. I as the Chair of the Committee knew that they were wrong and needed to ensure that they were a true and accurate record. If this finding is upheld then it will create something extremely dangerous, either a Councillor who is closely related to another Councillor cannot challenge the accuracy of minutes where statements are attributed to that Councillor, meaning that the accuracy of minutes is not protected, or the Councillor will seek out other members of the committee to “do their bidding” in meetings, outside of the public scrutiny and therefore against the principles laid down in the Nolan Report. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has stated in their report that process is more important than truth, and that simply cannot be allowed to be the case.

It is stated that complaints against Councillors are to be seen through the prism of whether a “reasonable informed member of the public” would consider it to be the case, but I would like to remind the members of the Standards Committee, that no member of the public made this complaint. This complaint has been made against me by the Clerk of Bridgend Town Council, because she felt that my actions “weakened” her separate complaint against another Councillor on the Council. No member of the public, who I serve, has made a complaint over my actions

So, members of the Committee, I ask that my hearing is postponed until I receive the information that I have requested from the PSOW, or my complaint to the ICO as there are material considerations in those documents. It has been confirmed that a member of the PSOW team, who has shown clear prejudice against me was involved in my case, that information held has been

“exempted” which I have challenged on the grounds of public interest. I have laid out the legal definition of bias in investigations and am trying to uncover if any bias has occurred, which is being withheld from me. I hope that you as a committee will see my values on openness and transparency, which I carry through my public life and will continue to bring when I am asked to sit in front of you and answer your questions.

Additional Information

As detailed to a BCBC Legal Officer, I had written the above reply on Tuesday 23rd April 2024. I subsequently received an email from Marilyn Morgan, at the PSOW Office with a copy of a letter written by Michelle Morris to Kelly Watson, Monitoring Officer at BCBC for the consideration of the Standards Committee. In this letter it details that the person suspended and later resigning from the PSOW “Ms Cook was responsible for the file allocation and regular oversight of Ms Morland’s progression of the case until the end of August” 2023. It goes on to state that “On 1 September 2023, as happens from time to time in accordance with the operational needs of our office, we rotated our team leaders and Ms Cook moved to manage a different team in PSOW. On this occasion, the rotation occurred as a result of the retirement of a team leader who managed a Public Service Complaints Investigation Team.” It does not however explicable state that this was the reason for this particular move, just that it happens from “time to time”. As you have seen in my reply above, I have asked the PSOW specifically for the reasons for the move from my case, despite being promised an answer, this has not been forthcoming. I have also had an SAR request for all correspondence by Sinead Cook, which has been declined, has been requested to be reviewed on the basis of public interest and I await this official response. If the request is unsuccessful then I will escalate the matter to the Information Commissioners Office. The PSOW claims that it is exempt from release because “We are unable to share any internal communications with you. The LGA requires that our consideration of complaints to be carried out in private.” However, given the clear and evidenced bias shown against me in public, by someone who had “regular oversight of Ms Morland’s progression of the case until the end of August” put alongside United Kingdom case law which states that “fair-minded and informed observer would conclude that there was a real possibility that the decision maker was biased” then it is incumbent on the PSOW to release all internal communications that relate to me and this case investigation to me and to this committee. I do not believe that this committee can properly consider the case, without it. In legal cases, the defence would have access to all information held on them under “disclosure”.

I would also like to bring the recent Welsh Senedd debate on the situation with impartiality, which passed unanimously and was passed to the Finance Committee (which was held in private session)

Committee, given all of the above, and the additional information from the email sent by the PSOW this week, I ask that this hearing is postponed until I am able to seek the information that the PSOW office clearly hold and are refusing to release. There is clear public interest along with information that you as a committee may feel is material to the case.



**Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman**
Cymru • Wales

Our ref: 202204885

Ask for: Annie Ginwalla

Your ref:



01656 641169

Date: 30 April 2024



annie.ginwalla@ombudsman
.wales

Ms Laura Griffiths
Group Manager
Legal & Democratic Services
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
BRIDGEND
CF31 4WB

By Email Only
laura.griffiths@bridgend.gov.uk

Dear Ms Griffiths

**Code of Conduct complaint made against Councillor Steven Bletsoe of
Bridgend Town Council by Mrs Leanne Edwards**

Thank you for passing on Councillor Bletsoe's submissions to us on 26 April 2024, we are grateful to the Committee for providing an opportunity to respond.

We note that Councillor Bletsoe would like to call Councillor Ian Spiller as a witness, and that he also considers it appropriate for the Standards Committee to postpone its scheduled hearing of the matter next week. While this is a decision for the Standards Committee, we have no objections to either proposal if given that the hearing is scheduled next week Councillor Bletsoe may require more time to prepare.

I hope it helps to explain that our Information Governance Team has now responded to Councillor Bletsoe's requests for information including the recent review. While we have provided the information we are able to share with him, we have also sought to explain in recent correspondence our position and we have responded in line with our relevant legislation. We would be happy to share copies of our replies with the Committee if that would be helpful.

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We acknowledge that Councillor Bletsoe has indicated his intention to seek a review from the ICO so he can be assured about the information which we have disclosed/been unable to disclose to him. This is of course an option that is open to him.

We know Councillor Bletsoe remains concerned about a former employee's comments on social media. The Ombudsman has, of course, set out to both you and Councillor Bletsoe information in recent correspondence about the staff members who were involved in substantive decision making in regard to the draft and final reports on the matter. In addition, and importantly, the evidential basis upon which the Ombudsman reached her conclusions (that breaches of the Code of Conduct may have occurred), and decision to refer the matter to you, have been fully set out in the report and appendices which have been shared with you and Councillor Bletsoe previously.

The Ombudsman recently explained, among other things, that Ms Cook moved teams as a result of operational needs which were necessitated as a result of the retirement of a team leader from one of our Public Service Complaints Investigation teams. We therefore consider that we have provided a direct answer to Councillor Bletsoe's question about this.

Councillor Bletsoe considers that the guidance and case law referred to at page 6 of the Ombudsman's report was referred to as the "justification" for the investigation, and that the guidance is not relevant to his circumstances. To clarify, this was referenced to provide examples of what the Ombudsman's guidance and case law states in regard to personal and prejudicial interests. It is relevant, among other things, because it sets out when interests may be considered personal, and that a close personal interest includes marriage.

Councillor Bletsoe has mentioned case reference number 202301955. In that case, Sinead Cook made a decision on the Ombudsman's behalf not to investigate because, based on the information the complainant provided, the interest in question did not appear to be prejudicial. The Member was, however, reminded about his obligations in regard to personal interests, and the need to declare these in meetings because it appeared he had failed to do so on this occasion. The member was reminded of the need to ensure that he sought advice from Bridgend County Borough Council's Monitoring Officer should he be unsure about his position in the future. Overall, however, it was not considered that the failure to declare a personal interest on this occasion proportionate or in the public interest to investigate given the particular circumstances of the case. We would be happy to provide more details about this individual case, and why it was considered no prejudicial interests arose, if the Standards Committee would find this helpful.

Councillor Bletsoe considers we have failed to investigate thoroughly. For example, he states that although the Ombudsman concluded there was no evidence that he colluded with Councillor Ian Spiller, she concluded the evidence suggested he sought to influence a decision. He is concerned however that we

did not interview Councillor Spiller to understand if he was influenced by Councillor Bletsoe's comments. As is set out at paragraph 60 of the Ombudsman's report, the issue was not about whether it could be said that Councillor Spiller, or any member, was in fact influenced. For that reason, we did not consider it necessary or proportionate to interview other members. Paragraph 14(1)(c) of the Code is clear that members who have a prejudicial interest must "not seek to influence a decision about that business" and must not make any oral representations (Paragraph 14(1)(e)). For the reasons set out in the Ombudsman's report, the view was that the evidence suggested Councillor Bletsoe had not adhered to these provisions, among others. The Ombudsman did not conclude, as it was not relevant to the provisions of the code, that any member was influenced by the representations he made.

Councillor Bletsoe is concerned we did not ask at interview why he did not seek advice from the Monitoring Officer. In interview (Appendix 12) we asked him whether he sought any advice about declaring an interest. Councillor Bletsoe explained why he felt unable to seek advice from the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and One Voice Wales. He did not mention why he may not have sought advice from the Monitoring Officer. In his representations on the Ombudsman's draft report (Appendix 14) he explained the reason he did not approach the Monitoring Officer was because he had sought advice from the Monitoring Officer on numerous occasions previously and the Monitoring Officer had advised that she was not able to provide advice on Town and Community Council matters.

Councillor Bletsoe suggests the evidence he provided, in the form of WhatsApp messages, confirm that the draft proposed minutes were wrong and that his statement that the minutes were wrong "has proven to be correct" and "that fact has been totally ignored by the PSOW". The report is clear that the Ombudsman did not consider the WhatsApp messages, appended to the report, evidenced what Councillor Bletsoe suggested. Councillor Bletsoe, as we understand, felt a WhatsApp message sent from a member who was present at the meeting was important because this confirmed the member present did not think there was any shouting at the meeting. Councillor Bletsoe felt this message (that there was no shouting) showed that the draft minutes of the meeting, which referenced Councillor Bletsoe's wife's behaviour, were inaccurate. However, the draft minutes, while referring to his wife as being 'irate' for example, did not refer to there being any shouting. The Ombudsman does not agree that Councillor Bletsoe is correct to state that his statement that the minutes were wrong has "proven to be correct" by the WhatsApp message he provided. More importantly however, the Ombudsman did not investigate, and therefore come to any conclusions about, whether Councillor Bletsoe's representations in the meetings, nor whether the draft minutes in question, were in fact accurate. The Ombudsman did not consider this relevant to the issues she was considering in the matter which were whether a) Councillor Bletsoe had a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter and b) whether he was therefore permitted to make any representations/take part in discussions about the matter.

In regard to Councillor Bletsoe's concerns that a dangerous precedent may be created that members cannot challenge matters which they know to be inaccurate, firstly, as stated, whether representations were accurate or not have not been tested in this case and no conclusions have been drawn on this point, so no such precedent can follow. The report seeks to acknowledge that he felt he was in a difficult position, for the reasons referred to in the report, however, the Ombudsman's view, overall, was that he was not able to make representations/take part in discussions as he did.

Finally, should the Committee decide not to postpone its hearing on the matter next week, Katrin Shaw our Director of Investigations, is no longer able to attend the hearing due to another unavoidable commitment. We will of course make sure other staff are made available, and we will inform you which staff members will attend.

Yours sincerely

Annie Ginwalla

Annie Ginwalla

Rheolwr Tîm Cod a Dirprwy Gynghorwr Cyfreithiol/ Code Team Manager & Deputy Legal Adviser

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST COUNCILLORS AND REFERRED TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. This document sets out the procedure that the Council's Standards Committee will follow where it is required to make decisions about the conduct of Councillors following investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales or the Council's Monitoring Officer under Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 and related regulations. If there is any conflict between this document and any statutory requirements then those statutory requirements will prevail.

Interpretation

2. In this procedure:
 - (a) 'the Act' means the Local Government Act 2000
 - (b) 'the Council' means Bridgend County Borough Council
 - (c) 'the Code of Conduct' means the code of conduct for members adopted by the Council or the community councils within the Council's area in 2008 in accordance with Section 51 of the Act, including any revisions
 - (d) 'the Complainant' means any person who made any allegation which gave rise to the investigation
 - (e) the 'Investigating Officer' means the person who conducted an investigation into any alleged breach of the Code of Conduct and produced the investigation report, being either the Ombudsman (or a person acting on his or her behalf) or the Monitoring Officer
 - (f) an 'investigation report' means a report on the outcome of an investigation into any alleged breach of the Code of Conduct produced either by the Ombudsman under s71(2) of the Act or by the Monitoring Officer under the Regulations.
 - (g) 'the Member' means any person who is the subject of an investigation into any alleged breach of the Code of Conduct
 - (h) 'the Monitoring Officer' means the officer for the time being appointed by the Council under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989
 - (i) 'the Ombudsman' means the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
 - (j) 'the Regulations' means the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001 as amended

- (k) 'the Standards Officer' means the officer for the time being appointed by the Council to support the work of the Standards Committee

Summary of the procedure

3. Under section 69 of the Act, the Ombudsman may investigate any alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by members or co-opted members (or former members or co-opted members) of the Council or a community council in the Council's area.
4. Under section 70(4) of the Act, where the Ombudsman ceases such an investigation before it is completed, he or she may refer the matters which are the subject of the investigation to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer will then investigate matters in accordance with the Regulations before reporting and, if appropriate, making recommendations to the Standards Committee.
5. Alternatively, under section 71(2) of the Act, where the Ombudsman decides after investigating that it is appropriate, he or she will produce a report on the outcome of the investigation and send it to the Monitoring Officer and the Council's Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer will then consider the report of the Ombudsman in accordance with the Regulations, before, if appropriate, making recommendations to the Standards Committee.
6. The Standards Committee will then make an initial determination either:
 - (a) that there is no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, or
 - (b) that the Member should be given the opportunity to make representations, either orally or in writing
7. Where the Member is given an opportunity to make representations, the Standards Committee will convene a hearing to consider any response made by the Member and it must determine under regulation 9(1) of the Regulations either that:
 - (a) there is no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and that therefore no action needs to be taken,
 - (b) the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct but that no action needs to be taken in respect of that failure
 - (c) the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and should be censured, or
 - (d) the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and should be suspended or partially suspended from being a member or co-opted member of his/her authority for a period not exceeding six months.

and take any such action accordingly.

Investigations by the Monitoring Officer (referrals under section 70(4) of the Act)

8. Where the Ombudsman ceases his or her investigation before it is completed and refers the matters which are the subject of the investigation to the Monitoring Officer under section 70(4) of the Act, the Monitoring Officer must:-
 - (a) conduct an investigation; and

- (b) report, and if appropriate make recommendations to the Council's Standards Committee
- 9. The Monitoring Officer will investigate in accordance with the Regulations and may follow such procedures as he or she considers appropriate in the circumstances of the case.
- 10. After concluding an investigation, the Monitoring Officer must:
 - (a) produce a report on the findings of his or her investigation and, if appropriate, may make recommendations to the Standards Committee,
 - (b) send a copy of the report to the Member, and
 - (c) take reasonable steps to send a copy of the report to the Complainant.
- 11. The Standards Committee will consider the Monitoring Officer's report and any recommendations in accordance with the procedure set out below.

Investigations by the Ombudsman (referrals under section 71(2) of the Act)

- 12. Where the Ombudsman completes his or her investigation and sends a report to the Monitoring Officer and the Council's Standards Committee under section 71(2) of the Act, the Monitoring Officer must consider the Ombudsman's report and, if appropriate, make recommendations to the Council's Standards Committee.
- 13. The Standards Committee will consider the Ombudsman's report together with any recommendations made by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the procedure set out below.

The first meeting of the Standards Committee – Initial Determination

- 14. After the Monitoring Officer has:
 - (a) produced an investigation report in accordance with paragraph 10; or
 - (b) considered the Ombudsman's investigation report in accordance with paragraph 12

s/he will arrange for a meeting of the Standards Committee to be convened as soon as possible and for a copy of the investigation report, together with the Monitoring Officer's recommendations (if any), to be sent to each of the members of the Standards Committee.
- 15. Notice of the time and place of the meeting will be given in accordance with Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001.
- 16. If the investigation report is produced by the Ombudsman, the Monitoring Officer will advise the Standards Committee. If the investigation report is produced by the Monitoring Officer, the Standards Officer or some other suitably qualified person will advise the Standards Committee.

17. The business of the Standards Committee meeting will be limited to considering the investigation report and the Monitoring Officer's recommendations (if any) and to making an initial determination either:-
- (a) that there is no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, or
 - (b) that the Member should be given the opportunity to make representations, either orally or in writing in respect of the findings of the investigation and any allegation that he or she has failed, or may have failed, to comply with the Code of Conduct.

After the first meeting of the Standards Committee

18. Where the Standards Committee decides that there is no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Standards Officer will accordingly notify the Member, the Complainant and the Ombudsman.
19. Where the Standards Committee decides that the Member should be given the opportunity to make representations, the Standards Officer will notify the Member of the Committee's decision and the procedure which the Committee proposes to adopt to receive and consider any representations that he or she may wish to make.

Preparing for the hearing to consider the Member's representations

20. The Standards Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee, will write to the Member to propose a date for a hearing to consider any representations that the Member may wish to make and to ask the Member to respond in writing within 14 days to confirm whether s/he:
- (a) is able to attend the hearing
 - (b) wants to make representations, whether orally or in writing and if so, to include any written representations in his or her response
 - (c) disagrees with any of the findings of fact in the investigation report, and if so, which matters he or she disagrees with and the reasons for any disagreements;
 - (d) wants to appear before the Committee in person or be represented at the hearing by a solicitor, barrister or any other person, in accordance with his/her right under the Regulations
 - (e) wants to give evidence to the Standards Committee, either orally or in writing;
 - (f) wants to call relevant witnesses to give evidence to the Standards Committee;
 - (g) wants any part of the meeting to be held in private;
 - (h) wants any part of the investigation report or other relevant documents to be withheld from the public

21. The Standards Officer will notify the Investigating Officer of the proposed hearing date and ask whether he or she will be attending the hearing.
22. The Standards Officer will send a copy of the Member's response under paragraph 20 to the Investigating Officer and will ask him/her to confirm in writing within 7 days whether s/he:
 - (a) has any comments on the Member's response
 - (b) wants to be represented at the hearing;
 - (c) wants to call relevant witnesses to give evidence to the Standards Committee;
 - (d) wants any part of the meeting to be held in private; and
 - (e) wants any part of the investigation report or other relevant documents to be withheld from the public.
23. The Standards Officer will write to the members of the Committee, the Member and the Investigating Officer at least two weeks before the hearing to:
 - (a) confirm the date, time and place for the hearing;
 - (b) summarise the allegation;
 - (c) outline the main facts of the case that are agreed;
 - (d) outline the main facts which are not agreed;
 - (e) note whether the Member or the Investigating Officer will attend or be represented at the hearing;
 - (f) list those witnesses, if any, who will be asked to give evidence;
 - (g) enclose the investigation report, any relevant documents, the Member's response and any further response from the Investigating Officer; and
 - (h) outline the proposed procedure for the meeting.

Powers of the Standards Committee

24. The Standards Committee may, in accordance with the requirements of natural justice, conduct the meeting in the manner it considers most suitable to the clarification of the issues before it and generally to the just handling of the proceedings. It must so far as appears to it appropriate seek to avoid formality and inflexibility in its proceedings. The Standards Committee will decide factual evidence on the balance of probabilities.
25. The Member or the Investigating Officer may be represented or accompanied whether or not legally qualified but if in any particular case the Standards

Committee is satisfied that there is a good reason, it may refuse to permit a particular person to assist or represent a party at the hearing.

26. The Standards Committee may take legal advice from a Council officer appointed for this purpose at any time during the meeting or while they are considering the outcome. The substance of any legal advice given to the Committee will be shared with the Member and the Investigating Officer if they are present.
27. Where appropriate, and in accordance with the Regulations, the Standards Committee has power to censure the Member, or suspend or partially suspend the Member for a period not exceeding 6 months.

Procedure at the hearing

28. The hearing will be held in public unless the Standards Committee is persuaded that there is a good reason to exclude the public.
29. The procedure at the meeting shall be as set out below, subject to the Chair making such changes as he or she thinks fit in order to ensure a fair and efficient hearing.

Introduction

30. The Chair of the Standards Committee will introduce those persons present and will explain the manner and order of proceedings

First stage: Preliminary procedural issues

31. The Standards Committee will then resolve any issues or disagreements about how the hearing should continue, which have not been resolved during the pre-hearing process.

Second stage: Making findings of fact

32. The Standards Committee will then consider whether or not there are any significant disagreements about the facts contained in the investigation report.
33. If there is a disagreement as to the facts:-
 - (a) the Investigating Officer, if present, will be invited to make any necessary representations to support the relevant findings of fact in the investigation report.
 - (b) the Investigating Officer may call any necessary supporting witnesses to give evidence, with the Standards Committee's permission and the Committee shall give the Member an opportunity to challenge any evidence put forward by any witness called by the Investigating Officer.
 - (c) the Member will then be invited to make representations to support his or her version of the facts.

- (d) the Member may call any necessary witnesses to give evidence, with the Standards Committee's permission and the Committee shall give the Investigating Officer an opportunity to challenge any evidence put forward by any witness called by the Member.
34. At any time, the Standards Committee may question any of the people involved or any of the witnesses.
35. If the Member disagrees with any relevant fact in the investigation report, without having given prior notice of the disagreement, he or she must give good reasons for not mentioning it before the hearing. If the Investigating Officer is not present, the Standards Committee will consider whether or not it would be in the public interest to continue in his or her absence. After considering the Member's explanation for not raising the issue at an earlier stage, the Committee may then:
- (a) continue with the hearing, relying on the information in the investigation report
 - (b) allow the Member to make representations about the issue, and invite the Investigating Officer to respond and call any witnesses, as necessary; or
 - (c) postpone the hearing to arrange for appropriate witnesses to be present, or for the Investigating Officer to be present if he or she is not already.
36. At the conclusion of the representations as to matters of fact, the Standards Committee will retire to deliberate in private on the representations, after which the Chair of the Standards Committee will announce their findings of fact.

Third stage: Deciding whether the Member has failed to comply with the Code

37. The Standards Committee will then consider whether, based on the facts it has found, the Member has failed to comply with the Code.
38. The Standards Committee will invite the Investigating Officer to make representations as to whether or not, based on the facts the Committee has found, the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.
39. The Standards Committee will invite the Member to respond to the representations of the Investigating Officer and to make representations as to whether or not, based on the facts the Committee has found, he or she has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.
40. The Standards Committee may, at any time, question anyone involved on any point they raise in their representations.
41. The Member will be invited to make any final relevant points.
42. The Standards Committee will retire to deliberate in private on the representations and decide whether or not the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, after which the Chair of the Standards Committee will announce their findings.

Fourth stage: Action to be taken

43. If the Standards Committee decides that the Member has not failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, it will formally record that there is no evidence of any failure by the Member to comply with the Code of Conduct and that therefore no action needs to be taken.
44. If the Standards Committee decides that the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct it will invite the Member and the Investigating Officer to make representations as to:
 - (a) whether or not the Committee should apply a sanction; and
 - (b) what form any sanction should take.
45. The Standards Committee will retire to deliberate in private on the representations and decide either that:
 - (a) no action needs to be taken in respect of the failure to comply with the Code of Conduct,
 - (b) the Member should be censured or
 - (c) the Member should be suspended or partially suspended from being a member or co-opted member of his or her authority for a period not exceeding six months [or, if shorter, for the remainder of that member's term of office],after which the Chair of the Standards Committee will announce their decision.
46. After making a decision the Standards Committee will instruct the Standards Officer to confirm the decision and the reasons for the decision in writing and to send a copy of the written decision (including details of the Member's right of appeal) to the Member, the Complainant and the Ombudsman as soon as reasonably practicable.

Failure to make representations / attend the hearing

47. If the Member fails to make representations, the Standards Committee may:
 - (a) unless it is satisfied that there is sufficient reason for such failure, consider the investigation report and make a determination in the Member's absence; or
 - (b) give the Member a further opportunity to make representations
48. If a party fails to be present or represented at a hearing, the Standards Committee may, if it is satisfied that the party was duly notified of the hearing and that there is no good reason for such absence -
 - (a) hear and decide the matter in the party's absence; or
 - (b) adjourn the hearing.

Illness or incapacity

49. If the Standards Committee is satisfied that any party is unable, through physical or mental sickness or impairment, to attend the hearing and that the party's inability is likely to continue for a long time, the Standards Committee may make such arrangements as may appear best suited, in all the circumstances of the case, for disposing fairly of the matter.

Suspension

50. A period of suspension or partial suspension will commence on the day after:
- (a) the expiry of the time allowed to lodge a notice of appeal to an appeals tribunal under the Regulations (i.e. within 21 days of receiving notification of the Standards Committee's determination);
 - (b) receipt of notification of the conclusion of any appeal in accordance with the Regulations;
 - (c) a further determination by the Standards Committee made after receiving a recommendation from an appeals tribunal under the Regulations,
- whichever occurs last.

Referral by an Appeals Tribunal

51. Where the Standards Committee determines that the Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Member may appeal against the determination to an appeals tribunal drawn from the Adjudication Panel for Wales.
52. An appeals tribunal may endorse the decision of the Standards Committee, refer a matter back to it recommending it impose a different penalty, or overturn the decision.
53. If:
- (a) the Standards Committee determines that the Member failed to comply with the Code of Conduct;
 - (b) the Member appeals to an appeals tribunal drawn from the Adjudication Panel for Wales; and
 - (c) the said tribunal refers the matter back to the Standards Committee with a recommendation that a different penalty be imposed,
- the Standards Committee shall meet as soon as reasonably practicable to consider the recommendation of the appeals tribunal and will determine whether or not it should uphold its original determination or accept the recommendation.
54. After making its determination the Standards Committee will instruct the Standards Officer to confirm the decision and the reasons for the decision in writing and to send a copy of the written decision to the Member, the Complainant, the Ombudsman and the president of the Adjudication Panel for Wales as soon as reasonably practicable.

Publication of the Standards Committee's report

55. The Standards Committee will cause to be produced within 14 days after:

- (a) the expiry of the time allowed to lodge a notice of appeal under the Regulations, or
- (b) receipt of notification of the conclusion of any appeal in accordance with the Regulations, or
- (c) a further determination by the Standards Committee made after receiving a recommendation from an appeals tribunal under the Regulations,

whichever occurs last, a report on the outcome of the investigation and send a copy to the Ombudsman, the Monitoring Officer, the Member and take reasonable steps to send a copy to the Complainant.

56. Upon receipt of the report of the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer shall:

- (a) for a period of 21 days publish the report on the Council's website and make copies available for inspection by the public without charge at all reasonable hours at one or more of the Council's offices, where any person shall be entitled to take copies of, or extracts from, the report when made so available,
- (b) supply a copy of the report to any person on request if he or she pays such charge as the Council may reasonably require, and
- (c) not later than 7 days after the report is received from the Standards Committee, give public notice, by advertisement in newspapers circulating in the area and such other ways as appear to him or her to be appropriate, that copies of the report will be available as provided by sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) above, and shall specify the date (being a date not more than seven days after public notice is first given) from which the period of 21 days will begin.

Costs

57. The Standards Committee has no power to make an award of any costs or expenses arising from any of its proceedings.



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The investigation of a complaint
against
Councillor Steven Bletsoe
of
Bridgend Town Council

A report by the
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Case: 202204885

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Introduction

Report by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on the investigation of a complaint made against Councillor Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council, of breaches of the Council's statutory Code of Conduct for Members

This report is issued under section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Summary

We received a complaint that a member (“the Member”) of Bridgend Town Council had breached the Code of Conduct.

The complainant was concerned that the Member had: failed to declare a personal and prejudicial interest in a Council meeting; had taken part in a discussion in the Council meeting when he should not have done, given his interests; and that by taking part in the discussion, he had tried to influence a decision on the matter discussed to gain an advantage for his wife.

We found that Council members were asked to ratify draft minutes of a committee meeting. The draft minutes documented, in part, the Member’s wife’s behaviour at the committee meeting. The Member knew that his wife’s behaviour was the subject of a formal complaint to the Ombudsman’s office.

We found that the Member had a personal interest in the matter because Paragraph 10 of the Code states that members must regard themselves as having a personal interest in any business of their authority if a decision upon it might reasonably be regarded as affecting their wellbeing or that of a person with whom they live. Our Guidance also makes clear that a member will have a personal interest if the council business affects a close personal associate of the Member, and a close personal associate includes close relatives – in this case the Member’s wife.

We also found that the Member had a prejudicial interest in the matter because we considered that a member of the public with knowledge of the fact that he took part in discussions about ratifying minutes of a meeting which documented his wife’s behaviour, and which behaviour was the subject of a formal investigation to the Ombudsman, would reasonably regard these as so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Member’s judgment of the public interest.

We found, given the Member had a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter, his subsequent actions in failing to disclose his interests and in taking part in discussions, without dispensation from the Authority’s Standards Committee, were suggestive of various breaches

of Paragraph 14 of the Code including that he must not seek to influence a decision about matters.

We also found that the Member, in making the suggestions he did regarding amendments to the draft minutes, used his position improperly in an attempt to gain an advantage for his wife, and a disadvantage to the person who had complained about his wife's behaviour, contrary to paragraph 7(a) of the Code. The Member's failure to seek advice on the matter from the County's Monitoring Officer, or to seek dispensation from the Standards Committee in order to make representations, was also suggestive of a breach of paragraph 6(1)(a) of the Code because he acted in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his office or authority into disrepute.

We referred our report on our investigation to the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Borough Council for consideration by its Standards Committee.

The Complaint

1. On 25 October **2022**, I received a complaint from Mrs Leanne Edwards, the Clerk at Bridgend Town Council (“the Council”). She was concerned that Councillor Steven Bletsoe (“the Member”) had failed to observe the Code of Conduct for members of Bridgend Town Council. She said that the Member had failed to declare a prejudicial interest in a matter and had improperly influenced council members in order to gain an advantage for his wife, Councillor Freya Bletsoe. A copy of the complaint is attached at Appendix 1.

Legal background

2. As required by Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 (“the Act”), the Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for members which incorporates the provisions of a Model Code contained in an order made by the Welsh Ministers. A copy of that Code is at Appendix 4. Council members are required to sign an undertaking that, in performing their functions, they will observe the Council’s Code of Conduct. Councillor Bletsoe gave such an undertaking in May 2022. A copy of that declaration is attached at Appendix 5.

3. Section 69 of the Act provides the authority for my investigation and the production of this report.

My investigation

4. Having considered the complaint we received; the following provisions of the Code of Conduct were relevant:

- 6(1)(a) – [Members] must not conduct [themselves] in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing [their] office or authority into disrepute.
- (7a) - [Members] must not in [their] official capacity or otherwise, use or attempt to use [their] position improperly to confer on or secure for [themselves], or any other person, an advantage or create or avoid for [themselves], or any other person, a disadvantage.

- 10(2)(c)(i) – [Members] must regard [themselves] as having a personal interest in any business of [their] authority if a decision upon it might reasonably be regarded as affecting [their] wellbeing or financial position, or that of a person with whom [they] live, or any person with whom [they] have a close personal association.
- 11(1) - Where [Members] have a personal interest in any business of [their] authority and [they] attend a meeting at which that business is considered, [they] must disclose orally to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest before or at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.
- 14(1)(a) - Where [Members] have a prejudicial interest in any business of [their] authority [they] must, unless [they] have obtained a dispensation from [their] authority's standards committee withdraw from the room, chamber or place where a meeting considering the business is being held.
- 14(1)(c) - Where [Members] have a prejudicial interest in any business of [their] authority [they] must, unless [they] have obtained a dispensation from [their] authority's standards committee not seek to influence a decision about that business.
- 14(1)(e) - Where [Members] have a prejudicial interest in any business of [their] authority [they] must, unless [they] have obtained a dispensation from [their] authority's standards committee not make any oral representations (whether in person or some form of electronic communication) in respect of that business or immediately cease to make such oral representations when the prejudicial interest becomes apparent.

5. The Member was informed we had decided to investigate on 13 December 2022 (Appendix 2).

6. During our investigation, we obtained copies of minutes and other documents from the Council, and we have interviewed the complainant

and Deputy Clerk to the Council. Copies of all statements and documents referred to in this report are attached.

7. We put the evidence we found to the Member so that he could review it before responding to our questions in interview. A transcript of the interview is available at Appendix 12.

8. The Member has also had the opportunity to comment on a draft of this report which included our provisional views and findings.

My guidance on the Code of Conduct

9. I have issued guidance for members of local authorities in Wales on the Model Code of Conduct (“my Guidance”). I include at Appendix 13 extracts of my Guidance which are relevant to this complaint.

10. Paragraph 3.6 of my Guidance states members, while carrying out their duties, must consider whether they have a personal interest and, if so, whether they need to disclose it. Paragraph 3.8 makes clear a member has a personal interest when any business of the council is likely to affect somebody with whom the member has a close personal association. A close personal associate includes close relatives (Paragraph 3.15).

11. My Guidance includes reference to a case example (28) where a member was found in breach of the Code for failing to declare a personal and prejudicial interest at a meeting which considered the Clerk’s remuneration package. The Member and the Clerk were engaged to be married at the time. The Adjudication Panel found that the Member should have declared a personal interest in the item of business by virtue of his close personal association with the Clerk. There are other Adjudication Panel cases of relevance, and these authorities are cited in the footnotes below.¹²

¹ [APW/001/2015-016/CT: Councillor Paul Cawley | The Adjudication Panel for Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

² [apw-decision-report-s-jenkins.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Events

12. On 14 June 2022, the Regeneration Committee of the Council met. The Member and his wife, Councillor Freya Bletsoe, were in attendance. The Member was Chair of the Committee.

13. A discussion took place about extending an invitation to a very high profile royal guest to unveil a plaque. The Clerk provided advice that such a decision, given its resource consequences, would need to be referred to the Council. The Clerk also provided advice as to why the matter could not be dealt with “on pink papers”, as suggested by Councillor Freya Bletsoe. (Confidential/exempt information relating to Council business is provided to councillors on pink paper, to make clear the confidential nature of matters).

14. Councillor Freya Bletsoe disagreed with both pieces of advice the Clerk provided, and the discussion escalated to such an extent that the Clerk told the Committee members that she felt bullied and intimidated by Councillor Freya Bletsoe’s behaviour towards her.

15. On 14 and 15 June 2022, Councillor Freya Bletsoe raised a formal complaint with the Clerk’s Line Manager about events that occurred in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022.

16. On 24 June 2022, the Clerk submitted a formal complaint to the Council about Councillor Freya Bletsoe. This included concerns about Councillor Freya Bletsoe’s behaviour towards her in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022.

17. On 27 June 2022, the Clerk submitted a formal complaint to my Office about Councillor Freya Bletsoe. This included concerns about her behaviour towards the Clerk in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022. We decided to investigate these concerns and Councillor Freya Bletsoe was informed of our decision in July 2022.

18. On 26 September 2022, at a full Council meeting, which the Member attended, there was an agenda item to “receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022”. The draft minutes included details about the contentious discussion that had taken

place between the Clerk and the Member's wife. The draft minutes referred, among other things, to Councillor Freya Bletsoe having:

- Disputed the advice given by the Clerk.
- Asked the Committee to obtain "proper advice" and having said that the advice "undermined" the Committee's delegated authority.
- Become "irate" and "angry".
- Announced to the Chair that she did not wish the Clerk to interrupt her.
- Asked the Clerk to specify where her advice came from.
- Suggested she was annoyed at the Clerk "throwing curve balls".
- Abruptly left the meeting without apology.

19. The Member did not declare a personal or prejudicial interest in the agenda item and remained in the meeting to discuss it. The Member stated he had questions regarding inaccuracies in the minutes and proposed that they be deferred to the next meeting, which was agreed.

20. On 24 October 2022, the Regeneration Committee met. There was again an agenda item to "confirm and sign the Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting held on 14th June 2022". The Member did not declare a personal or prejudicial interest in the agenda item and remained in the meeting to discuss it. The minutes of the meeting of 24 October 2022 record that the Member said:

- That the minutes from the previous meeting [14 June 2022] needed to be reviewed.
- That he was not commending the minutes for sign off as he felt that one or two references should not have been included and the purpose of the minutes was not to record conflict, just resolutions.
- That other Councillors have left meetings previously without apology and not been recorded and that he had heard Councillor Freya Bletsoe say, "I'm sorry I can't do this", prior to leaving the meeting.

21. Although not stated in the minutes, a recording of the meeting (which was taken by the complainant on her phone when she attended the meeting remotely as a guest) showed that the Member also said "my

original proposal for the minutes...was to state for the public record that there had been a disagreement between a councillor and the Clerk and the Clerk...[stated] she has felt bullied and intimidated...My concern is that we can't openly discuss this because there are people who are in attendance, both officers and councillors who maybe asked for witness statements so we can't discuss it, around our recollection of this because we may be asked individually...to give witness statements".

22. The minutes of the meeting then record that Councillor Spiller said that, although he was not present at the meeting in question, he believed the minutes were too detailed and not a summary. The minutes of the meeting went on to record that he said, "he was happy that the minutes had been taken accurately, but was not comfortable with page 3, bullet points 3 to 10 and proposed that bullet points 3 to 10 be removed and replaced with 'Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk, a discussion took place after which Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30pm'". The Committee resolved to summarise the meeting as Councillor Spiller had proposed.

23. On 25 October 2022, my Office received the Clerk's complaint that the Member had tried to influence Committee members to remove details about his wife's behaviour at the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 14 June 2022 for the personal gain of his wife.

24. On 12 December 2022, there was a full Council meeting. One agenda item was to "to receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 24th October 2022". The Member said he believed he said in the meeting of 24 October that Councillor Freya Bletsoe had said in the Regeneration Meeting of 14 June 2022 "I can't do this, **I'm leaving**" rather than "I'm sorry I can't do this" as recorded in the draft minutes of 24 October 2022. He requested that this be recorded in the minutes. The Deputy Clerk advised, if his proposal to amend the minutes was seconded and approved at the next Regeneration Meeting, the minutes could be changed.

25. At this stage, the minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2022 show that Councillor Felton stated that the previous amendment to the minutes of 14 June 2022 was problematic and impacted "tone and intent".

She also expressed concern that changes to the minutes of 14 June 2022 could be construed as interfering with the minutes.

26. The minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2022 go on to show that the Mayor was asked if he could recall whether the Member had previously referred to his wife having said she was leaving. The Mayor could not recall what was said. The Member said he was happy for his comments to be recorded in the minutes of “this full Council meeting” of 12 December 2022. Council then resolved “to receive and note the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 24th October 2022”.

What the Witnesses said

The Complainant, Leanne Edwards, Clerk to the Council

27. The Clerk said (Appendix 1 and Appendix 9):

- She watched the Council meeting of September 2022 online as a guest. The Member queried the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting and said there were some inaccuracies. It was agreed that a discussion about the minutes would be deferred.
- She attended the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 24 October 2022 online, as a member of the public could.
- She recorded some of the meeting on her phone as she was concerned the Member wanted to amend the minutes which formed part of her complaint to the Ombudsman.
- On 12 December 2022, when the draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 24 October 2022 were presented, the Member queried the minutes again. The discussion was noted by the Council.
- The Member did not seek advice from the Clerk as to whether he should declare an interest in the above mentioned meetings.

- She said that the evidence she had provided to the Ombudsman, in its ongoing investigation of her concern, was being tampered with and the references to Councillor Freya Bletsoe regarding the incident were being redacted.
- If something happened in a meeting, the minutes were the only evidence and because they had now been redacted, evidence had been removed.
- She said the Member instigated this, and she felt it was wrong because he was Councillor Freya Bletsoe's husband and he therefore had an interest. She felt he influenced others in his position as Chair.

The Deputy Clerk – Debra Jones

28. The Deputy Clerk, Debra Jones said (Appendix 10):

- After the meeting of 26 September 2022, in which it was agreed that a discussion about the minutes of the Regeneration Committee of 14 June 2022 would be postponed, she relayed advice in the full Council meeting of 17 October 2022 that any proposed changes or amendments to the minutes of the meeting of 14 June 2022 should be put in writing to the Deputy Clerk. The Deputy Clerk would then circulate these proposals to Committee members in advance of the next Regeneration Committee meeting of 24 October 2022.
- In the meeting of 24 October 2022, the Member reminded fellow members that items relating to personnel matters could not be discussed and the Deputy Clerk did not understand why the Member said this.
- The Member apologised for not having sent his amendments in writing and he said he believed there were some items which should not be in the minutes.

- Councillor Spiller proposed that the minutes were too detailed. The Members took a vote, and it was resolved that a number of bullet points would be removed.
- The Deputy Clerk's impression was that Councillor Spiller and the Member had discussed the matter beforehand and were ready to say what was said in the meeting.
- She found it strange that the Member had not given his proposed changes in writing, which she said would have been a lot more helpful.
- She felt a "game was being played" to make sure the minutes were framed with a particular narrative, as she knows members are aware of how important minutes are when there is an Ombudsman investigation.
- She thought that the Democratic Services Officer's ("the DSO") confidence was affected, because she was the staff member who minuted the meeting and drafted the minutes. She had told the DSO that this was not something she should take personally.
- She said the Member was a good councillor and it was a shame this had come about. She felt he should have left the meeting of 24 October 2022 and not led the discussion about the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022.

What Councillor Steven Bletsoe said

29. The Member in his written submissions and in interview said (Appendix 3 and Appendix 12):

- He contested that any breach of the Code had occurred. He considered there was no basis for the complaint. He did not consider he had a prejudicial interest; at worst he had a "loose personal interest".

- As Chair of the Committee, he did not feel that the minutes were factually accurate. He also considered they were not written in the way in which the Council records minutes or in accordance with guidance from the WLGA and One Voice Wales. He said they were “erroneously in a verbatim style”.
- “Regardless of who this “dispute” was between, [he] believed that using the minutes as an attempt to write a narrative of the event was actually bringing [the Council] into disrepute and [he] acted as a Councillor and Chair of a committee to remedy what [he] considered to be a very serious breach of Council standards”.
- He does not believe such important and sensitive situations should be played out in a political arena. He believes that the situation should not be dealt with in the minutes of a public document of minutes. He believed that the minutes should state that a disagreement took place between the Councillor and the Officer and that would suffice under the adopted policy of the Council.
- There was no “manipulation of the minutes as... claimed, just the public recording that a debate occurred between the Clerk and a Councillor, which was all that was required under the practise of the Council”.
- He considered it a “dangerous precedent” if, as Chair, he was unable to voice his concern that minutes were not correct “and potentially allow incorrect minutes to be proposed for approval, simply because I am married to a person in the meeting...”
- The fact that he is married to the person alleged to be involved in the dispute “had zero influence in my actions regardless of the accusation levelled against me”.
- He said it was his belief that the minutes “...were deliberately written to support [the Clerk’s] complaint against Councillor Freya Bletsoe. He considered that the Clerk’s complaint [about his wife] had been “engineered” and that the Clerk wanted her version of events of the

Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022 to be available, outside of the Council's usual way of minuting.

- He abstained from the vote. Once he had made his views as the Chair of the Committee known, he was satisfied to allow the Committee itself to decide what it felt was the best course of action, through a majority.
- He did not, and would refuse to speak to any other Independent Councillor on the Regeneration Committee meeting before this or any other committee meeting. This is not something he has ever done.
- There was no benefit to be gained from his actions; the Ombudsman complaint would continue into the Clerk's original complaint, this would not alter, however, he had the right, as the Chair of the Committee to state that he believed that the minutes were incorrect and should not be verbatim "...otherwise, where is democracy?".
- He referred to the minutes of the full Council of 17 October 2022, which referenced a dispute between 2 councillors to show that debates between councillors were not usually minuted. He said, "I am being accused of manipulating a situation to record minutes in exactly the same way that the Council records minutes".
- He simply believed that "some of the detail was wrong and the style of recording was incorrect... [the Clerk] was ...miffed that someone (anyone) was changing her narrative of the occurrence, which as the Chair of the Committee I have the right to put forward my recording of the event".
- There was a "key" line that he felt needed to be addressed. He heard his wife say, "I'm sorry, I can't take this any more I'm leaving". So, it "stood out" to him when the draft minutes said his wife abruptly left the meeting, without apology. He may have been one of the only ones to raise this issue because he was with his wife in Yorkshire when the meeting took place, whereas others were attending in different locations remotely. The apology when leaving the meeting,

was something he felt the Ombudsman could consider was important.

- He did not say that people who were in the meeting could not comment; he said that people who were in the meeting could be called as a witness in the investigation and that they should be mindful of that and pay respect to proper process. He said he did not want people to have an open discussion about their recollection that would jeopardise the complaint. He wanted people to allow the process of the Clerk taking forward her complaint in the proper way.
- When asked if he thought about his position and relationship with Councillor Freya Bletsoe before taking part in the agenda discussion, he said he decided 2 things. He had decided he was not going to make a “public declaration that Freya’s my wife because everyone in Bridgend knows that anyway...” and, secondly, that whatever happened, he was not going to vote, which is why he abstained.
- When asked why he had decided not to vote, he said because of the public perception, he tried to err on the side of caution while trying to find a balance.
- When asked if he sought advice, he said he had nobody to go to because he could not approach the Clerks and One Voice Wales was for Clerks and the Chair. There is no support for community councillors.
- He is not naïve, he knows the political games being played, and therefore why the minutes were so important.
- He said everyone on the Committee is a very good friend of his wife (except Councillor Felton), so they could not have chaired the meeting and would have been in the same position as the Member in having difficulties in making representations on the matter.
- If he made sure the truth was known, and he was charged with not declaring an interest, he’d rather the truth be known.

- When asked, he did not agree that the removal of the details of Councillor Freya Bletsoe's behaviour from the minutes reflected things in a better light for her or were advantageous to her. He said the minutes still reflected there was a dispute, and the Ombudsman could then interview witnesses etc. The Ombudsman would not take minutes as absolute; they would interview.
- When asked if he thought changing the minutes could jeopardise the complaint, he said allowing the minutes to go through incorrectly would have done exactly the same because he knew they were wrong.
- When asked if he considered his conduct could have brought the Council or his office into disrepute, he said he did not. He said he would not have done anything differently, because fundamental and core to his values was that truth was more important than anything else and the truth was that the minutes were not right, and his actions were with a view to making sure the Council did not bring itself into disrepute.

30. The Member provided comments on our draft report which are appended in full at Appendix 14. The Member said, among other things:

- Paragraph 19 of my report was not accurate because he had arrived late for the full Council meeting of 26 September 2022, having been detained by a County Borough Council meeting. The agenda item, to receive the minutes of the Regeneration Committee of 14 June 2022, had already been “bypassed”. However, Councillor Morelli asked the Mayor to return to the item “on instruction from a WhatsApp chat”. It was at this point that he made a public statement that as Chair he did not agree with the accuracy of the minutes, and at this time derogatory messages appeared on the chat function on screen in the meeting at 19:23 (Appendix 5, Page 42). He said there was “clear evidence of the political manipulation that was being undertaken around the matter, which has been completely ignored and again, is being ignored to create a false narrative around the matter.”
- He was concerned that the complainant’s recording of the meeting of 24 October 2022 had been taken covertly without his permission or that of the Council. Such action by the Clerk was contrary to the Council’s Standing Orders, and also contrary to her general position that meetings should not be recorded. He considered this was a “pre-planned attempt to provide evidence” and the complainant’s motivation was to make sure the minutes reflected “her singular recollection of them to support her separate complaint [the complaint she had made to the Ombudsman about Councillor Freya Bletsoe’s behaviour]”. He felt this was an extremely important aspect not conveyed in our draft report. “My singular motivation has been the full accuracy and truth of the minutes, the complainant’s motivation is that the minutes are to her recollection and to support a separate complaint against another member...”
- He considers it an important factor that all councillors, other than Councillor Wood, attended the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 14 June 2022 remotely. He was the only person in the same location as Councillor Freya Bletsoe (as they were both attending remotely too) and that the minute takers were only able to hear her

through the Owl System (a video conferencing camera) in the Chamber.

- He considers details about why Councillor Freya Bletsoe disputed the advice in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022 should be included, and that certain details, such as that complaints were made about Councillor Freya Bletsoe to the Ombudsman, should not have been included in the draft report as he considers they are not relevant to the complaint about him.
- Although the minutes of the meeting of 24 October 2022 record that Councillor Spiller “advised that he was happy that the minutes had been taken accurately, but was not comfortable with page 3, bullet points 3 to 10...” as referred to at Paragraph 22, he said this was misleading. He said Councillor Spiller stated that “he was not disputing that they had been [taken accurately] as he was not at the meeting”.
- He felt strongly that the WhatsApp messages he provided to my Investigation Officer prior to being interviewed, which were appended to the report as part of his written response, should be referred to in the report. He considered these showed that Councillor Felton’s comments about the Regeneration Committee minutes of 14 June 2022 (Paragraph 25) did not reflect her true position. He said the messages showed she had made her comments due to political pressure and interference from party colleagues.
- He felt an important factor to include in the report was that in the meeting of 26 September 2022, where the complainant attended as a guest, there was only one guest at the meeting and a guest [identity showing as ‘Carwyn (Guest)’] made remarks in the on screen chat at 19:23 which said “what aspect of the minutes is being questioned for accuracy? this is being fudged – turn up late and then put off making a decision on important issues” (Appendix 3, page 42). He felt this showed the complainant’s motivation and that the complaint was malicious. [No evidence has been provided to suggest that the Clerk is the guest shown on screen].

- He said there has never been a contradiction that the change he proposed was not correct, and therefore there has to be an acceptance that his proposal was true.
- He said our investigation was not thorough because we did not interview all the councillors “who were present in the meeting”. [It is not clear which meeting the Member may be referring to].
- He referred to his concerns that the complainant “wrote” the contentious minutes, and at other times to the complainant’s “version of the [contentious] minutes produced by her staff and taken from her notes”. He considers an adverse inference should be drawn because the complainant’s notes of the meeting have been destroyed and cannot be checked. He also said a very important factor was that the Deputy Clerk, who provided witness evidence in the case, was the complainant’s best friend, they have worked together before, they holiday together and “they do everything together”. He said this has a material impact on the evidence gathered in the matter.
- He felt another important factor, not mentioned in our report, was that not a single member of the public had made a complaint to my Office about the matter.
- He reiterated that he did not seek “to gain anyone an advantage at any time”, his “drive and motivation” was “to ensure true and accurate recording of official minutes, which I knew were incorrect, regardless of who they were about.” Similarly, he said he had no intention of influencing or restricting debate and this was an “insulting” conclusion to draw. Rather, because the complaint about Councillor Freya Bletsoe had been discussed in the Personnel Committee meeting on pink papers, he considered if the councillors discussed matters at the Regeneration Meeting, which were not on pink papers, they could have breached the Code. He said, “my advice as Chair of the Committee was designed to protect them and that of the Clerk, whose personal information I was seeking to protect.”

- He said he did not try to influence other councillors and we have not interviewed councillors to ask them if it was true. He said he did not try to influence Councillor Spiller in the meeting of 24 October 2022, and we have not interviewed Councillor Spiller.
- He disagreed with the conclusions in my draft report overall. He said of particular concern was that a councillor in attendance at a meeting could not state that minutes were wrong, when knowing that to be the case, and it is “beyond belief that the Ombudsman considers I should not have corrected the public record so that it was true and accurate”. He also said he was required to act equally in regard to the 7 Nolan principles, and he did so in this case by telling the truth about what he heard in the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 14 June 2022.

Undisputed facts

31. The Member is married to Councillor Freya Bletsoe.

32. On 14 June 2022, the Regeneration Committee met, which the Member and his wife, Councillor Freya Bletsoe, attended.

33. The Clerk told Committee members in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022, that she felt bullied and intimidated by the Member’s wife.

34. On 14 and 15 June 2022, Councillor Freya Bletsoe raised a formal complaint to the Clerk’s Manager about events that occurred in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022.

35. On 24 June 2022 and 27 June 2022, the Clerk submitted formal complaints to the Council and to my Office about Councillor Freya Bletsoe (which included concerns about what happened in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022).

36. On 26 September 2022, at a Council meeting, the Member, who had not declared a personal or prejudicial interest, stated he had questions regarding inaccuracies in the minutes of the Regeneration Committee of

14 June 2022 presented for ratification. The item was deferred to the next meeting.

37. On 24 October 2022, the Regeneration Committee met and discussed whether to approve the draft Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 14 June 2022.

38. The Member did not declare a personal or prejudicial interest in the meeting held on 24 October 2022. The Member made representations about the meeting of 14 June 2022 and the way in which discussions involving his wife were recorded in the minutes.

39. On 24 October 2022, the Committee resolved to summarise the minutes from the meeting of 14 June 2022 and to remove any details about the dispute and the Member's wife's behaviour.

40. On 25 October 2022, we received the Clerk's complaint about the Member's conduct in his involvement in ratifying minutes of the Regeneration Committee of 14 June 2022.

Disputed facts

41. Did the Member have a personal interest in the agenda item to ratify committee minutes of 14 June 2022?

42. Did the Member have a prejudicial interest in the agenda item to ratify committee minutes of 14 June 2022?

43. Did the Member attempt to influence other Committee members on the question of whether minutes, as drafted, should be ratified - either inside or outside the Chamber?

44. Was there any advantage to his wife in the Member raising concerns about the draft minutes?

Did the Member have a personal interest in the agenda item to ratify committee minutes of 14 June 2022?

45. The Member considered that he did not have a personal interest in the matter or, if he did, it was “at the very worst a loose personal interest”.

46. Paragraph 10 of the Code states that members must regard themselves as having a personal interest in any business of their authority if a decision upon it might reasonably be regarded as affecting their wellbeing or that of a person with whom they live. My Guidance also makes clear that a member will have a personal interest if the council business affects a close personal associate of the Member, and a close personal associate includes close relatives.

47. A decision as to whether the draft minutes, which documented his wife’s behaviour, should be ratified could reasonably be regarded as affecting the wellbeing of his wife (a person with whom he lived). I consider the Member therefore had a personal interest in the matter pursuant to 10(2)(c)(i) of the Code.

Did the Member have a prejudicial interest in the agenda item to ratify committee minutes of 14 June 2022?

48. The Member did not consider he had a prejudicial interest in the matter.

49. Paragraph 12 of the Code states that, where a member has a personal interest, they will also have a prejudicial interest if the interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice their judgment of the public interest.

50. In this case, I consider that a member of the public with knowledge of the following listed factors, would reasonably regard these as so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Member’s judgment of the public interest when he took part in a discussion about whether the draft Committee minutes should be ratified:

- The Member's wife was being investigated by my Office for concerns about her professional conduct in relation to a Committee meeting.
- The Member was aware that his wife disputed that she behaved inappropriately in the Committee meeting in question.
- The draft minutes of the Committee meeting detailed the dispute between the Member's wife and Clerk and detailed his wife's alleged behaviour at that meeting.

51. While the Member considered most Committee members had similar difficulties in making representations because they were friends with his wife, I am not persuaded that friendship, unless deemed to be a close personal associate, would have put them in the same position as the Member; one Committee member made a proposal as to how the meeting should be minuted, which was seconded by another member. The Member's relationship with Councillor Freya Bletsoe as her spouse is entirely different.

Did the Member attempt to influence other Committee members on the question of whether minutes as drafted should be ratified - either inside or outside the Chamber?

Was there any advantage to his wife in the Member raising concerns about the draft minutes?

52. The Member was Chair of the Regeneration Committee. In 3 meetings (26 September 2022, 24 October 2022 and 12 December 2022) he referred to there being inaccuracies in the draft minutes of 14 June 2022 which recorded the discussion between his wife and the Clerk, and which detailed the alleged behaviour of his wife. In the meeting of 24 October 2022, the Member said he would not commend the minutes from the previous meeting [14 June 2022]. The Member specifically referred to his wife having said she was leaving and that he considered she apologised, because she said, "I'm sorry, I can't take this any more I'm leaving".

53. More generally, the Member told the meeting that he considered minutes should record resolutions not conflict, and that he considered the minutes should refer to a dispute between a member and the Clerk and no more.

54. Even after the Regeneration Committee of 24 October 2022, when members had resolved to simply state in the minutes of 14 June 2022 that “Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk, a discussion took place after which Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30pm”, the Member again raised in a subsequent meeting of 12 December 2022 that his wife had apologised and said she was leaving.

55. In his interview, the Member said that he felt this was a point my Office may consider important and that he may have been one of the only people who could have raised the point, given he was with his wife when she said this (whereas others were in different locations, remotely).

56. While the Member said he did not consider the amendments could be favourable to his wife, because my Office would conduct its own investigation through witness statements, by his own admission, he considered the point about his wife having apologised before leaving a significant one, which he thought my Office may find important.

57. The Member also said he was content to leave the Committee to decide the issue of the minutes once he had made his points. However, when the Committee decided to record that “Councillor F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30”, he raised the issue again, in a subsequent meeting, that his wife had apologised and said she was leaving. It was clear, therefore, that the Member was attempting to influence matters and was determined to make sure his recollection of events was recorded.

58. The Member also told Committee members that the issue could not be openly discussed, and in his interview, the Member told us that he felt members should not discuss their recollection about what happened on 14 June as this could jeopardise the complaint. It therefore appeared that the Member was seeking to influence the Committee to record matters in the way he felt appropriate, and for there to be no detailed discussion between members, as that would not be appropriate, in the Member’s

view. While the Member in his comments on the draft report disagrees strongly about this, and stated his advice was designed to protect others and the Clerk, I remain of the same view.

59. The Member said the Council would not usually record details of disputes, and he referred to minutes of a particular meeting as an example. I note the example did not simply record that a dispute occurred with no further details, as suggested. Rather the minutes went on to record the nature of the dispute and summarised what some members had said. I am not of the view there is evidence to suggest the Council protocol was clear that only resolutions, and never disputes, would be recorded in minutes. In any event, whether matters were minuted in a manner that was usual for the Council is not relevant to the issue of concern which was whether the Member should have involved himself in the discussions that related to his wife.

60. I consider, on balance, the evidence is suggestive of the Member trying to influence the outcome of what should be recorded in the minutes of the contentious meeting in question, for the advantage of his wife, to portray her alleged comments and actions at the meeting in the best possible way. He felt my Office would consider the matter of his wife leaving the meeting with an apology to be an important factor. I am not persuaded by the Member's comments on the draft report. He said that his comments in interview were taken out of context and that he was providing but "one example of why the minutes were wrong and why they could not be relied upon in the separate investigation" and why interviews in the separate investigation were so important.

The Member has also expressed concern that I arrived at my conclusions without interviewing other councillors to understand if they considered they had been influenced. This concern may arise from a misunderstanding of the Code which is clear that when councillors have a prejudicial interest in council business, they must not "seek to influence a decision about that business". It is irrelevant as to whether any councillors were in fact influenced and it was neither necessary nor proportionate therefore to interview councillors in this case.

61. One of the Clerk's concerns was that the Member used his contacts to influence others (not just in the meeting but outside the chamber). The Clerk was concerned that Councillor Spiller's proposal that the minutes were too detailed and should be summarised to say only that a dispute occurred (which the Member had himself suggested a little earlier in the same meeting), may have been discussed with the Member before the meeting. While I can understand the Clerk's concerns, particularly given that Councillor Spiller was not, in fact, in the original meeting, the Member stated that no such conversation took place. While I note the Deputy Clerk had the impression in the meeting that Councillor Spiller and the Member knew what they were going to say in advance, I do not consider there is sufficient evidence to suggest a discussion took place before the meeting. While Councillor Spiller was not at the original meeting, the principle about what generally should be recorded in meetings was one Councillor Spiller was entitled to have an opinion about. As mentioned above, however, given the Member made this point first in the meeting, I consider this an attempt to influence a decision on matters.

62. The Member raised concerns in his response to the draft report that the recording was covert and may not be admissible. While it appears that the Clerk may have breached the Council's Standing Orders, by recording the meeting without the permission of the Council, this does not render the recording inadmissible in our view. One of the important factors we consider when assessing whether to include recording evidence in our reports, is whether we are satisfied the recording is accurate and has not been altered in any way. The Member in interview confirmed the transcript was not inaccurate, and had opportunities both in interview, and in responding to my draft report, to challenge any inaccuracies which he considered material. The Member in interview did raise his concerns about trust because he did not know he was being recorded. The Member in interview also referred to what he had said in the recording because he felt this showed he was being respectful of the ongoing situation. He said "You'll notice from the recording at the outset, I ask everybody to be respectful of the ongoing situation. Because I'm trying to be fair to the two different parties who are taking part... in quite a serious and...uncomfortable accusation." The Member did not ask for a copy of the recording prior to interview, or after interview. He asked for a copy in response to the draft report which we have sent to him with our final report.

In addition, even without the recording, the conclusions in respect of the disputed facts above, and overall conclusions below would remain the same given all the other evidence which has been considered in this investigation.

63. I appreciate the Member has concerns about the witness evidence of the Deputy Clerk, given her relationship with the Complainant which he describes. However, we have not been provided with any evidence that would cause us to have concerns about her honesty in matters or call into question her credibility as a witness. Again, our conclusions would remain the same without the Deputy Clerk's evidence because the series of Council minutes clearly reflect the course of events. Similarly, I can see the Member feels very strongly that WhatsApp messages he provided between Labour party members show some political interference in the Council's discussion and what he refers to as "attempts to manipulate the evidence". However, having considered these messages very carefully, I am not of the view they evidence what the Member suggests. More importantly, however, they are not relevant to the issues which are being considered in this matter. This case was not about what was said in the Regeneration Committee Meeting of 14 June 2022, and whether the draft minutes were in fact accurate or not, or whether the Member's recollection of what was said was accurate. This case was about one discrete issue, whether, given the Member's interests in the matter, he was able to take part in Council discussions about the ratification of the minutes.

Conclusions

64. The Member had a personal and prejudicial interest in the agenda item to receive and ratify the minutes of the Regeneration Committee of 14 June 2022. That being the case, the Member's participation in the specific agenda item in the meeting on 24 October 2022 was suggestive of breaches of Paragraphs 11(1), 14(1)(a), 14(1)(c) and 14(1)(e) of the Code.

65. The Member had a personal interest in the minutes which were discussed, and therefore had to disclose orally the existence and nature of his interest before or at the start of the discussion (Paragraph 11(1) of the Code.

66. In accordance with these various provisions under Paragraph 14 of the Code, unless dispensation from the authority's Standards Committee had been obtained, he was:

- Obligated to withdraw from the Council's discussions when they met (Paragraph 14(1)(a)).
- Not permitted to make any representations (whether oral or written) in respect of the agenda item (Paragraph 14(1)(e)).
- Not permitted to seek to influence a decision about the agenda item (Paragraph 14(1)(c)).

67. The Member had not sought or obtained such dispensation.

68. I also consider the Member used his position improperly, in an attempt to gain an advantage, when he suggested the minutes should not include the detail of the dispute (nor details about his wife's alleged behaviour therefore), and by stating that he had heard his wife apologise and say she was leaving the meeting. I am not persuaded by the Member's argument that there was no advantage to his wife, because my Office would seek its own evidence, regardless of what the minutes said. While my Office would of course investigate impartially and independently, minutes are an important evidential document, and his suggestion to remove any details

about the dispute, including what was alleged to have been said and by whom (including references which showed his wife may not have treated others with respect and consideration), can only have been advantageous to his wife and disadvantageous to the Clerk, contrary to paragraph 7(a) of the Code.

69. I appreciate that the Member felt he was in a difficult position. He suggested he wanted to balance the need to adhere to the Code with making sure the truth, as he saw it, was made known. He also considered the wider principle, that non-verbatim minutes were the style adopted by the Council, and that such conflicts should not be played out publicly, which he considered were important principles to uphold. Nonetheless, I consider the breaches both deliberate and concerning.

70. I say deliberate because the Member, in his interview, said he would prefer to have been found to have breached the rules than to fail to set out the truth. He also said he would not have done anything differently with hindsight. This, therefore, is indicative of a member who will only follow the statutory ethical rules in place when he considers them a good idea, in any given circumstances. This is a concern. While there will be situations when members may be frustrated by the rules, public confidence in councillors and their authorities is severely undermined if the ethical rules of good governance and democracy are not adhered to, even in difficult situations. It is of further concern, that when presented with our draft report and findings, the Member remains resolute and entrenched in his position, which shows there has been no reflection or insight into why his behaviour may have been the cause of concern. The purpose of the ethical standards regime is to give the public confidence that their elected officials are not involving themselves in personal matters, so as to preserve the probity and integrity of decision making in local administrations.

71. I have also said the breach was concerning because this was a very sensitive situation. The Member's wife was being investigated by my Office for serious concerns of alleged bullying. This will naturally have been a source of great distress to both the Member's wife and the Clerk. Suggesting the removal from minutes of any details about the dispute, as the Member did, could have concerned the Clerk and other members of staff who were involved in minuting the meeting. The Member should have

recognised the message his involvement in such a contentious issue will have sent to Council staff and to the public too, being involved, as he was, when he had such an apparent conflict.

72. That is not to say that it would be inappropriate for anybody else to have challenged the draft minutes in such circumstances. Certainly, I would expect committee members to be concerned if the minutes were substantively inaccurate or completely out with the usual manner in which minutes were recorded. However, the Member could not make representations on the matter, given his prejudicial interest. I do not agree that most other members, being friends with the Member's wife, placed them in the same position.

73. While I appreciate the Member said he could not approach the Clerk or Deputy Clerk for advice, given the circumstances, he could have spoken to the Monitoring Officer at Bridgend County Borough Council and consider whether he could obtain dispensation from the Standards Committee, but he did not. In not doing so, I consider, in the circumstances, that the Member's behaviour was also suggestive of a breach of Paragraph 6(1)(a) of the Code – members must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office as councillor or their authority into disrepute.

Finding

74. My finding under section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000 is that my report on this investigation should be referred to the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Borough Council, for consideration by the Council's Standards Committee.

MM. Morris.

Michelle Morris

Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus/Public Services Ombudsman

27 March 2024

Appendix

Appendix 1	The Complaint and Supporting Information
Appendix 2	Investigation Start Letter
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Appendix 4	Bridgend Town Council Code of Conduct
Appendix 5	Declaration of Acceptance of Office
Appendix 6	Register of Interests
Appendix 7	Information from the Council
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Appendix 9	Leanne Edwards Witness Statement and Exhibits
Appendix 10	Debra Jones Witness Statement
Appendix 11	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Outcome letter of complaint against Councillor Bletsoe 9 September 2019
Appendix 12	Interview Transcript
Appendix 13	Extracts from my Guidance on the Code of Conduct
Appendix 14	Councillor Bletsoe's response to the Ombudsman's draft report

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203
Website: www.ombudsman.wales
Email: ask@ombudsman.wales
Follow us on Twitter: [@OmbudsmanWales](https://twitter.com/OmbudsmanWales)

Appendix 1

From: Leigh McAndrew
Sent: Fri, 28 Oct 2022 09:48:36 +0000
To: 'Workpro@workpro.ombudsman.wales'
Subject: new complaint

From: Lea Edwards <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 25 October 2022 14:00
To: Louise Morland <Louise.Morland@ombudsman.wales>
Subject: Re: [REDACTED]

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]

Good afternoon Ms Moorland,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

It is regular practice at the Town Council for draft minutes of all committee meetings to be presented to full Council for information. At the Town Council meeting on 26th September 2022 the following item was included on the agenda:

'14.1 To receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022'

Under this agenda item, Cllr Steven Bletsoe raised a concern regarding the accuracy of the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting. The Deputy Clerk explained that she had taken advice from One Voice Wales and that the accuracy of the minutes could only be discussed at the next Regeneration Committee meeting by councillors who were present at the meeting. She requested that Cllr Steven Bletsoe submit his proposed amendments to the minutes in writing to her which she explained could be considered at the next Regeneration Committee meeting.

A Regeneration Committee meeting took place last night (24/10/2022) and as agreed, I did not work for this meeting. I observed this meeting remotely as a guest.

In attendance at the meeting were:

- The Mayor, Cllr Tim Wood
- Cllr Steven Bletsoe (Chair of Regeneration Committee)
- Cllr Freya Bletsoe
- Cllr Steven Easterbrook
- Cllr Alison Felton
- Cllr Ian Spiller
- Plus two members of staff: Debra Jones (Deputy Clerk) and Julie Brown (Minute taker)

The following agenda item was included on the agenda for the meeting:

‘To confirm and sign minutes of the Regeneration meeting held on 14th June 2022’

For this agenda item, Cllr Freya Bletsoe declared a prejudicial interest and left the room for the discussions involving page 1-3 of the minutes.

Cllr Freya Bletsoe’s husband, Cllr Steven Bletsoe, who is Chair of the Regeneration Committee, did not declare an interest in relation to the discussions of page 1-3 of the minutes and stayed in the meeting and participated in the discussions.

As Chair, Cllr Steven Bletsoe advised the committee that the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022 were also a matter for the Personnel Committee and reminded members not to discuss matters regarding personnel. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that Personnel minutes were not on the agenda for discussion.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe proceeded to apologise to the Deputy Clerk that he had not submitted his comments about the accuracy of the minutes in writing before the meeting due to being busy.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe explained the reason that he did not support the minutes as an accurate record to be approved, is that he felt there were references in the minutes that perhaps should not have been included.

He referred to a discussion that had been held in the October full council meeting and implied that staff had advised Council that the purpose of minutes was to only reference resolutions and not detail any conflict that takes place during the meeting. The Deputy Clerk stated that staff had not given that advice and she reminded Members that at the October meeting there had been some conflict and the Clerk had advised Council at the meeting that it would be recorded in the minutes as it had taken place.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe stated that his proposal, for the public record, was to state that there had been a disagreement between a Councillor and the Clerk and the clerk had stated that she felt bullied and intimidated. He did not provide information about which elements of the minutes he claimed were inaccurate.

He expressed a concern that the committee could not openly discuss this matter because as people who were in attendance at the meeting on 14th June 2022, Councillors and staff may be asked individually to give witness statements.

The Deputy Clerk asked that Cllr Steven Bletsoe propose his amendments or changes to the minutes so that those who were in attendance at the meeting could agree or disagree to his proposals. She highlighted that the minutes were taken by a minute taker and they were a reflection of what happened on the evening. She highlighted that she was unsure of which parts Cllr Steven Bletsoe is claiming are not accurate.

Although he was not present at the meeting on 14th June 2022, [REDACTED] suggested that the minutes should be a summary and that they were more detailed than other minutes. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that the minutes were a summary and not verbatim.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe and committee members proceeded to discuss this matter at length and on several occasions, [REDACTED] noted that she felt that the minutes were accurate. [REDACTED] initially agreed with [REDACTED] then changed his mind.

[REDACTED] proposed amendments to the minutes to remove several bullet points and this was taken to a vote. Cllr Steven Bletsoe abstained from the vote, [REDACTED] voted against the proposed changes and [REDACTED] voted in favour of amending the minutes. The minutes will now be amended as instructed.

I would like to note that the Councillors that voted for the amendments to the minutes are all part of the Bridgend County Independents Group and friends of Cllr Steven Bletsoe and Cllr Freya Bletsoe.

It appears that the Councillors did not deny the events that took place at the Regeneration Committee meeting on 14th June 2022 and did not dispute the accuracy of the minutes as such, but have instead chosen to manipulate the minutes to remove the detail of the proceedings at the meeting from the public minutes.

I feel that Cllr Steven Bletsoe has manipulated the situation and used his personal connections to remove details about his wife's behaviour at a public meeting for his own and his wife's benefit. This conduct is not acceptable and undermines the member of staff who prepared the original minutes and tampers with the evidence for the complaint I have submitted.

Kind regards,

Leanne Edwards

From: Lea Edwards
Sent: Thu, 3 Nov 2022 20:31:06 +0000
To: Leigh McAndrew; Louise Morland
Subject: Re: Complaint made to the Ombudsman - 202204885 [REF/xP/w5/rA/m6/]

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Mr McAndrew,

c.c. Ms Moorland

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I feel it is important for you to be aware of the details on page 4 and 5 of my original letter (attached). On these pages there is a section titled '*Regeneration Committee Meeting – Tuesday 14th June 2022*'. The information sent to Ms Morland on 25th October refers to how the minutes of this meeting have now been manipulated to remove any detail of the bullying behaviour [REDACTED]

Despite having a significant conflict of interest, Cllr Steven Bletsoe failed to declare a prejudicial interest at the public meeting. He fully participated in the discussions, disclosed that the contents of the minutes of the Regeneration Meeting on 14th June 2022 were subject to a Personnel matter and advised Councillors present that they may be required to give witness statements (this information was not in the public domain). Cllr Steven Bletsoe also stated at the meeting that if Councillors wished to discuss any of the personnel matter, they should raise it with him as Chair. I believe Cllr Steven Bletsoe misused his position of authority as Chair of

the Regeneration Committee to influence fellow Councillors and subsequently succeeded in redacting public records for the personal gain of his wife.

[REDACTED]

Kind regards
Leanne Edwards

From: Leigh.McAndrew@ombudsman-wales.org.uk <Leigh.McAndrew@ombudsman-wales.org.uk>
Sent: 28 October 2022 12:53
To: lea_edwards@[REDACTED]
Subject: Complaint made to the Ombudsman - 202204885 [REF/xP/w5/rA/m6/]

Dear Mrs Edwards

Reference: 202204885

Please find attached my letter of today which is being sent to you by email only. I also attach a declaration form for your signature.

Yours sincerely

Mr Leigh McAndrew
Rheolwr Ymchwilio Cynorthwyol/Assistant Investigation Manager
Ffôn/Tel: 01656 644216

--

Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru/ Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
Pen-y-Bont ar Ogwr/ Bridgend/
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Hybu'r Gymraeg

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Welsh Language Promotion

You can write to us in Welsh and we will reply in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding.

Sganiwyd y neges hon am bob feirws hysbys wrth iddi adael Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru.

Mae Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru yn cymryd o ddifrif yr angen i ddiogelu eich data.

Mae ein Hysbysiad Preifatrwydd yn esbonio sut rydym yn defnyddio eich gwybodaeth a sut rydym yn diogelu eich preifatrwydd.

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Ystyriwch yr amgylchedd – a oes wir angen i chi argraffu'r neges e-bost hon?

Please consider the environment - do you really need to print this email?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Regeneration Committee Meeting – Tuesday 14th June 2022

At the Regeneration Committee meeting on 14th June 2022 a discussion took place regarding Bridgend Town Council extending an invitation to a member of the Royal Family to unveil a blue plaque in Bridgend Town Centre. During the discussion I explained that the initial budget for the blue plaque scheme is only for the purchase of the plaque. I also highlighted that an invitation of this nature has wide budget and resource implications, outside the scope of what was originally agreed by Council. I therefore advised that extending an invitation of this nature should be referred to the Council for full consideration.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Chair of the Regeneration meeting, Cllr Steven Blestoe allowed a fellow councillor to behave abusively towards me and did not publically call out the behaviour at the time. If it had been any other councillor chairing the meeting, I do not believe they would have tolerated the disrespect shown to me.

[REDACTED]

Although the minutes of this meeting will be provided, as I will note below, minutes do not record the tone of the meeting and therefore witnesses are the only people that can verify this appalling conduct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix 2

Our ref: 202204885/LM/SW

Ask for: Louise Morland

 01656 644224

Date: 13 December 2022

 Louise.Morland
@ombudsman.wales

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Councillor Steven Bletsoe



Dear Councillor Bletsoe

Code of Conduct complaint made by Mrs Leanne Edwards

The Ombudsman has now decided to investigate a complaint made against you by Mrs Edwards. I enclose a redacted copy of the complaint.

I have been asked to carry out the investigation.

Although the complainant does not specify which parts of the Code of Conduct ("the Code") she considers to have been breached, the complaint will be investigated on the basis that there may have been a failure to comply with the following paragraphs of the Code:

- 6(1)(a) – [Members] must not conduct [themselves] in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing [their] office or authority into disrepute.
- (7a) - [Members] must not in [their] official capacity or otherwise, use or attempt to use [their] position improperly to confer on or secure for [themselves], or any other person, an advantage or create or avoid for [themselves], or any other person, a disadvantage.
- 11(1) - Where [Members] have a personal interest in any business of [their] authority and [they] attend a meeting at which that business is considered,

Page 1 of 3

[they] must disclose orally to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest before or at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

- 14(1)(a) - Where [Members] have a prejudicial interest in any business of [their] authority [they] must, unless [they] have obtained a dispensation from [their] authority's standards committee withdraw from the room, chamber or place where a meeting considering the business is being held.
- 14(1)(c) - Where [Members] have a prejudicial interest in any business of [their] authority [they] must, unless [they] have obtained a dispensation from [their] authority's standards committee not seek to influence a decision about that business.
- 14(1)(e) - Where [Members] have a prejudicial interest in any business of [their] authority [they] must, unless [they] have obtained a dispensation from [their] authority's standards committee not make any oral representations (whether in person or some form of electronic communication) in respect of that business or immediately cease to make such oral representations when the prejudicial interest becomes apparent.

You need not respond to this letter if you do not wish to. However, any comments made at this stage will be taken into consideration. You should bear in mind that your comments may also be disclosed to the complainant or used in any subsequent proceedings.

If my investigation finds that there is a case to answer, I will in due course put to you the evidence I have found, and you may be invited to interview to answer any questions which appear relevant in the light of it.

I have written to notify the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Borough Council this investigation. The Monitoring Officer has also been provided with a copy of the complaint in line with the Ombudsman's process. Given the Clerk to Bridgend Town Council's involvement in the complaint, I have asked the Monitoring Officer to take on the role that would usually be undertaken by the Clerk and to provide relevant information requested by the Ombudsman. Please note, in line with our operating procedures, the Clerk has been notified of the investigation, but I have advised her that I will be liaising with Monitoring Officer during the course of the investigation.

Meeting your needs during our investigation

Please let us know if you need us to change the way we communicate with you to help you use our service. If anything makes it difficult for you to engage with us, for example, if you have a disability, please contact us to explain how this affects you and to discuss any adjustments which might help. We will consider whether your request for an adjustment is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances. This is because we need to use public money carefully.

The Ombudsman's investigations are conducted in private. You are therefore asked not to contact or discuss the details of the complaint with any potential witnesses or persons who may be involved in the matter, whether directly or indirectly, to avoid any prejudice to the investigation. Conduct of this kind may amount to a breach of the Code.

If you consider that specific information should be considered, or witnesses should be contacted by the Ombudsman as part of this investigation please let me know and I will consider your request in light of the remit of the Ombudsman's investigation.

This letter is only being sent electronically. A hard copy will not be sent unless you ask for one.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Louise Morland', with a horizontal line underneath.

Louise Morland
Swyddog Ymchwilio/Investigation Officer

Enc: Redacted Copy of Complaint

Appendix 3

From: [Steven Bletsoe](#)
To: [Simon Wyatt](#)
Subject: Re: ENCRYPT Complaint made to the Ombudsman - 202204885 [REF/xP/w5/rA/m6/]
Date: 13 December 2022 12:50:09

You don't often get email from steven.bletsoe@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Thank you for your email,

I confirm receipt and note its contents

I confirm that I will fully cooperate with your investigation and welcome the opportunity to correct inaccuracies in the statements made. I cannot address any aspect of the highly redacted pages.

Can you please confirm how this matter will proceed, whether you require a written submission in the first instance as I feel that an initial written representation will assist you in this matter.

I reserve the right to seek legal advice to assist me with this matter.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter

Steven Bletsoe

On Tue, 13 Dec 2022, 11:48 , <Simon.Wyatt@ombudsman-wales.org.uk> wrote:

Simon.Wyatt@ombudsman-wales.org.uk has sent you a protected message.



Read the message

[Learn about messages protected by Microsoft Purview Message Encryption.](#)

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Microsoft Corporation, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052

This is my full written response to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales investigation into myself after a complaint made by the Clerk of Bridgend Town Council, Mrs Leanne Edwards.

There are a number of responses that I wish to make, for ease of assisting the investigation I will follow the template of the Member Evidence pack to allow me to address each item in direct correlation to the “evidence” provided. I will however state from the outset that I contest that any breach has occurred and that there is no basis for the complaint to be made. For clarity, I wish to point out that much of the information sent to me is very heavily redacted, whilst some of it is easy to make sense of, there is no way to make any sense of parts where entire paragraphs and even pages are completely redacted. I am not ignoring these points, I am unable to address them.

Appendix 1 page 002. This starts with a explanation that on 26th September 2022 that agenda item 14.1 was to consider the draft minutes of the Regeneration Meeting of 14th June 2022. It states that raised a concern over the accuracy of the minutes. This is not a full or accurate reflection of what actually happened. At 16:00 I was in a COSC 3 meeting at Bridgend County Borough Council, this meeting overran and did not finish before the Bridgend Town Council meeting started at 18:30. As a diligent “twin hatted Councillor” I made every effort to play as much as a role in both meetings as possible and ran from BCBC offices on Angel Street to Carnegie House in Bridgend Town Centre to enable me to do so. It is also worth noting that I also attended the COSC 2 pre-meeting at 15:00, meaning that I was in Council meetings between 15:00 and 22:00 after completing a full day in work (starting at 06:00). This is something that I do as a Councillor as I am passionate about serving my community, nothing less and my sole motivation for why I am a Councillor on BCBC, BTC and Coity Higher Community Council, two of those are unpaid and I do not take any remuneration either as a Councillor or Chair of any Committees at either Bridgend Town Council or Coity Higher. I do not do any of this to “improperly to confer on or secure for [themselves], or any other person, an advantage or create or avoid for [themselves], or any other person, a disadvantage” I do it to serve the communities that I serve, wholly and singularly.

When I finally arrived at Carnegie House to join the Bridgend Town Council meeting the Mayor had already proceeded the agenda passed 14.1 and the Councillors were discussing a subsequent agenda item. As soon as that item had concluded Councillor Angela Morelli (Labour) asked the Mayor if he could return to agenda item 14.1 so that the Council could ratify the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting, a rather strange request and not one allowed for in the Standing Orders of the Council (in that you move progress and do not go back to items). The Mayor used his discretion and did so, at which point I stated that as Chair of the Regeneration Committee I did not agree with the accuracy of the minutes and as the Vice Chair (Councillor Fran Sullivan) was not in attendance and there were not enough members of the committee who were in the meeting would be quorate to discuss the matter that I would defer the matter to the next Regeneration Committee for full discussion and would report back to the Full Council, as I was aware that this was the proper protocol to deal with the matter. At this point a fake named profile (Carwyn, Guest) wrote in the chat facility that “what aspect of the minutes is being questioned for accuracy?” “this is being fudged” and “turn up late and then put off making a decision on important issues” (evidence IMG-20240103-WA0004) . I pointed this out to the staff in the meeting, who removed the messages and the fake profile left the meeting. It is worth pointing out that very few people ever attend Bridgend Town Council meetings remotely to watch proceedings, and I am sure that this is similar around the whole of Wales. There is zero doubt that whoever this person was, they were there to cause problems and to “stir the situation” to extend a grudge against the Council or certain Councillors and the manipulation behind this entire situation.

At the bottom of the same page, I am extremely concerned that the Clerk, whilst stating that she did not work the meeting, attended as a Guest, under an unnamed attendee and causes me great concern over being able to trust the Proper Officer of the Council, especially given further details included in her submission, which I will come on to later.

Appendix 1 page 003. Here it is stated that “Cllr Freya Bletsoe’s Husband, Cllr Steven Bletsoe, who is Chair of the Regeneration Committee, did not declare an interest.....” This is a disingenuous comment and one that it is one of the cornerstones of why I believe that no breach has occurred. I am a democratically elected Bridgend Town Councillor for the Morfa Ward and have been since 2017. I am not elected to confer or secure any advantage for Councillor Freya Bletsoe, who is a democratically elected Councillor of Bridgend Town Council for Oldcastle Ward and has been since 2015 (originally through co-option). We are both, separately elected to serve the residents of our separate Wards. Subsequently I was elected by two difference terms of Council to Chair the Regeneration Committee of Bridgend Town Council from 2017 – 2020 up until my term as Mayor and then again in 2022 after my term as Mayor ended. Again, I have done this without taking the enhanced remuneration for doing so, to serve the community I was elected to.

As Chair of the committee and the meeting in question I did not feel that the minutes were either accurate (to be addressed shortly) or proposed in a way that was either in line with way that Bridgend Town Council records minutes or in fact guidance available to Councils on how minutes are taken. The WLGA states that “Officers will take minutes at all formal council meetings. This serves as a record of the decisions taken, the reasons for the decisions being taken and any background papers received.” And One Voice Wales state that “Decisions have been taken and these need to be implemented. The clerk or the minuting secretary writes the minutes as a legal record of what was decided at the meeting. It is not necessary to note who said what, although the discussion can be summarised and decisions must be precisely recorded. It is important that the minutes are accurate and therefore the minutes of the last meeting are confirmed and signed at the start of the next meeting. It is a good idea if the minutes record clearly the actions to be taken following the meeting.” Neither of these organisation advise that verbatim recording of what was said should ever be proposed as minutes from “one side” of the meeting and Bridgend Town Council has *never* done this in my entire time as a Councillor for any Full Council or Committee meeting. Regardless of who this “dispute” was between, I believed that using the minutes as an attempt to write a narrative of the event was actually bringing Bridgend Town Council into disrepute and acted as a Councillor and Chair of a committee to remedy what I considered to be a very serious breach of Council standards. If the Clerk, or any Officer felt it was appropriate to use the public recording of what they claim was said in a meeting in order to attempt to lead the Ombudsman in a complaint that they have raised I believe that is not an appropriate way to propose minutes. This is based on the guidance provided by the WLGA and One Voice Wales and the adopted practises of Bridgend Town Council over my period of time as a Councillor. That deals with the style of how the minutes were recorded, however, I do wish to raise that Mrs Leanne Edwards was a note taker in the meeting and her notes were used to produce the proposed minutes by the Officer who it is claimed produced the wording. The same Officer who phoned Councillor Freya Bletsoe and myself (on speakerphone) whilst I was in the car and stated “I have had to write the minutes for the Regeneration Meeting, and I know that you are not going to be happy with them”. An extremely strange thing to say about how they have written the minutes and clear evidence that they were told how to write them, not in the style that Bridgend Town Council usually records minutes. Who exactly told this Officer to write the minutes in this way, for what purpose and to what end. The Officer, or in fact any Officer, has never written minutes in this way, and did not for the remainder of the meeting. Who exactly instructed her to write them in this way for this part of this particular meeting? I propose that it was her line manager, the Clerk of the Council, the person who has put forward this complaint about me, and the person who

complained about the Councillor in the meeting. There is no other logical explanation as to why an Officer would choose to do so otherwise. I wish at this point to reiterate that I as an Elected Councillor, subsequently elected to Chair of the Regeneration Committee would hold this view, regardless of who the "dispute" is between, I have not come to this position because of who the accusation is against. Any accusation to the contrary that I have done so because I am married to one of people named in the dispute is inaccurate and insulting to the standards that I hold as an elected Councillor.

In relation to the actual accuracy of the proposed minutes, it is in part linked to the fact that they are erroneously in a verbatim style, as without recording the meeting either visually and or verbally, then no one person notes could ever completely accurately report every single persons words and or actions. Added into this is the fact that the alleged dispute occurred between two people interacting remotely with the Clerk in the Chamber and the Councillor online in West Yorkshire. It would test the best accuracy of some of the most skilful minute takers in the Country, all probably service in the HM Court system to fully accurately record two people, talking at and over each other, one of them on a Teams call in order to be 100% accurate, and these proposed minutes were not accurate from my recollection as not just an attendee, but as the Chair. There were aspects of it that would not correct and if they were to be accepted as Verbatim (against the advice of OVW the WLGA and Bridgend Town Councils policy) then they would need to be recorded as 100% accurate, they were not. I am the Chair of the Committee, I am duty bound to uphold the integrity of the Committee and I as Chair knew that the minutes were not accurate, based on my recollection of what I heard in the meeting. It is alleged by the complainant that I should have withdrawn from the meeting and not voiced my recollection, stating that I had a conflict of interest. However, I would like to turn that point around on the complainant, what is the alternative? That I as the Chair of the Committee know that the minutes are not correct, but am unable to voice this? That I am to sit back and potentially allow incorrect minutes to be proposed for approval, simply because I am married to a person in the meeting? And if this is the alternative, I ask what dangerous precedent this stance would take. I am friendly with four people on that committee, as well as others on Full Council of Bridgend Town Council and Coity Higher Council, if there is a proposal to accept a minute that I know is inaccurate that could paint a close friend in a negative light, am I unable to raise that inaccuracy for fear of "obtaining an advantage". There is no line to draw, as any line drawn is an offensive accusation against a Councillor that they are acting improperly, when in fact they are acting in respect of democracy and proper record keeping. Is the suggestion that I should know that the minute is incorrect and should (before the meeting) seek to influence a fellow Councillor who is not married to (or a close friend to) a Councillor and get them to "do my bidding" as I am unable to make the representation that I know to be correct. Again, this is why to I contest the basis of the accusation and investigation. I acted in respect of proper minute keeping in relation to the accuracy of the minutes and refused to do any action contrary to the code of conduct in trying to influence any other Councillor. The fact that I am married to the person alleged to be involved in the dispute had zero influence in my actions regardless of the accusation levelled against me.

In relation to this aspect of the complaint, I would like to submit evidence (IMG-20231215-WA0001) where I would like to evidence that there has been political interference in this process and lies at the heart of much of the problems that exist, or more precisely have existed on Bridgend Town Council. The screenshot is of leaked WhatsApp messages from the Local Labour Group were passed to me by an ex member of the Labour Group who had become disillusioned with their conduct. For full clarity, the driving force behind the chats is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. He is the [REDACTED] n [REDACTED] Bridgend Town Council, in my opinion a deeply unpleasant person, someone who [REDACTED] and someone who has publicly and privately stated a vendetta against me.

There will be a number of pieces of evidence relating to these leaked WhatsApp messages, some of which do not make pleasant reading, but show the genesis of the problems that have existed on Bridgend Town Council. For full clarity, the screenshot IMG-20231215-WA0001 is whilst S [REDACTED] was *not* and BTC Councillor, but very evidently an influential person within the Constituency Labour Group. These screenshots are part of 1,600 screenshots in total, which have all been passed to the Ombudsman separately and to [REDACTED]. I will only refer to the ones pertinent to the complaint against me, but make their entirety available should they be required. In this screenshot, you can clearly see that [REDACTED] encourages Councillor Allison Felton on how to respond to the situation with the minutes of the Regeneration Meeting, despite him not being in attendance even stating "Can't have fake minutes can we (laughing face)." A political leader in the area, who wasn't in the meeting, making sure that the only Labour Councillor who was there is "coached" into how to act. Stating that he wanted it to read that a Councillor had bullied the Clerk and wanted it documenting. It is important to note who is driving this conversation and putting words into the mouth of a Councillor who attended, a leading Labour agitator, with a vendetta against some (including me) and using his influence to drive his agenda. This evidence also makes reference to legal advice, which I will return to later in this response.

On the same page it states that I as Chair of the Regeneration stated that minutes should be a recording of resolutions and not be verbatim, going on to state that the Deputy Clerk confirmed that "staff had not given this advice" (Paragraph 8). This simply is not true and the evidence contradicts this statement. As above in this response, both the WLGA and One Voice Wales offer clear advice that minutes of meetings are a recording of resolutions and descriptions of debate that led to that resolution, not a verbatim recording. This has been discussed in Bridgend Town Council meetings on numerous occasions during my near 7 years of being a Councillor, and is regularly done so when discussing Staff workloads. Bridgend Town Council adopts the policy of this advice and has done so, including in the meeting in question. Any move away from this adopted policy of recording minutes is a matter of resolution by Council or Committee and not the Officer who it is claimed in this paragraph "Clerk had advised Council at the meeting that it would be recorded in the minutes as it had taken place". The only people in the meeting taking notes were the Democratic Services Officer and the complainant herself and therefore any proposed notes would be taken from these two members of staffs notes. Given the way this complaint has been engineered, what in fact is being stated by the complainant is that it is her version of events, and that alone that she wishes to be available, outside of the adopted policy of the Council of recording minutes and attempting to stop the Chair of the Committee from disagreeing with her version. This is an affront to the democracy of the Council and also risks putting the Council at significant reputational risk. For the record, I have consistently supported the proposal put in front of Bridgend Town Council to video and audio record all meetings so that detailed records can be maintained, something that a majority of Councillors have supported and Staff have objected to. This motion was proposed prior to this meeting in question and I would be able to rely on that recording to have substantiated my assertion that the proposed minutes were incorrect, it is a matter of deep frustration that the Staff protestations to this proposal, that I believe assists them, has led to this situation and that we have a situation where a Councillor who knows the minutes were wrong is being told that he is unable to state that they were wrong for fear of a code of conduct complaint. *Note despite further changes to the proposal to record meetings, they still are not being done so.*

On the same page It is stated that I asked Councillors to be respectful of the ongoing situation, that it was discussed at the Personnel Committee on Pink Papers, and that it was a part of an ongoing Public Services Ombudsman complaint. I hope that the PSO office can see the reverence and seriousness of the situation and my respect for due process. I did not and still do not believe that

such important and sensitive situations should be played out in a political arena. I believe that the situation should be dealt with properly and (as stated in the previous paragraph) not in the minutes of a public document of minutes. I believed that the minutes should state that a disagreement took place between the Councillor and the Officer and that would suffice under the adopted policy of Bridgend Town Council and on the advice of the WLGA and OVW. My opinion was at the time and still is that the minutes proposed were factually incorrect, that the verbatim styles was not correct process and this view was held regardless of who the alleged dispute was between, my relationship to one of those people involved had zero to do with it. My driving motivation was the reputation and integrity of the Council as a corporate body.

Appendix 1 page 004 The first paragraph includes a factual inaccuracy. It states that the Deputy Clerk told me that the minutes were taken by a “minute taker” as in singular. There were in fact two minute takers in the Regeneration Committee meeting, the Democratic Service Officer, and the Bridgend Town Council Clerk. This is the same person involved in the alleged disagreement, the same person who has submitted this complaint against me, the person whose notes have been used to generate the proposed minutes and the person who wishes for their version of events to be recorded as a matter of public record so that it can be used to justify their separate complaint against a Councillor. The way that the complaint is written is misleading and disingenuous, it leads the Ombudsman to believe that the complainant is not involved in the situation and comes back to my entire motivation to contest the accuracy of the minutes. There is no physical way that one minute taker could have 100% accurately documented every word said by all parties in the meeting, unless it was recorded (which it wasn’t), or the person who wrote the minutes worked from two people’s notes (one of whom has an interest in making sure that the minutes are sided in a particular way to prop up a separate complaint against a Councillor) and on that basis I remained on the view, that the minutes were not correct from my position as Chair of the Committee, and that they did not need to be verbatim and that view was held regardless of who the specific Councillor involved was. I was and am still of the view that any grievance between a Town Clerk and a Councillor should be carried out through proper channels, laid out in Town Council policies and not played out through disagreements of accuracy in verbatim minutes (outside of Council policy) in a public forum. This statement in the complaint shows my motivation from the outset.

On the same page Paragraph 3 shows very clearly that I abstained from the vote, and would have always abstained from the vote, as once I had made my views as the Chair of the Committee known I was satisfied to allow the committee itself to decide what it felt was the best course of action through a majority. I took no part in any vote on what the committee felt was the best course of action once I had made my views known on the accuracy and verbatim aspect of the minutes **as the Chair and not as a relation to any person**. Despite the accusations made, I take my position extremely seriously and only ever do what is in the best interests of the Council and those I am elected to serve. If I was to act as a Husband, I would not have even attended the meeting, I would have made my apologies and not attended. I did not, I attended as a Councillor, as Chair of the committee and with the best interests of the Council at the forefront of my mind, at all times.

On the same page Paragraph 4 is quite possibly one of the most egregious statements that I have ever seen written about local politics and one that I take extreme offence to. “The Bridgend County Independent Group” is not a Political Party, it is a support network for Independent Councillors to help each other in the local political landscape, predominantly around elections. The statement made here first has no bearing on how any Councillor who is part of that group act, speak or vote on any item in any Council that they sit. The Bridgend County Independent Group do not meet before Council meetings to discuss matters, they do not have a “Party Line” on anything, ever and do not work in a way that is suggested in this complaint. It is an abhorrent “note” to make in the complaint.

If the PSOW office would like to check any single meeting from any Council across the whole of Bridgend Borough either at Community or Local Authority level where they believe that Bridgend County Independent Councillors have acted in a “block group” voting I would be extremely interested to see it. It simply does not happen. I did not, and would refuse to speak to any other Independent Councillor on the Regeneration Committee meeting before this or any other committee meeting purely because it is something that I have never done and would never do. In fact that single only ever “pre-meeting” I have **ever** taken part in as a member of the Bridgend County Independent Group was directly after each of the elections in 2017 and 2022 where experienced Councillors have met with new Councillors to explain how committees work and to explain the benefits of being on them. I have never and will never, ever meet with another Independent Councillor to discuss “tactics” or “strategy” on how to “overturn minutes to the benefit of another Independent Councillor”, I am a democrat and believe in open and transparent democracy. The mere insinuation that I have influenced “friends” to benefit my wife is crass and offensive, but I do believe opens up a view into the mind of the person who has made the complaint, or the very least some of the influence that may be taken over her.

I provide you with further evidence that I have from the leaked Labour WhatsApp messages (IMG-20231215-WA0003). This message predates the incident in question and is in fact from the last term of the Council (2017-22). The background is that in the penultimate Full Council meeting before the elections, that staff had moved that Bridgend Town Council be deemed as an “unreasonable employer” and the matter was discussed on pink papers. A Labour candidate [REDACTED] had been made aware of the contents of the confidential meeting and had made them public on a social media platform in an attempt to gain votes in his election. As you can see from the discussion, ex-Councillor Martin Smidman admonishes him and states that the Clerks had stated that they did not want this to become political and that it should be respectful. Chris replies with “oh well, I didn’t know that and it is out there now” and Martin replies with “The Labour members have been very supportive of the clerks, **and we have been privately thanked by them for doing so**”. There is no grounds for Labour members to have been “privately thanked” unless secret private meetings were being convened. The Chair of the Personnel Committee was Cllr Alan Wathan (Independent) and I was the Mayor (Independent) so on what grounds is the Clerk (or plural Clerks in the message) meeting with Labour members to discuss anything, let alone support and backing. This single statement by a Labour ex-Councillor matched with the paragraph in the complaint shows a clear political bias in the situation as well as a huge misunderstanding of what the term “Independent Councillor” actually means. Again, I restate (as recent as the December Full Council meeting) Independent Councillors disagree on matters and vote in difference ways. Again, I restate my absolute disgust at the accusation made that “friends have clubbed together”, it is offensive.

On the same page Paragraph 5 is states “it appears that the Councillors did not deny the events that took place at the Regeneration Committee Meeting on 14th June 2022 and did not dispute the accuracy of the minutes **as such**”. I am sorry, but my stance at the time that they were not accurate and that they should not be verbatim is justified. There was no “manipulation” of the minutes as it claimed, just the public recording that a debate occurred between the Clerk and a Councillor, which was all that was required under the practise of the Council, the advice from WLGA and OVW. The only manipulation that was evident was that the Clerk wanted her version of events, taken from her notes to be ratified without question from Councillors who were in attendance so that she could rely on them in a complaint she had taken forward, this is simply not what public minutes of the Council meetings are there to do. I remind the PSOW office that the Clerk is not a separate person from this situation, she is the one making the accusation against the Councillor and she has an interest in ensuring that the minutes reflect what she wants them to say. This is an extremely important aspect

of the entire case and the Clerk is not acting properly here, but attempting to manipulate the minutes to support her compliant.

On the same page Paragraph 6 there are many aspects of this final paragraph that need to be addressed. I have not manipulated anything, have never manipulated anything and find it abhorrent that I am being accused of attempting to manipulate anything. I did not believe that the inaccurate recording of minutes, which were made from notes either taken by the complainant herself, or by a singular member of staff who was sat listening to a computer speaker as all but one of the Councillors was remote, who is not a professional minute taker and I knew that aspects of it were incorrect, I also knew that the recording of verbatim minutes was not in line with the policy of Bridgend Town Council or the advice from WLGA or OVW. I have not used my “personal connections” to assist me in doing anything. I have never spoken to the Councillors who were in the meeting before that or any other meeting to discuss how I could use them to achieve my aim of achieving anything, therefore I know that I did not do so in this case. I have not and will not ever do so. Again an abhorrent accusation. There is a statement that I have done this for **my and my wife’s benefit** which again is inaccurate, there is no benefit to myself, I acted as the Chair of the committee purely and singularly and there is also no benefit to my Wife as it did not and could not jeopardise the complaint that had been made against her. Bridgend Town Council did not have a policy of recording verbatim minutes, the guidance does not state that it should be done and the Ombudsman would not rely on them in order to conduct their investigation, but would act accordingly through their own interviews. And, most importantly, I knew that there were mistakes in the proposed minutes. Be accusation the Clerk is suggesting that I am required, as Chair of the committee, to sit back and not raise my concerns and allow minutes to be potentially be approved in order to “support her own complaint”. There is no evidence of this of course because nobody knows what the other Councillors would have said if I had in fact chosen not to attend the meeting. I do not know as I have never spoken to any of the other Councillors about it and would not do so as there are now 2 live PSOW investigations into the overall situation. The only way that the PSOW could understand the views of the other Councillors would be to interview them, as I have never spoken to them about it.

Finally of this part of the appendix I offer you one final piece of evidence (IMG-20240104-WA0006) and (IMG-20240104-WA0012) where you can see actual evidence of manipulation of the situation by members of the Labour Group who were not in attendance, or aware of could possibly have happened trying to manipulate what the one Labour Councillor who was there had witnessed. Trying to intimate that the Councillor in question had shouted, when Cllr Felton was clear that she hadn’t and trying to her to admit to things that simply had not occurred. This is provided to you as evidence as to the background of what is actually going on here and the reality of the situation.

There is an accusation that I have should have declared a prejudicial interest because my wife is named in the minutes, this simply is not the case, I have taken part in debates that include my wife and “Councillor Friends” for 7 years and it is purely that the Clerk is unhappy that she has not “got her way” in initiating verbatim minutes that this complaint has been raised. There was no benefit to be gained from the actions that occurred, the Ombudsman complaint would continue into her original complaint, this would not alter, however, I had the right, as the Chair of the committee to state that I believed that the minutes were incorrect and should not be verbatim. Otherwise, where is democracy? I refer to a complaint made about me in 2023 where a supposed member of the public (who is actually a Labour Pencoed Town Councillor) complained that I had proposed my wife as Chair of Scrutiny 2 Committee at BCBC. The compliant was thrown out as I was told that there was no conflict in proposing a Councillor who I happened to be married to, I have used the same measurement of justice in my thoughts in this case. I wholeheartedly knew that there were errors in the minutes and I, as Chair of the Committee, had every right to voice this in the interests of the

reputation of the Council. I restate, I did no “manipulate” those around me, I never spoke to **any** other Councillor (either on the Committee or Full Council) about what I was going to say or the items that I thought were incorrect. They arrived at their own position on their own, just like Independent people do.

Pages 6-10 I cannot make any comment on as they are completely redacted in full

Pages 10-11 are extremely difficult to obtain context as they are very highly redacted, but I will attempt to deal with them to the best of my ability.

The only thing that I can really say to this accusation that I allowed a Councillor to be abusive towards the Clerk and that a different Chair would have handled it differently. I am an experienced and extremely fair Chair, I have never had any complaints about my actions as Chair in my entire time as a Chair of any meeting in my time of being a Councillor. I Chaired the Regeneration Committee from 2017 -2020, then Chaired Council meetings as Mayor from 2020-22 and then back to the Regeneration Committee for 2022-23. During that time I have had to deal with extremely difficult questions from Councillors and members of the public at times. I have never had a single complaint about how I have carried out these duties, I allow open debate, I use my judgement to the best of the Council at all times. On this occasion, I was using a laptop, whilst sat at a Dining Room table in West Yorkshire for the first meeting of the Committee of the new term and was appointed as Chair at the opening of the meeting, I had not had time to prepare as I was not Chair until the meeting commenced so was caught unprepared for the meeting and the disagreement between the Clerk and Councillor, in previous years you can have a working plan going forward for projects, but this was the first meeting of a new term and I hadn't been Chair of that Committee for over 18 months whilst as Mayor. I in no way showed any favouritism to any person in that meeting and don't at any time. This accusation is abhorrent and designed to create a narrative that simply does not exist. Again, it reinforces my support for the recording of meetings so that “tone” can be gauged in such circumstances and opinions on tone can be removed. As I referred to earlier in (IMG-20240104-WA0006) and (IMG-20240104-WA0012) there was no shouting, something that Labour Councillors tried to manipulate to the only Labour Councillor who was actually present. A recording of the meeting would have settled my Chairing abilities very quickly for you.

Pages 12-18 are fully redacted and I cannot make comment.

Pages 19 – 119 would appear to me to be for information purposes with reference to code of conduct etc.

Page 120 This is an extremely interesting detail and I ask for the Ombudsman take it into consideration for this case. I ask you to look at the line “A heated debate took place between Cllr C Harding was asked to apologise for his remark”. These are the minutes of a Bridgend Town Council full meeting of 17th October 2022, perversely whilst discussing the benefits to staff of visually and audio recording meetings. As you will note, there is a summary of a heated debate between two members of the Council, not verbatim recording. I am being accused of manipulating a situation to record minutes in exactly the same way that Bridgend Town Council record minutes. Here is the evidence. I recall this situation as I was sat very close to Cllr Wathan on this occasion and Cllr Harding was attending remotely. This proves that this is not a justified complaint, but more that it is that the Clerk is extending her existing complaint, simply because she has not been allowed to document her version of the situation, based on minutes generated from her notes. Bridgend Town Council does not record minutes in this way, the WLGA and OVW advise a summary (as has been done on this case, and every other case in my term as Councillor). I was not seeking to gain a

prejudicial advantage, I was seeking to protect the integrity of the Council from incorrect and improperly documented minutes.

Pages 121 – 153 are further minutes of meetings

Page 156 Note 7. As I have previously mentioned, this is not a true or accurate reflection of what happened. I arrived late, and after the agenda item had been passed over due to my not being there and the Vice Chair not being in the meeting. I also have very extreme concerns that the Clerk is stating that she attended the meeting as a Guest. Given my previous submission of (IMG-20240103-WA0004) where a person who is a Guest is seen making comment on the situation and I do not recall other guests being present. I would ask that Bridgend Town Council is asked as to who attended this meeting to see if these are actually the words of the Clerk, who has admitted that they were logged into the meeting as a guest in her statement. I would like to say that I would trust the Clerk that it was not her, but her actions in this situation have meant a complete lack of trust from my side on this matter.

Note 8 in my opinion raises the lid on the genesis of the entire complaint against me, it is not about me having any perceived or alleged conflict of interest, it is because in the Clerk's opinion someone was attempting to change "her evidence" to a different complaint. That simply was not the case. I was not just a Councillor in the Regeneration Committee meeting, I was the Chair. I believed that aspects of the proposed minutes were wrong and I also believed that the style of verbatim recording was not correct. This point is regardless of who the alleged disagreement was between. At no time did I make any statement that a disagreement occurred, or any statement about who was right or wrong. I simply stated that I believed that some of the detail was wrong and the style of recording was incorrect (note reference above to the minutes provided above with detail a "heated debate"). I am afraid that the Clerk has detailed here the reason for her complaint against me, not any reference to any conflict of interest, which I dispute anyway, but miffed that someone (anyone) was changing her narrative of the occurrence, which as the Chair of the Committee I have the right to put forward my recording of the event. **Important note** It was not agreed that the minutes would be redacted, it was agreed that they would be summarised. There is an extremely important distinction on this point as redacted intimates something completely different to what actually happened.

Note 9, again there was no redaction, the Committee agreed, through a motion of Cllr Ian Spiller that they would be a summary of the facts, as is the policy of Bridgend Town Council of recording minutes and is guidance from WLGA and OVW. There was no redaction and the word redacted was never used.

Note 10. Bridgend Town Council do not record verbatim minutes, there has been a motion passed by a large majority of Councillors to record them, in part with a view to assist the PSOW office in any complaints that are received in relation to content in meetings, that is certainly part of my motivation in supporting the motion and the Clerk's reference here is extremely concerning. Mrs Edwards states that she is relying on the draft minutes as evidence, however, I know that there are mistakes and inaccuracies in there and I as Chair have the right to raise those. Is Mrs Edwards stating that one person's proposal of minutes, which are also based on her notes taken in the meeting, are the only singular record of what it claimed to have been said and that a Councillor is unable to state that they are wrong, from their recollection. Any move to take away Councillors ability to state that minutes are incorrect is extremely dangerous, especially given that the Clerk is also stating that they are relying on them as being evidence in a complaint. How does this even work? I restate again, if I did not use my position to do anything other than state the minutes were incorrect, and attempted to remedy this in as respectful way as was physically possible and being fully respectful on my position as Chair and a Councillor. I would have done this regardless of who the officer and/or

Councillor were, I did not do this “because the Councillor is my wife” any insinuation that I did is abhorrent. Any person who know me as a Councillor knows how I operate (something raised in a witness statement shortly after this) I take great pride in being a Councillor and **always** uphold my standards, my actions would have remained the same regardless of who was involved in this alleged situation.

Note 11. I have always tried to work with those around me to the betterment of the Council and the staff, I have always given everyone the same respect, but this situation has caused me significant concern, I go back to evidence (IMG-20231215-WA0001) where Labour Councillors are discussing my position here and that “they should take legal advice, which on its own is not a concern, however when matched with the statement in the complaint itself around all Councillors are “part of the Bridgend County Independent Group” and more worrying the statement from Labour Ex-Councillor that the “Labour Group have been thanked privately” by the Clerks for their support (IMG-20231215-WA0003) I am sat here writing this and questioning political bias. There is also the “guest” in the Council meeting where we know the Clerk has stated she was a guest and actually recorded me, without any notification or my permission, this all leaves an extremely sour taste in my mouth. I have been asking for meetings to be recorded officially, alongside others, to help protect the staff and Councillors and now I am told that the Clerk, who objects to being recorded, has recorded me and other staff in order to submit this complaint? I have very, very serious concerns around this situation.

Pages 175 – 179 This evidence is an extremely concerning situation. I did not consent to being recorded in this meeting, there was no notification that the meeting was being recorded. Bridgend Town Council did not have an adopted policy of recording meetings (despite it being the will of a majority of Councillors). Yet the Clerk of Bridgend Town Council and Proper Officer has recorded me in the meeting. I will be taking legal advice on this piece of evidence as it is covert recording without consent.

Whilst you are considering it though I will make the point that I question how this can be relied on as, if Mrs Edwards was in fact remote then she would not have been able to attribute any words to specific persons. There is an Owl system in place that would have given her the voice content without it being attributed to a person. It would just say “Chamber feed”. This makes the information unreliable (as well as possibly illegal)

It is also worth pointing out that Mrs Edwards has chosen the specific time to “stop the recording” at a point of her choosing rather than making the recording available in full for consideration. This is disingenuous and misleading.

Appendix 10 Page 181 The irony of this entire evidence at the next level. The charge is that I breached the code of conduct by engaging in a debate around minutes that include my wife (a charge that I refute) and yet, the only evidence provided for the charge comes from the complainants best friend. And when I say best friend, I refer to a best friends who goes on family holidays together, have worked for numerous organisations together, not just a passing associate. If I am to accept that the Deputy Clerk is acting properly and in line with her duties, then the complainant and Public Services Ombudsman **has** to accept that I can also act in a similar manner. Failure to accept that I can act properly in relation to my duties when they involve my wife and allow the Deputy Clerk to act in this manner is hypocrisy of the highest level. I will however address the points raised in this evidence as follows.

Point 4, again does not reflect the actual circumstances that I arrived late, due to a meeting at BCBC Civic Offices and that the agenda item had passed, that a Labour Cllr requested returning to it or the messages from a “guest” at the meeting.

Point 7, I did not want any reference to the matters that had been discussed at the Personnel Meeting to be discussed as they had been discussed on Pink Papers and were confidential, any open discussion on what had been discussed would have been a breach of that confidentiality and bring the council into disrepute. I was aware that it was a delicate matter, one that was with the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales and that nothing in this meeting should ever risk due process that had to be carried out. The complaint was being taken forward and that was proper process, it should be allowed to continue unfettered, without any person on the Regeneration Committee putting any jeopardy towards it. I believed that there were mistakes in the minutes, that the way they had been recorded was wrong, but I didn’t want any discussion that would risk the complaint that the Clerk had submitted and to allow the PSOW to complete their investigation, especially in a public meeting, when the Personnel Committee had met in “closed session”. The Deputy Clerk didn’t suggest that we went into closed session to discuss this, which raises concerns for me that she knew that the Clerk was in attendance in a covert manner. If we had gone into a closed session, they all guests would have been removed. I may be wrong, I may be right, but all trust has been completely lost by me in the staff at the Council after this situation and the details in the leaked Labour WhatsApp messages and the in this complaint. I did not say that people who were in the meeting could not comment, I said that people who were in the meeting could be called as a witness in the investigation and that they should be mindful of that and pay respect to proper process.

Point 9. The Deputy Clerk states that she informed that the minutes were “not verbatim” but were a “summary”. This is incorrect as you can see from your evidence the difference between how Bridgend Town Council report summary minutes and what was proposed for this alleged incident. These were verbatim minutes, which Councillor Spiller believed was not correct, as he points out, he could not comment of their accuracy, as he was not in the meeting, his view was that the style of reporting was not correct or in keeping with Bridgend Town Council policy of minute recording.

Point 10. I did not vote on the proposal from Councillor Spiller, which was seconded, I stated what I believed to be the correct state of affairs as the Chair of the Committee, not as someone “who lives with Councillor Freya Bletsoe”, but as a Councillor and as a Chair, I did not feel it appropriate to vote on the matter and did not do so.

Point 11 is a ridiculous accusation and purely speculation based on zero facts and could not be further from the truth. I will explain how:-

I have never, ever spoken to a Councillor prior to a meeting to discuss matter that should be discussed in an open Council meeting. It is everything that I stand against and did so in my original campaign in 2017. If you speak to any Councillor that I have say alongside through my entire terms of Council and ask them if I have every done so you will receive a resounding response. I stand against such practices and find it an affront to democracy. So in short, I can guarantee that this did not happen, as it has never happened in my entire time as a Councillor, on any issue.

If, as is accused, I did attempt to get Councillor Spiller to do this “on my behalf” would I have opened the agenda item in the way that I did, speaking openly and honestly about how I saw it, when I could (as is alleged) got other Councillors to do it for me and take the attention away from the fact that I am married to the Councillor named in the Clerk’s complaint. It would make no sense for me to have said what I said if I had arranged for others to do all of the talking. It is a nonsense accusation and has no basis in fact or rational thinking. There is no reference to any evidence in the pack which is

from any interviews with Councillors who were in the meetings in question, I can only assume that interviews have taken place with those Councillors who would confirm this to be the case. There was also no “games” being played to create a narrative. At no time was there anything other than respect being shown for staff and processes from everyone who took part in a delicate situation. You will refer back to the WhatsApp messages from the Labour Group, I will assure you now, that no such similar conversation has ever occurred on any chat I am a part of, I have shown the situation nothing but respect as a past Mayor, as the Chair of the Committee and a person who holds the reputation of Bridgend Town Council close to his heart.

Point 12 This is an extremely strange accusation against me, as I am being told that I was not allowed to raise the fact that I believed that some of the items in the proposed minutes were wrong, yet I am told that they are strong evidence in an ongoing investigation. There were aspects of it there were wrong and I tried to raise that. I was also of the view that it was not the best route to try to “claim that they were true and accurate. There is one of two ways that these minutes were proposed, either from one person, not a professional minute taker, who was listening to the majority of Councillors who were online or were put together by that person who also used notes from the person who put forward the complaint about Councillor, so her version of events, and as already reported the person who put together the minutes phoned both myself and Councillor Freya Bletsoe expressing her view that she would “not be happy with the minutes” which is an extremely strange to have done if not led to put those minutes forward in that way. The statement here is that the proposed minutes were an important aspect of a complaint (by her best friend) but it had to be the version proposed by the staff and that the Chair could not raise any concerns over their accuracy, and if he did then there would be a code of conduct complaint in against him if he did. What on earth are we proposing here? And what precedent are we claiming for Councils if the Chair is unable to make these representations. If the absolutely accuracy of everything is said at all times, in case they are needed, why do staff refuse to adhere to the motion of the Council and use digital technology to absolutely record, in absolute accuracy by digitally audio and video recording them. This would mean that every aspect of what is said, their tone and context would be recorded and could be submitted, rather than the written minutes by staff, which it appears is what staff want recorded, without any intervention from Councillors. To be clear, absolutely clear, my reference above to “her best friend” is used on that basis that my marriage to a Councillor is being used as a reason why I am being accused of having a conflict of interest, it has to work both ways or neither.

Point 13 I was not influencing things by referencing the Personnel Committee meeting, I was asking Councillors to be respectful of matters that had been discussed on pink papers, and to the process of the complaint to the Ombudsman. This narrative that is being written about me is false and misleading.

Point 14 This point that I have somehow undermined the confidence of the Deomocratic Services Officer is equally laughable and insulting. I have had the honour of being Mayor of Bridgend Town and Chair of the entire Council, during that time I worked closely with the Democratic Services Officers, who in essence if the “right hand” of the Mayor, working closely to help the duties throughout the year. I have also been a “confidant” of the Democratic Services Officer and I can state that her confidence has been undermined for a very long time by staff at the Council, with her telling me that “everything I do is wrong”. Even the genesis for this entire situation where the Democratic Services Officer contacted the Lord Lieutenant to discuss the attendance of (the then) Prince of Wales, she was told off for doing so and I was confided in by phone over that. I have certainly not been the one who has undermined the confidence of this member of staff, in fact she is one of the people I have worked closest with whilst I was Chair of the entire Council. In relation to the statement that two sets of notes were taken for the meeting that the Deputy Clerk “clerked”, the

same was the case when the Clerk “clerked” the meeting, she had a book open in front of her and was making notes the whole way through, which is how I know that the minutes proposed were produced in part from notes that she made. The statement here that “notes are shredded” means that I am seemingly unable to prove this, but I recall the Clerk, the complainant in both complaints, was making notes during the meeting in question, where the minutes were being disputed.

Point 16. The Deputy Chair, Councillor Fran Sullivan was not in attendance at the meeting, I could not have handed over to her. I was also of the opinion that the minutes were not correct, so what is the proposal of what I was meant to do. I had no idea if other Councillors shared my opinion that the minutes were incorrect as I had not spoken to them about it before the meeting. I do not believe that it is democratic to have done so or “agree a way to get my point”. Therefore, again, I ask what the precedent would be if a Councillor who believes that minutes are not correct is unable to raise that fact in a public meeting, in full view of the electorate (in a respectful way). I believe in democracy, vehemently, and will stand up for better democracy at all times. I believe that my actions in raising that I did not believe that the minutes were correct, in a public way, when virtually every person who lives in Bridgend know that I am married to Councillor Freya Bletsoe, was the correct thing to do. I could have given everything I believed to be correct to another Councillor to raise for me, before the meeting and left, leaving them to do it for me, but I find that an underhand and actually not the right thing to do under any circumstances. I do not believe that is the way to conduct myself as a Councillor and it would never enter my head to do it that way. I believe that I acted properly and in the best interests of Bridgend Town Council, as I do with everything that I do as a Councillor.

Summary

- in the initial council meeting I was late to the meeting, the item had passed and couldn't be returned to. The mayor ruled on this. This was nothing to do with me and I acted properly at all times in this meeting.
- in this meeting there were online comments made by a guest, I have no evidence who it was, but the comments show an underlying and nefarious tone. We know, through the evidence of the Clerk, that she was in the meeting as a guest.
- in the September meeting I had every right to take part in and challenge minutes of a meeting that I participated in and chaired.
- to not allow a councillor to do this is perverse and sets a dangerous precedent. You cannot exclude a councillor from agreeing minutes based on what is written in the draft. That's the top of a very slippery slope that could allow a clerk or others to deliberately exclude councillors by manipulating minutes to how they wish them to be recorded.
- I had good cause to challenge the minutes. Not only were they Incorrect but with one section in verbatim style was at variance with BTC practice of minute recording. I have offered the comparison (from the evidence bundle) this with the description of the ex-Councillor Harding and Councillor Wathan which purely stated that there was an argument which was heated.
- I did not at any point prior to or during the meeting seek to influence councillors to vote in a particular way regarding the minutes. Where is the evidence of this? Have other Councillors been interviewed to confirm this?

- The screen shots of the Labour WhatsApp messages also demonstrate is that there was keen political interest in the minutes and a certain version of what happened and more importantly the false narrative of what didn't actually happen. This includes the very blatant coaching of Councillor Felton, who was the Labour Counillor in attendance, but Labour Councillors and BCBC Officers who were not in the meeting.
- In light of the screenshots it is now clear that although she supported the minutes in the meeting Cllr Felton admitted to labour colleagues that whilst there was a disagreement there was no shouting, and this actually supports the aspects of the minutes that I was due to challenge in the meeting.
- although not obvious at the time Mrs Edwards's complaint against me highlights the fact that the minutes are a cornerstone of her complaint against Councillor Freya Bletsoe. On reading this complaint that puts the minutes into more context. At the time I challenged them because they were incorrect and in an incongruous style. But now in light of the complaint it is my believe that they were deliberately written to support Mrs Edwards complaint against Councillor Freya Bletsoe
- I dispute that the version of events regarding the minute taker and that I've undermined confidence of the staff. I was told by the supposed minute taker that she was given notes by the clerk to base her minutes on I was with Councillor Freya Bletsoe was told that 'She won't like them'.
- why were the draft minutes shredded? These minutes were contentious the staff knew they were contentious, and the clerk has admitted in her complaint that they were important to her other complaint. Therefore why has the Deputy Clerk stated that all notes are shredded as a matter of course, when they could be extremely important.

The clerk recorded a subsequent meeting, why was this? Presumably because she knew the minutes were likely to be challenged on grounds of style and accuracy. She provided a transcript of the recording yet didn't keep the original notes and stopped the recording in a non-obvious place, offering only what she deems to have been important, but not what follows. Keeping the original notes and any emails between staff would have supported the accuracy of the minutes. This is significant and undermines the credibility.

The only contemporaneous record of the meeting is the passed in the leaked WhatsApp chats that says there was a disagreement but no shouting. This supports my assertion that the minutes were incorrect and is from a private conversation from a Labour Group who were actually trying to frame the narrative

- it has to be remembered that the complainant is the line manager of all council staff. Those who have provided evidence are either very close personal friends or may feel pressured into doing so because of their positions.

Thank you.

Lab BTC chat

Done

forward. 🤔

[15/06/2022, 17:55:19] +44 [REDACTED] Did she shout?

[15/06/2022, 17:57:15] +44 [REDACTED]: She didn't stay for all the meeting 😊 Don't think there was shouting.

Some people don't anticipate the effect of their words.

This was classic example....

[15/06/2022, 18:09:12] +44 [REDACTED]: This message was deleted.

[15/06/2022, 18:10:01] +44 [REDACTED]: So was it unacceptable behaviour by a councillor towards a member of staff

[15/06/2022, 18:11:22] +44 [REDACTED]: I think everything has been dealt with in the way you would expect. Leanne is so efficient and isn't going to let anything go that shouldn't.

[15/06/2022, 18:12:58] +44 [REDACTED]: Yes she is very good at her job - unfortunately some people throw their weight around using their status to belittle other people

[15/06/2022, 18:13:53] +44 [REDACTED]: She told me the other day that the proposals about urge were not submitted correctly but cos they went through on a vote there is nothing they can be done now, Steven Bletsoe knew what he was doing

[15/06/2022, 18:19:47] +44 [REDACTED]: She (Leanne) is so capable she isn't going to let anyone get away with anything unacceptable behaviour/ attitude wise. (She is on the ball with requirements legally etc too and will stick to what is stipulated legally... from what I have observed.) Interesting to hear about the Urge thing. Once bitten etc... Guess Minutes of committees will be an accurate record of every thing that happens. 😊

[15/06/2022, 18:20:24] +44 [REDACTED]: I am sorry to go on but what was Freya's behaviour like towards Leanne? When I say behaviour I mean did she behave in an intimidating way

[15/06/2022, 18:20:25] +44 [REDACTED]: Very efficient as ever last night 👍

[20/06/2022, 18:30:54] +44 [REDACTED]: Going remote tonight, can't be asked being there in this heat with all of them mouth breathers lol

[15/06/2022, 17:10:20] +44 [REDACTED]: Yes I was on Regeneration 😊 last night.

[15/06/2022, 17:24:15] +44 [REDACTED]: Was it ok ? Did anything happen regarding behaviour

[15/06/2022, 17:24:43] +44 [REDACTED]: Were you there in person or online ? X

[15/06/2022, 17:53:39] +44 [REDACTED]:

@447597933833 I was there remotely. There was a bit of upset. Freya got worked up over some information not being immediately available and consequently caused upset with Leanne. Happy days. Will be interesting if meetings are recorded in future. Will have to make sure that happens. Ironical to think of who has put the motion forward. 😊

[15/06/2022, 17:55:19] +44 [REDACTED]: Did she shout?

[15/06/2022, 17:57:15] +44 [REDACTED]: She didn't stay for all the meeting 😊 Don't think there was shouting.

Some people don't anticipate the effect of their words.

This was classic example....

[15/06/2022, 18:09:12] +44 [REDACTED]: This message was deleted.

[15/06/2022, 18:10:01] +44 [REDACTED]: So was it unacceptable behaviour by a councillor towards a member of staff

Has Freya used this extract. Fenton says she

[25/04/2022, 20:15:00] ~ Angela Moore: agenda item 07 minutes-of-bridgend-town-council-meeting-monday-28th-march-2022_excluding-confidential.pdf • 17 pages <attached: 00001495-agenda-item-07-minutes-of-bridgend-town-council-meeting-monday-28th-march-2022_excluding-confidential.pdf>

[25/04/2022, 20:15:56] ~ [REDACTED]: It is now in the public domain.

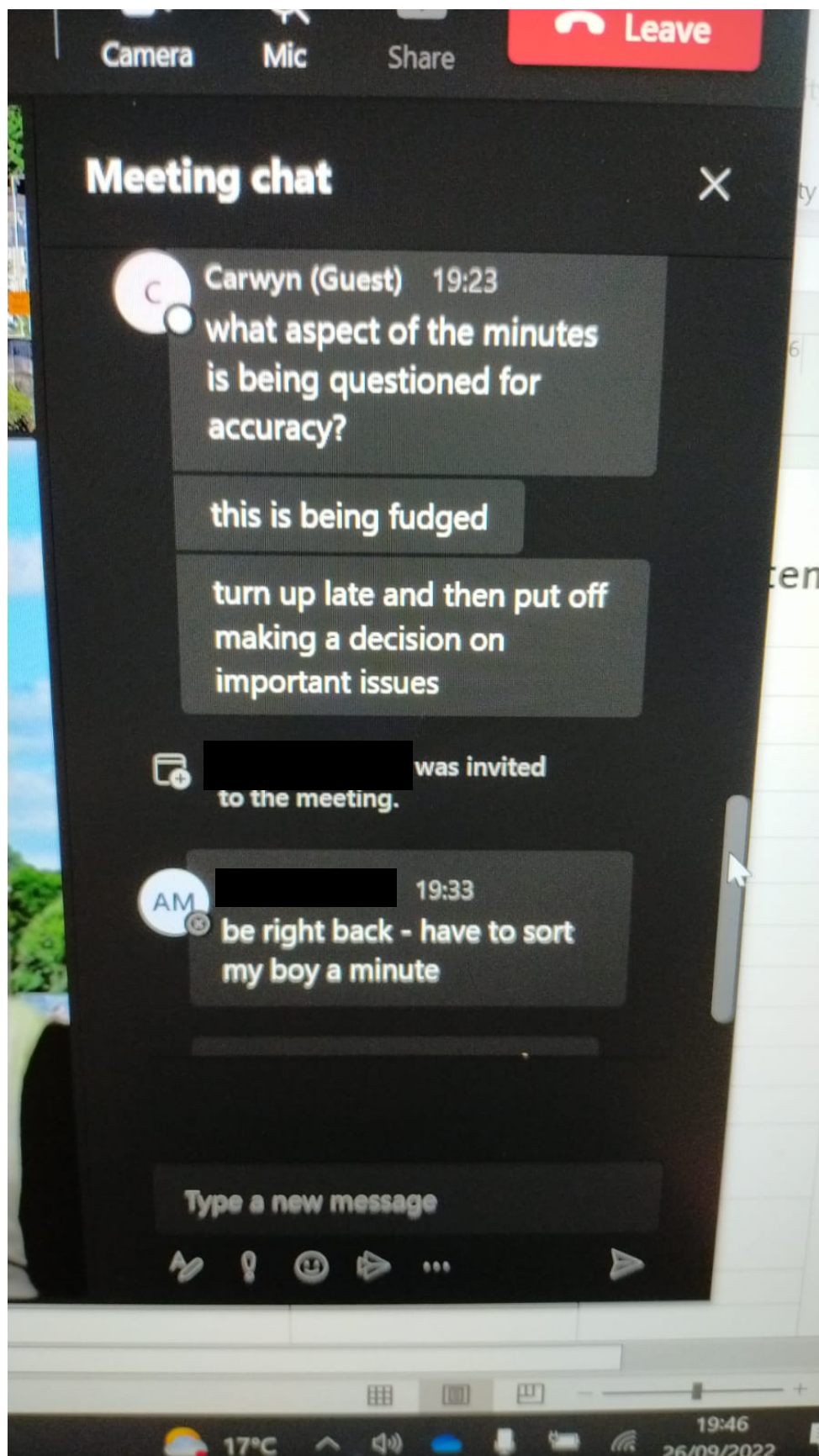
[25/04/2022, 20:20:12] ~ [REDACTED]: How can they have the best interests of the residents when they don't have the best interests of the staff

[25/04/2022, 20:27:06] ~ [REDACTED]: We need to be careful with this publically. [REDACTED], the clerk, specifically asked that this not be used politically and all councillors present agreed.

[25/04/2022, 20:28:07] ~ [REDACTED]: I didn't read that otherwise I wouldn't have said anything, however, I feel the public should know what the BCI are doing

[25/04/2022, 20:33:41] ~ [REDACTED]: I know where you are coming from [REDACTED]. However, although the Labour members have been very supportive of the clerks, and we have been privately thanked by them for doing so, technically it is the council as a whole that has been designated and, as I said, it was agreed not to politicise it. I also understand fully that you were not to know that.

[25/04/2022, 20:35:10] ~ David White: I would agree



[18/10/2022, 10:54:48] +44 [REDACTED]: Hi Angela, hope all was well for you both last night. //Just checking what it is that branch would like to know... focus of business or regarding "particular" issues...(excluding the material not for public consumption, I guess 😊) Would be grateful if u could clarify... then perfectly happy to write up and forward to relevant person...who is?//Sorry brain is not fully engaged 😊 A

[18/10/2022, 11:09:47] +44 [REDACTED]: Thank you Alison - what ever you think is important really - what tc is up to and the dirt of course ha ha

[18/10/2022, 11:10:57] +44 [REDACTED]: 😂👍 Who should I send it to? Sorry to be so thick... 😊

[18/10/2022, 11:11:51] +44 [REDACTED], Emily said she would like a copy too xx

[18/10/2022, 11:12:56] +44 [REDACTED]: I will track them down... 👍

[18/10/2022, 11:13:32] +44 [REDACTED]: So what happened last night - looking at your texts? Did the minutes of the Regen minutes go through?

[18/10/2022, 11:14:02] +44 [REDACTED]: Are you on the CLP WhatsApp chat ?

[18/10/2022, 11:14:25] +44 [REDACTED]: I can pass it on - I won't take the credit I promise ha ha

[18/10/2022, 11:14:28] +44 [REDACTED]: Am on so many... think I am

[18/10/2022, 11:19:45] +44 [REDACTED]: The Regen minutes must have got thru ... Don't recall any issue with those. //Really had flavour of what Indies are like I felt last night. For all claims of listening to staff they ... selected individuals...really are overbearing and dismissive of the concerns of others ie staff. Beats me why they are so keen to be videoed 🙄 Hardly an advert for local democracy at

[29/10/2022, 11:48:35] [REDACTED]: I think after Mondays regen meeting at the next meeting [REDACTED] you will need to dispute the minutes unless they state that you were unhappy about the removal of the section on the clerk being bullied. Can't have fake minutes can we 🤔

[29/10/2022, 11:53:21] +44 [REDACTED]: I said that I was against any changes, that summarised minutes would not accurately represent what happened in this instance. I therefore proposed the minutes be accepted as they were. I had no support(apart from accidental which was withdrawn 😊)Am sure I will be disputing the accuracy of any summary.

[29/10/2022, 12:02:01] [REDACTED]: A real fighter not a quitter lol

[29/10/2022, 12:02:45] +44 [REDACTED]: 🙄

[29/10/2022, 12:05:11] +44 [REDACTED]: This is a conflict of interest- was it the chair - her husband- I think they should take legal advice on this

[29/10/2022, 12:05:35] +44 [REDACTED]: He was...

[29/10/2022, 12:06:13] +44 [REDACTED]: Steve was chair and suggested changing the minutes

[29/10/2022, 12:07:42] +44 [REDACTED]: It was Ian who came up with the amended version I wouldn't support. SB abstained on the vote... but am finding out what it is like to be a lone voice!

[29/10/2022, 12:08:53] +44 [REDACTED]: They are attempting a cover up

[29/10/2022, 12:10:59] +44 [REDACTED]: Think [REDACTED] disputed some details but let's face it... we all knew it happened like that. They didn't like verbatim minutes either as this was wasn't usual practice. Re your above comment....well 🤔

[29/10/2022, 12:13:16] +44 [REDACTED]: So you will have the minutes of that meeting suggesting covering up a bullying incident described in minutes from July 🤔

[29/10/2022, 12:14:57] +44 [REDACTED]: Refusing to agree them makes them complicit

Appendix 4



Bridgend Town Council

Approved Model Code of Conduct

Local Government Act 2000	Deddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000
Model Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members with voting rights	Cod Ymddygiad Enghreifftiol ar gyfer Aelodau ac Aelodau Cyfetholedig â hawliau pleidleisio
The attached Annex sets out the text (in English and Welsh) of the Model Code of Conduct prescribed by the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) Order 2008, as amended by the following statutory instruments: - Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies and Credit Unions Act 2010 (Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2014 – (No. 2014/1815) (“the 2014 Regulations”) – effective from 1 August 2014. - Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016 (No. 2016/84) – effective from 1 April 2016. This document has been produced for the benefit of relevant authorities to whom the Model Code applies, but it does not itself have any legal standing. It is believed to be a true and accurate representation of the law as at 1 April 2016, but no assurance is given in this regard and authorities should take their own legal advice on matters relating to the Code. Please note the 2014 Regulations were made by the UK Government. They amend the Model Code to insert a definition of a ‘registered society’. It appears that the Welsh language version of the Model Code was not amended at the same time. The Welsh Government is in discussion with the UK Government about this with a view to the Welsh language version being amended as soon as practicable. In the interim, the Welsh Government does not believe this anomaly has a material bearing on the operation of the Model Code.	Mae'r Atodiad amgaeedig yn nodi testun (yn Gymraeg a Saesneg) y Cod Ymddygiad Enghreifftiol a bennir gan Orchymyn Awdurdodau Lleol (Cod Ymddygiad Enghreifftiol) (Cymru) 2008, fel y'i diwygiwyd gan yr offerynnau statudol canlynol: - Rheoliadau Deddf Cwmnïau Cydweithredol a Chymdeithasau Budd Cymunedol ac Undebau Credyd 2010 (Diwygiadau Canlyniadol) 2014 - (Rhif 2014/1815) (“Rheoliadau 2014”) - yn dod i rym ar 1 Awst 2014. - Gorchymyn Awdurdodau Lleol (Cod Ymddygiad Enghreifftiol) (Cymru) (Diwygio) 2016 (Rhif 2016/84) – yn dod i rym ar 1 Ebrill 2016. Cynhyrchwyd y ddogfen hon er budd awdurdodau perthnasol y mae'r Cod Enghreifftiol yn gymwys iddynt, ond nid oes ganddi unrhyw statws cyfreithiol. Credir ei bod yn cynrychioli'r gyfraith ar 1 Ebrill 2016 yn wir ac yn gywir, ond ni roddir unrhyw sicrwydd yn hyn o beth, a dylai'r awdurdodau geisio eu cyngor cyfreithiol eu hunain ar faterion sy'n ymwneud â'r Cod. Sylwer: Gwnaed Rheoliadau 2014 gan Lywodraeth y DU. Maent yn diwygio'r Cod Enghreifftiol drwy fewnosodi diffiniad o ‘cymdeithas gofrestredig’. Mae'n ymddangos na ddiwygiwyd fersiwn Gymraeg y Cod Enghreifftiol ar yr un pryd. Mae Llywodraeth Cymru wrthi'n trafod hyn â Llywodraeth y DU gyda'r bwriad o ddiwygio'r fersiwn Gymraeg cyn gynted ag y bo'n ymarferol. Yn y cyfamser, nid yw Llywodraeth Cymru yn credu bod yr anghysondeb hwn yn effeithio'n ymarferol ar weithredu'r Cod Enghreifftiol.

THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

PART 1 INTERPRETATION

1.—(1) In this code —

"co-opted member" ("*aelod cyfetholedig*"), in relation to a relevant authority, means a person who is not a member of the authority but who —

- (a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or
- (b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority, and who is entitled to vote on any question which falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or subcommittee;

"meeting" ("*cyfarfod*") means any meeting —

- (a) of the relevant authority,
- (b) of any executive or board of the relevant authority,
- (c) of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the relevant authority or of any such committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of any executive or board of the authority, or
- (d) where members or officers of the relevant authority are present other than a meeting of a political group constituted in accordance with regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990,

and includes circumstances in which a member of an executive or board or an officer acting alone exercises a function of an authority;

"member" ("*aelod*") includes, unless the context requires otherwise, a co-opted member;

"registered society" means a society, other than a society registered as a credit union, which is —

- (a) a registered society within the meaning given by section 1(1) of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014; or
- (b) a society registered or deemed to be registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969;

“register of members’ interests” (“*cofrestr o fuddiannau’r aelodau*”) means the register established and maintained under section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000;

"relevant authority" ("*awdurdod perthnasol*") means—

- (a) a county council,
- (b) a county borough council,
- (c) a community council,
- (d) a fire and rescue authority constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies,
- (e) a National Park authority established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995;

"you" ("*chi*") means you as a member or co-opted member of a relevant authority; and

"your authority" ("*eich awdurdod*") means the relevant authority of which you are a member or co-opted member.

(2) In relation to a community council—

- (a) “proper officer” (“*swyddog priodol*”) means an officer of that council within the meaning of section 270(3) of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- (b) “standards committee” (“*pwyllgor safonau*”) means the standards committee of the county or county borough council which has functions in relation to the community council for which it is responsible under section 56(1) and (2) of the Local Government Act 2000.

PART 2 GENERAL PROVISIONS

2.—(1) Save where paragraph 3(a) applies, you must observe this code of conduct —

- (a) whenever you conduct the business, or are present at a meeting, of your authority;
- (b) whenever you act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting in the role of member to which you were elected or appointed;
- (c) whenever you act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting as a representative of your authority; or

(d) at all times and in any capacity, in respect of conduct identified in paragraphs 6(1)(a) and 7.

(2) You should read this code together with the general principles prescribed under section 49(2) of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to Wales.

3. Where you are elected, appointed or nominated by your authority to serve —

(a) on another relevant authority, or any other body, which includes a Local Health Board you must, when acting for that other authority or body, comply with the code of conduct of that other authority or body; or

(b) on any other body which does not have a code relating to the conduct of its members, you must, when acting for that other body, comply with this code of conduct, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

4. You must —

(a) carry out your duties and responsibilities with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion;

(b) show respect and consideration for others;

(c) not use bullying behaviour or harass any person; and

(d) not do anything which compromises, or which is likely to compromise, the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your authority.

5. You must not —

(a) disclose confidential information or information which should reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential nature, without the express consent of a person authorised to give such consent, or unless required by law to do so;

(b) prevent any person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

6.—(1) You must —

(a) not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute;

(b) report, whether through your authority's confidential reporting procedure or direct to the proper authority, any conduct by another member or anyone who works for, or on behalf of, your authority which you reasonably believe involves or is likely to involve

criminal behaviour (which for the purposes of this paragraph does not include offences or behaviour capable of punishment by way of a fixed penalty);

(c) report to your authority's monitoring officer any conduct by another member which you reasonably believe breaches this code of conduct;

(d) not make vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints against other members or anyone who works for, or on behalf of, your authority.

(2) You must comply with any request of your authority's monitoring officer, or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, in connection with an investigation conducted in accordance with their respective statutory powers.

7. You must not —

(a) in your official capacity or otherwise, use or attempt to use your position improperly to confer on or secure for yourself, or any other person, an advantage or create or avoid for yourself, or any other person, a disadvantage;

(b) use, or authorise others to use, the resources of your authority —

(i) imprudently;

(ii) in breach of your authority's requirements;

(iii) unlawfully;

(iv) other than in a manner which is calculated to facilitate, or to be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the authority or of the office to which you have been elected or appointed;

(v) improperly for political purposes; or

(vi) improperly for private purposes.

8. You must —

(a) when participating in meetings or reaching decisions regarding the business of your authority, do so on the basis of the merits of the circumstances involved and in the public interest having regard to any relevant advice provided by your authority's officers, in particular by —

(i) the authority's head of paid service;

(ii) the authority's chief finance officer;

(iii) the authority's monitoring officer;

(iv) the authority's chief legal officer (who should be consulted when there is any doubt as to the authority's power to act, as to whether the action proposed lies within the policy framework agreed by the authority or where the legal consequences of action or failure to act by the authority might have important repercussions);

(b) give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your authority.

9. You must —

(a) observe the law and your authority's rules governing the claiming of expenses and allowances in connection with your duties as a member;

(b) avoid accepting from anyone gifts, hospitality (other than official hospitality, such as a civic reception or a working lunch duly authorised by your authority), material benefits or services for yourself or any person which might place you, or reasonably appear to place you, under an improper obligation.

PART 3 INTERESTS

Personal Interests

10.—(1) You must in all matters consider whether you have a personal interest, and whether this code of conduct requires you to disclose that interest.

(2) You must regard yourself as having a personal interest in any business of your authority if —

(a) it relates to, or is likely to affect —

(i) any employment or business carried on by you;

(ii) any person who employs or has appointed you, any firm in which you are a partner or any company for which you are a remunerated director;

(iii) any person, other than your authority, who has made a payment to you in respect of your election or any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a member;

(iv) any corporate body which has a place of business or land in your authority's area, and in which you have a beneficial interest in a class of securities of that body that exceeds the nominal value of £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body;

(v) any contract for goods, services or works made between your authority and you or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a body of the description specified in sub-paragraph (iv) above;

(vi) any land in which you have a beneficial interest and which is in the area of your authority;

(vii) any land where the landlord is your authority and the tenant is a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a body of the description specified in subparagraph (iv) above;

(viii) any body to which you have been elected, appointed or nominated by your authority;

(ix) any —

(aa) public authority or body exercising functions of a public nature;

(bb) company, registered society, charity, or body directed to charitable purposes;

(cc) body whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy;

(dd) trade union or professional association; or

(ee) private club, society or association operating within your authority's area,

in which you have membership or hold a position of general control or management;

(x) any land in your authority's area in which you have a licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy for 28 days or longer;

[Note: subparagraph (b) is omitted.]

(c) a decision upon it might reasonably be regarded as affecting —

(i) your well-being or financial position, or that of a person with whom you live, or any person with whom you have a close personal association;

(ii) any employment or business carried on by persons as described in 10(2)(c)(i);

(iii) any person who employs or has appointed such persons described in 10(2)(c)(i), any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;

(iv) any corporate body in which persons as described in 10(2)(c)(i) have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £5,000; or

(v) any body listed in paragraphs 10(2)(a)(ix)(aa) to (ee) in which persons described in 10(2)(c)(i) hold a position of general control or management,

to a greater extent than the majority of—

(aa) in the case of an authority with electoral divisions or wards, other council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the electoral division or ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision; or

(bb) in all other cases, other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the authority's area.

Disclosure of Personal Interests

11.—(1) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you attend a meeting at which that business is considered, you must disclose orally to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest before or at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

(2) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you make —

(a) written representations (whether by letter, facsimile or some other form of electronic communication) to a member or officer of your authority regarding that business, you should include details of that interest in the written communication; or

(b) oral representations (whether in person or some form of electronic communication) to a member or officer of your authority you should disclose the interest at the commencement of such representations, or when it becomes apparent to you that you have such an interest, and confirm the representation and interest in writing within 14 days of the representation.

(3) Subject to paragraph 14(1)(b) below, where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made a decision in exercising a function of an executive or board, you must in relation to that business ensure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of your interest.

(4) You must, in respect of a personal interest not previously disclosed, before or immediately after the close of a meeting where the disclosure is made pursuant to sub-paragraph 11(1), give written notification to your authority in accordance with any requirements identified by your authority's monitoring officer, or in relation to a community council, your authority's proper officer from time to time but, as a minimum containing —

(a) details of the personal interest;

(b) details of the business to which the personal interest relates; and

(c) your signature.

(5) Where you have agreement from your monitoring officer that the information relating to your personal interest is sensitive information, pursuant to paragraph 16(1), your obligations under this paragraph 11 to disclose such information, whether orally or in writing, are to be replaced with an obligation to disclose the existence of a personal interest and to confirm that your monitoring officer has agreed that the nature of such personal interest is sensitive information.

(6) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (4), a personal interest will only be deemed to have been previously disclosed if written notification has been provided in accordance with this code since the last date on which you were elected, appointed or nominated as a member of your authority.

(7) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (3), where no written notice is provided in accordance with that paragraph you will be deemed as not to have declared a personal interest in accordance with this code.

Prejudicial Interests

12.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority you also have a prejudicial interest in that business if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (3), you will not be regarded as having a prejudicial interest in any business where that business—

(a) relates to —

(i) another relevant authority of which you are also a member;

(ii) another public authority or body exercising functions of a public nature in which you hold a position of general control or management;

(iii) a body to which you have been elected, appointed or nominated by your authority;

(iv) your role as a school governor (where not appointed or nominated by your authority) unless it relates particularly to the school of which you are a governor;

(v) your role as a member of a Local Health Board where you have not been appointed or nominated by your authority;

(b) relates to —

(i) the housing functions of your authority where you hold a tenancy or lease with your authority, provided that you do not have arrears of rent with your authority of more than two months, and provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;

(ii) the functions of your authority in respect of school meals, transport and travelling expenses, where you are a guardian, parent, grandparent or have parental responsibility (as defined in section 3 of the Children Act 1989) of a child in full time education, unless it relates particularly to the school which that child attends;

(iii) the functions of your authority in respect of statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of such pay from your authority;

(iv) the functions of your authority in respect of an allowance or payment made in accordance with the provisions of Part 8 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, or an allowance or pension provided under section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;

(c) your role as a community councillor in relation to a grant, loan or other form of financial assistance made by your community council to community or voluntary organisations up to a maximum of £500.

(3) The exemptions in subparagraph (2)(a) do not apply where the business relates to the determination of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

13. You also have a prejudicial interest in any business before an overview and scrutiny committee of your authority (or of a sub-committee of such a committee) where—

(a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by your authority's executive, board or another of your authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint subcommittees; and

(b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken, you were a member of the executive, board, committee, sub-committee, joint-committee or joint sub-committee mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken.

Participation in Relation to Disclosed Interests

14.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2), (2A), (3) and (4), where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority you must, unless you have obtained a dispensation from your authority's standards committee —

(a) withdraw from the room, chamber or place where a meeting considering the business is being held—

(i) where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after the period for making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business has ended and in any event before further consideration of the business begins, whether or not the public are allowed to remain in attendance for such consideration; or

(ii) in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that that business is being considered at that meeting;

(b) not exercise executive or board functions in relation to that business;

(c) not seek to influence a decision about that business;

(d) not make any written representations (whether by letter, facsimile or some other form of electronic communication) in relation to that business; and

(e) not make any oral representations (whether in person or some form of electronic communication) in respect of that business or immediately cease to make such oral representations when the prejudicial interest becomes apparent.

(2) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority you may attend a meeting but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.

(2A) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority you may submit written representations to a meeting relating to that business, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, whether under statutory right or otherwise.

(2B) When submitting written representations under sub-paragraph (2A) you must comply with any procedure that your authority may adopt for the submission of such representations.

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) does not prevent you attending and participating in a meeting if —

(a) you are required to attend a meeting of an overview or scrutiny committee, by such committee exercising its statutory powers; or

(b) you have the benefit of a dispensation provided that you —

(i) state at the meeting that you are relying on the dispensation; and

(ii) before or immediately after the close of the meeting give written notification to your authority containing —

(aa) details of the prejudicial interest;

(bb) details of the business to which the prejudicial interest relates;

(cc) details of, and the date on which, the dispensation was granted; and

(dd) your signature.

(4) Where you have a prejudicial interest and are making written or oral representations to your authority in reliance upon a dispensation, you must provide details of the dispensation within any such written or oral representation and, in the latter case, provide written notification to your authority within 14 days of making the representation.

PART 4

THE REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Registration of Personal Interests

15.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (4), you must, within 28 days of—

(a) your authority's code of conduct being adopted or the mandatory provisions of this model code being applied to your authority; or

(b) your election or appointment to office (if that is later),

register your personal interests, where they fall within a category mentioned in paragraph 10(2)(a), in your authority's register of members' interests by providing written notification to your authority's monitoring officer.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (4), you must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new personal interest falling within a category mentioned in paragraph 10(2)(a), register that new personal interest in your authority's register of members' interests by providing written notification to your authority's monitoring officer.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (4), you must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change to a registered personal interest falling within a category mentioned in paragraph 10(2)(a), register that change in your authority's register of members' interests by providing written notification to your authority's monitoring officer, or in the case of a community council to your authority's proper officer.

(4) Sub-paragraphs (1), (2) and (3) do not apply to sensitive information determined in accordance with paragraph 16(1).

(5) Sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) do not apply if you are a member of a relevant authority which is a community council when you act in your capacity as a member of such an authority.

(6) You must, when disclosing a personal interest in accordance with paragraph 11 for the first time, register that personal interest in your authority's register of members' interests by providing written notification to your authority's monitoring officer, or in the case of a community council to your authority's proper officer.

Sensitive information

16.—(1) Where you consider that the information relating to any of your personal interests is sensitive information, and your authority's monitoring officer agrees, you need not include that information when registering that interest, or, as the case may be, a change to the interest under paragraph 15.

(2) You must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change of circumstances which means that information excluded under sub-paragraph (1) is no longer sensitive information, notify your authority's monitoring officer, or in relation to a community council, your authority's proper officer asking that the information be included in your authority's register of members' interests.

(3) In this code, "sensitive information" ("*gwybodaeth sensitif*") means information whose availability for inspection by the public creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that you or a person who lives with you may be subjected to violence or intimidation.

Registration of Gifts and Hospitality

17. You must, within 28 days of receiving any gift, hospitality, material benefit or advantage above a value specified in a resolution of your authority, provide written notification to your authority's monitoring officer, or in relation to a community council, to your authority's proper officer of the existence and nature of that gift, hospitality, material benefit or advantage.

Y COD YMDDYGIAD ENGHREIFFTIOL

RHAN 1 DEHONGLI

1.—(1) Yn y cod hwn —

mae "aelod" ("*member*") yn cynnwys aelod cyfetholedig onid yw'r cyd-destun yn mynnu fel arall;

ystyr "aelod cyfetholedig" ("*co-opted member*"), mewn perthynas ag awdurdod perthnasol, yw person nad yw'n aelod o'r awdurdod ond—

(a) sy'n aelod o unrhyw bwyllgor neu is-bwyllgor i'r awdurdod, neu

(b) sy'n aelod o unrhyw gyd-bwyllgor neu gyd-is-bwyllgor i'r awdurdod, ac sy'n cynrychioli'r awdurdod arno,

ac sydd â'r hawl i bleidleisio ar unrhyw gwestiwn sydd i'w benderfynu mewn unrhyw gyfarfod o'r pwyllgor neu o'r is-bwyllgor hwnnw;

ystyr "eich awdurdod" ("*your authority*") yw'r awdurdod perthnasol yr ydych chi'n aelod neu'n aelod cyfetholedig ohono;

ystyr "awdurdod perthnasol" ("*relevant authority*") yw—

(a) cyngor sir,

(b) cyngor bwrdeistref sirol,

(c) cyngor cymuned,

(ch) awdurdod tân ac achub a gyfansoddwyd drwy gynllun o dan adran 2 o Ddeddf Gwasanaethau Tân ac Achub 2004 neu gynllun y mae adran 4 o'r Ddeddf honno yn gymwys iddo,

(d) awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol a sefydlwyd o dan adran 63 o Ddeddf yr Amgylchedd 1995;

ystyr "cofrestr o fuddiannau'r aelodau" ("register of members' interests") yw'r gofrestr a sefydlir ac a gedwir o dan adran 81 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000;

ystyr "cyfarfod" ("*meeting*") yw unrhyw gyfarfod —

(a) o'r awdurdod perthnasol,

(b) o unrhyw weithrediaeth neu fwrdd i'r awdurdod perthnasol,

(c) o unrhyw bwyllgor, is-bwyllgor, cyd-bwyllgor neu gyd-is-bwyllgor i'r awdurdod perthnasol neu unrhyw bwyllgor, is-bwyllgor, cyd-bwyllgor neu gyd-is-bwyllgor o'r fath i unrhyw weithrediaeth neu fwrdd i'r awdurdod, neu

(ch) y mae aelodau neu swyddogion yr awdurdod perthnasol yn bresennol ynddo ac eithrio cyfarfod grŵp gwleidyddol a gyfansoddwyd yn unol â rheoliad 8 o Reoliadau Llywodraeth Leol (Pwyllgorau a Grwpiau Gwleidyddol) 1990,

ac mae'n cynnwys amgylchiadau pan fo aelod o weithrediaeth neu fwrdd neu swyddog sy'n gweithredu ar ei ben ei hun yn arfer un o swyddogaethau awdurdod; ac

ystyr "chi" ("you") yw chi fel aelod neu aelod cyfetholedig o awdurdod perthnasol.

(2) Mewn perthynas â chyngor cymuned—

(a) ystyr "swyddog priodol" ("proper officer") yw swyddog o'r cyngor hwnnw o fewn ystyr adran 270(3) o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 1972; a

(b) ystyr "pwyllgor safonau" ("standards committee") yw pwyllgor safonau'r cyngor sir neu'r cyngor bwrdeistref sirol sydd â swyddogaethau mewn perthynas â'r cyngor cymuned y mae'n gyfrifol amdano o dan adran 56(1) a (2) o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000.

RHAN 2 DARPARIAETHAU CYFFREDINOL

2.—(1) Ac eithrio pan fo paragraff 3(a) yn gymwys, rhaid i chi gydymffurfio â'r cod ymddygiad hwn —

(a) pa bryd bynnag y byddwch yn cynnal busnes eich awdurdod, neu'n bresennol mewn un o gyfarfodydd eich awdurdod;

(b) pa bryd bynnag y byddwch yn gweithredu, yn honni gweithredu neu'n rhoi'r argraff eich bod yn gweithredu yn rôl aelod y cawsoch eich ethol neu eich penodi iddi;

(c) pa bryd bynnag y byddwch yn gweithredu, yn honni gweithredu neu'n rhoi'r argraff eich bod yn gweithredu fel un o gynrychiolwyr eich awdurdod; neu

(ch) ar bob adeg ac mewn unrhyw gapasiti, mewn cysylltiad ag ymddygiad a nodir ym mharagraffau 6(1)(a) a 7.

(2) Dylech ddarllen y cod hwn ar y cyd â'r egwyddorion cyffredinol a ragnodir o dan adran 49(2) o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000 o ran Cymru.

3. Os byddwch wedi eich ethol, eich penodi neu eich enwebu gan eich awdurdod i wasanaethu —

(a) ar awdurdod perthnasol arall, neu ar unrhyw gorff arall, sy'n cynnwys Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol rhaid i chi, pan fyddwch yn gweithredu ar ran yr awdurdod arall neu'r corff arall hwnnw, gydymffurfio â chod ymddygiad yr awdurdod arall neu'r corff arall hwnnw; neu

(b) ar unrhyw gorff arall nad oes ganddo god sy'n ymwneud ag ymddygiad ei aelodau, rhaid i chi, pan fyddwch yn gweithredu ar ran y corff arall hwnnw, gydymffurfio â'r cod ymddygiad hwn, ac eithrio pan yw'n gwrthdaro ag unrhyw rwymedigaethau cyfreithlon eraill y gall y corff hwnnw fod yn ddarostyngedig iddynt neu i'r graddau y mae'n gwrthdaro â'r cyfryw rwymedigaethau.

4. Rhaid i chi —

(a) cyflawni eich dyletswyddau a'ch cyfrifoldebau gan roi sylw dyladwy i'r egwyddor y dylai fod cyfle cyfartal i bawb, waeth beth fo'u rhyw, eu hil, eu hanabledd, eu cyfeiriadedd rhywiol, eu hoed neu eu crefydd;

(b) dangos parch at eraill ac ystyriaeth ohonynt;

(c) peidio ag ymddwyn fel bwli neu harasio unrhyw berson; a

(ch) peidio â gwneud dim sy'n cyfaddawdu, neu sy'n debygol o gyfaddawdu, didueddrwydd y sawl sy'n gweithio i'ch cyngor neu ar ei ran.

5. Rhaid i chi —

(a) peidio â datgelu gwybodaeth gyfrinachol neu wybodaeth y byddai'n rhesymol ystyried ei bod o natur gyfrinachol, heb gydsyniad datganedig person a awdurdodwyd i roi cydsyniad o'r fath, neu onid yw'r gyfraith yn mynnu eich bod yn gwneud hynny;

(b) peidio â rhwystro unrhyw berson rhag gweld gwybodaeth y mae gan y person hwnnw hawl i'w gweld yn ôl y gyfraith.

6.—(1)Rhaid i chi —

(a) peidio ag ymddwyn mewn ffordd y gellid yn rhesymol ei hystyried yn un sy'n dwyn anfri ar eich swydd neu ar eich awdurdod;

(b) adrodd, p'un ai drwy weithdrefn adrodd gyfrinachol eich awdurdod neu'n uniongyrchol i'r awdurdod priodol, ar unrhyw ymddygiad gan aelod arall neu gan unrhyw un sy'n gweithio i'ch awdurdod neu ar ei ran ac y mae'n rhesymol i chi fod o'r farn ei fod yn golygu neu'n debygol o olygu ymddygiad troseddol (nad yw at ddibenion y paragraff hwn yn cynnwys tramgwyddau neu ymddygiad y gellir ei gosbi drwy gosb benodedig);

(c) adrodd i swyddog monitro eich awdurdod ar unrhyw ymddygiad gan aelod arall y mae'n rhesymol i chi fod o'r farn ei fod yn groes i'r cod ymddygiad hwn;

(ch) peidio â gwneud cwynion blinderus, maleisus neu wacsaw yn erbyn aelodau eraill neu unrhyw un sy'n gweithio i'ch awdurdod neu ar ei ran.

(2) Rhaid i chi gydymffurfio ag unrhyw gais gan swyddog monitro eich awdurdod, neu gan Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru, mewn cysylltiad ag ymchwiliad a wneir yn unol â'u gwahanol bwerau statudol.

7. Rhaid i chi —

(a) yn eich capasiti swyddogol neu fel arall, beidio â defnyddio neu geisio defnyddio eich safle yn amhriodol i roi neu i sicrhau mantais i chi eich hun neu i unrhyw berson arall, neu i greu neu i osgoi anfantais i chi eich hun neu i unrhyw berson arall;

(b) peidio â defnyddio adnoddau eich awdurdod, neu awdurdodi eraill i'w defnyddio—

(i) yn annoeth;

(ii) yn groes i ofynion eich awdurdod;

(iii) yn anghyfreithlon;

(iv) ac eithrio mewn dull a fwriedir i hwyluso neu i ffafrio cyflawni swyddogaethau'r awdurdod neu'r swydd yr ydych wedi eich ethol neu eich penodi iddo neu iddi;

(v) yn amhriodol at ddibenion gwleidyddol; neu

(vi) yn amhriodol at ddibenion preifat.

8. Rhaid i chi —

(a) pan fyddwch yn cyfrannu mewn cyfarfodydd neu'n gwneud penderfyniadau ynghylch busnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef, wneud hynny ar sail rhinweddau'r amgylchiadau o dan sylw ac er budd y cyhoedd gan roi sylw i unrhyw gyngor perthnasol a ddarperir gan swyddogion eich awdurdod, ac yn benodol gan —

(i) pennaeth gwasanaeth taledig yr awdurdod;

(ii) prif swyddog cyllid yr awdurdod;

(iii) swyddog monitro'r awdurdod;

(iv) prif swyddog cyfreithiol yr awdurdod (y dylid ymgynghori ag ef pan fo unrhyw amheuaeth ynghylch pw^ er yr awdurdod i weithredu, ynghylch a yw'r cam a arfaethir yn dod o fewn y fframwaith polisi y cytunwyd arno gan yr awdurdod neu os gallai canlyniadau cyfreithiol gweithredu neu fethu â gweithredu gan yr awdurdod gael ôl-ffeithiau pwysig);

(b) rhoi rhesymau dros bob penderfyniad yn unol ag unrhyw ofynion statudol ac unrhyw ofynion rhesymol ychwanegol a osodir gan eich awdurdod.

9. Rhaid i chi —

(a) parchu'r gyfraith a rheolau eich awdurdod sy'n llywodraethu hawlio treuliau a lwfansau mewn cysylltiad â'ch dyletswyddau fel aelod;

(b) osgoi derbyn rhoddion oddi wrth neb, na lletygarwch (ac eithrio lletygarwch swyddogol, megis derbyniad dinesig neu weithio dros ginio, a awdurdodir yn briodol gan eich awdurdod) na buddiannau materol neu wasanaethau i chi eich hun neu i unrhyw berson os byddai gwneud hynny'n eich rhoi o dan rwymedigaeth amhriodol, neu os gallai'n rhesymol ymddangos fel pe bai'n gwneud hynny.

RHAN 3 BUDDIANNAU

Buddiannau Personol

10.—(1) Ym mhob mater rhaid i chi ystyried a oes gennych fuddiant personol, ac a yw'r cod ymddygiad hwn yn ei gwneud yn ofynnol i chi ddatgelu'r buddiant hwnnw.

(2) Rhaid i chi ystyried bod gennych fuddiant personol mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef —

(a) os yw'n gysylltiedig â'r canlynol, neu'n debygol o effeithio arnynt —

(i) unrhyw gyflogaeth yr ydych yn ymgymryd â hi neu fusnes yr ydych yn ei redeg;

(ii) unrhyw berson sy'n eich cyflogi neu sydd wedi eich penodi, unrhyw ffyrn yr ydych yn bartner ynddi neu unrhyw gwmni yr ydych yn gyfarwyddwr arno ac yn derbyn tâl;

(iii) unrhyw berson, ac eithrio eich awdurdod, sydd wedi rhoi taliad i chi mewn cysylltiad â'ch ethol neu mewn cysylltiad ag unrhyw dreuliau a dynnwyd gennych wrth i chi gyflawni eich dyletswyddau fel aelod;

(iv) unrhyw gorff corfforaethol y mae ganddo le busnes neu dir yn ardal eich awdurdod, ac y mae gennych chi fuddiant llesiannol mewn dosbarth o warannau sydd gan y corff hwnnw ac sy'n werth mwy na'r gwerth enwol o £25,000 neu un ganfed ran o gyfanswm cyfalaf cyfrannau dyroddedig y corff hwnnw;

(v) unrhyw gontract am nwyddau, gwasanaethau neu waith neu weithfeydd a wnaed rhyngoch chi, rhwng ffyrn yr ydych yn bartner ynddi, neu rhwng cwmni yr ydych yn gyfarwyddwr arno ac yn derbyn tâl, neu rhwng corff o'r math a ddisgrifir yn is-baragraff (iv) uchod a'ch awdurdod;

(vi) unrhyw dir y mae gennych fuddiant llesiannol ynddo ac sydd yn ardal eich awdurdod;

(vii) unrhyw dir y mae eich awdurdod yn landlord arno ac y mae ffym yr ydych yn bartner ynddi, cwmni yr ydych yn gyfarwyddwr arno ac yn derbyn tâl, neu gorff o'r math a ddisgrifir yn is-baragraff (iv) uchod yn denant arno;

(viii) unrhyw gorff yr ydych wedi eich ethol, eich penodi neu eich enwebu gan eich awdurdod i fod arno;

(ix) unrhyw —

(aa) awdurdod cyhoeddus neu gorff sy'n arfer swyddogaethau o natur gyhoeddus;

(bb) cwmni, cymdeithas ddiwydiannol a darbodus, elusen, neu gorff arall a chanddo ddibenion elusennol;

(cc) corff y mae dylanwadu ar farn neu bolisi cyhoeddus ymhlith ei brif ddibenion;

(chch)undeb llafur neu gymdeithas broffesiynol; neu

(dd) clwb preifat neu gymdeithas breifat sy'n gweithredu o fewn ardal eich awdurdod,

yr ydych yn aelod ohono neu ohoni neu mewn safle rheolaeth neu reoli cyffredinol ynddo neu ynddi;

(x) unrhyw dir yn ardal eich awdurdod y mae gennych drwydded (ar eich pen eich hun neu ar y cyd ag eraill) i'w feddiannu am 28 o ddiwrnodau neu fwy;

[Nodyn: Mae is-baragraff (b) wedi ei hepgor.]

(c) pe byddai'n rhesymol ystyried penderfyniad arno yn benderfyniad a fyddai'n effeithio —

(i) ar eich llesiant neu eich sefyllfa ariannol, neu lesiant neu sefyllfa ariannol person yr ydych yn byw gydag ef, neu unrhyw berson y mae gennych gysylltiad personol agos ag ef;

(ii) ar unrhyw gyflogaeth yr ymgwymerir â hi neu fusnes a redir gan bersonau fel a ddisgrifir yn 10(2)(c)(i);

(iii) ar unrhyw berson sy'n cyflogi neu sydd wedi penodi'r cyfryw bersonau ag a ddisgrifir yn 10(2)(c)(i), unrhyw ffym y mae'r cyfryw bersonau'n bartneriaid ynddi, neu unrhyw gwmni y maent yn gyfarwyddwyr arno;

(iv) ar unrhyw gorff corfforaethol y mae gan bersonau fel a ddisgrifir yn 10(2)(c)(i) fuddiant llesiannol mewn dosbarth o warannau sy'n werth mwy na'r gwerth enwol o £5,000; neu

(v) ar unrhyw gorff a restrir ym mharagraffau 10(2)(a)(ix)(aa) i (dd) y mae personau a ddisgrifir yn 10(2)(c)(i) mewn safle rheolaeth neu reoli cyffredinol ynddo,

a hynny i raddau mwy—

(aa) yn achos awdurdod â dosbarthiadau etholiadol neu wardiau, na'r rhelyw o bobl eraill sy'n talu'r dreth gyngor, bobl eraill sy'n talu ardrethi neu breswylwyr eraill yn y dosbarth etholiadol neu'r ward, yn ôl y digwydd, y bydd y penderfyniad yn effeithio arnynt; neu

(bb) ym mhob achos arall, na'r rhelyw o bobl eraill sy'n talu'r dreth gyngor, o bobl eraill sy'n talu ardrethi neu breswylwyr eraill yn ardal yr awdurdod.

Datgelu Buddiannau Personol

11.—(1) Pan fydd gennych fuddiant personol mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef ac y byddwch yn bresennol mewn cyfarfod lle y caiff y busnes hwnnw ei ystyried, rhaid i chi ddatgelu ar lafar gerbron y cyfarfod hwnnw fodolaeth a natur y buddiant hwnnw cyn i'r cyfarfod ystyried y busnes neu ar ddechrau'r ystyriaeth, neu pan ddaw'r buddiant i'r amlwg.

(2) Pan fydd gennych fuddiant personol mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef ac y byddwch yn gwneud —

(a) cynrychioliadau ysgrifenedig (p'un ai drwy lythyr, neges ffacs neu ar ryw ffurf arall ar gyfathrebu electronig) i un o aelodau neu o swyddogion eich awdurdod ynghylch y busnes hwnnw, dylech gynnwys manylion am y buddiant hwnnw yn y gyfathrebiaeth ysgrifenedig; neu

(b) cynrychioliadau llafar (p'un ai'n bersonol neu ar ryw ffurf ar gyfathrebu electronig) i un o aelodau neu o swyddogion eich awdurdod dylech ddatgelu'r buddiant ar ddechrau'r cyfryw gynrychioliadau, neu pan ddaw'n amlwg i chi fod gennych fuddiant o'r fath, a chadarnhau'r cynrychioliad a'r buddiant yn ysgrifenedig o fewn 14 o ddiwrnodau ar ôl gwneud y cynrychioliad.

(3) Yn ddarostyngedig i baragraff 14(1)(b) isod, os bydd gennych fuddiant personol mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef ac y byddwch wedi gwneud penderfyniad wrth arfer un o swyddogaethau gweithrediaeth neu fwrdd, rhaid i chi mewn perthynas â'r busnes hwnnw sicrhau bod unrhyw ddatganiad ysgrifenedig ynghylch y penderfyniad hwnnw'n cofnodi bodolaeth a natur eich buddiant.

(4) Rhaid i chi, mewn cysylltiad â buddiant personol nas datgelwyd eisoes, cyn cyfarfod neu'n syth ar ôl diwedd cyfarfod pan ddatgelir y buddiant yn unol ag is-baragraff 11(1), roi hysbysiad ysgrifenedig i'ch awdurdod yn unol ag unrhyw ofynion a nodir gan swyddog

monitro eich awdurdod, neu mewn perthynas â chyngor cymuned, swyddog priodol eich awdurdod o bryd i'w gilydd ond, rhaid cynnwys o leiaf —

(a) manylion am y buddiant personol;

(b) manylion am y busnes y mae'r buddiant personol yn gysylltiedig ag ef; ac

(c) eich llofnod.

(5) Pan fydd eich swyddog monitro wedi cytuno bod yr wybodaeth sy'n ymwneud â'ch buddiant personol yn wybodaeth sensitif, yn unol â pharagraff 16(1), mae eich rhwymedigaethau o dan y paragraff 11 hwn i ddatgelu'r cyfryw wybodaeth, p'un ai ar lafar neu'n ysgrifenedig, i'w disodli gan rwymedigaeth i ddatgelu bodolaeth buddiant personol ac i gadarnhau bod eich swyddog monitro wedi cytuno bod y cyfryw fuddiant personol o natur gwybodaeth sensitif.

(6) At ddibenion is-baragraff (4), dim ond os bod hysbysiad ysgrifenedig wedi ei ddarparu yn unol â'r cod hwn ers y dyddiad diwethaf pryd yr etholwyd chi, y penodwyd chi neu yr enwebwyd chi'n aelod o'ch awdurdod y bernir bod buddiant personol wedi ei ddatgelu eisoes.

(7) At ddibenion is-baragraff (3), os na ddarperir hysbysiad ysgrifenedig yn unol â'r paragraff hwnnw bernir na fyddwch wedi datgan buddiant personol yn unol â'r cod hwn.

Buddiannau sy'n Rhagfarnu

12.—(1) Yn ddarostyngedig i is-baragraff (2) isod, os bydd gennych fuddiant personol mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef bydd gennych hefyd fuddiant sy'n rhagfarnu yn y busnes hwnnw os bydd y buddiant yn un y bydd yn rhesymol i aelod o'r cyhoedd sy'n gwybod y ffeithiau perthnasol fod o'r farn ei fod mor arwyddocaol fel y bydd yn debygol o ragfarnu eich barn ynghylch buddiant cyhoeddus.

(2) Yn ddarostyngedig i is-baragraff (3), nid ystyrir bod gennych fuddiant sy'n rhagfarnu mewn unrhyw fusnes os bydd y busnes hwnnw—

(a) yn gysylltiedig—

(i) ag awdurdod perthnasol arall yr ydych hefyd yn aelod ohono;

(ii) ag awdurdod cyhoeddus arall neu gorff sy'n arfer swyddogaethau o natur gyhoeddus lle yr ydych mewn safle rheolaeth neu reoli cyffredinol;

(iii) â chorff yr ydych wedi cael eich ethol, eich penodi neu eich enwebu gan eich awdurdod i fod arno;

(iv) â'ch rôl fel llywodraethwr ysgol (os na chawsoch eich penodi neu eich enwebu gan eich awdurdod) oni bai bod y busnes yn benodol gysylltiedig â'r ysgol yr ydych yn un o'i llywodraethwyr;

(v) â'ch rôl fel aelod o Fwrdd Iechyd Lleol os na chawsoch eich penodi neu eich enwebu gan eich awdurdod i fod arno;

(b) yn gysylltiedig:

(i) â swyddogaethau tai eich awdurdod os oes gennych denantiaeth neu les gyda'ch awdurdod, ar yr amod nad oes arnoch i'ch awdurdod ôl-ddyledion rhent o fwy na deufis, ac ar yr amod nad yw'r swyddogaethau hynny'n ymwneud yn arbennig â'ch tenantiaeth neu â'ch les;

(ii) â swyddogaethau eich awdurdod mewn cysylltiad â phrydau ysgol, cludiant a threuliau teithio, os ydych chi'n warchodwr, yn rhiant, yn fam-gu neu'n nain neu'n dad-cu neu'n daid, neu os oes gennych gyfrifoldeb rhiant (fel y'i diffinnir yn adran 3 o Deddf Plant 1989) dros blentyn sy'n cael addysg lawnamser, onid yw'r busnes yn benodol gysylltiedig â'r ysgol y mae'r plentyn hwnnw'n ei mynychu;

(iii) â swyddogaethau eich awdurdod mewn cysylltiad â thâl salwch statudol o dan Ran XI o Ddeddf Cyfraniadau a Budd-daliadau Nawdd Cymdeithasol 1992, os ydych yn cael, neu os oes gennych hawl i gael, taliad o'r fath gan eich awdurdod;

“(iv) â swyddogaethau eich awdurdod mewn cysylltiad â lwfans neu daliad a wneir yn unol â darpariaethau Rhan 8 o Fesur Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru) 2011, neu lwfans neu bensiwn a ddarperir o dan adran 18 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol a Thai 1989;

(c) yn gysylltiedig â'ch rôl fel cynghorydd cymunedol mewn perthynas â grant, benthyciad neu fath arall ar gymorth ariannol a wnaed gan eich cyngor cymuned i gyrrff cymunedol neu wirfoddol hyd at uchafswm o £500.

(3) Nid yw'r esemptiadau yn is-baragraff (2)(a) yn gymwys os yw'r busnes yn gysylltiedig â dyfarnu ar unrhyw gymeradwyaeth, cydsyniad, trwydded, caniatâd neu gofrestriad.

Pwyllgorau Trosolygu a Chraffu

13. Bydd gennych hefyd fuddiant sy'n rhagfarnu mewn unrhyw fusnes sydd gerbron un o bwyllgorau trosolygu a chraffu eich awdurdod (neu un o is-bwyllgorau pwyllgor o'r fath)—

(a) os bydd y busnes hwnnw'n gysylltiedig â phenderfyniad a wnaed (p'un a gafodd ei weithredu ai peidio) neu gam a gymerwyd gan weithrediaeth, bwrdd, neu un arall o bwyllgorau, is-bwyllgorau, cyd-bwyllgorau neu o gyd-is-bwyllgorau eich awdurdod; a

(b) os oeddech chi, ar yr adeg pan wnaed y penderfyniad neu pan gymerwyd y cam, yn aelod o'r weithrediaeth, y bwrdd, y pwyllgor, yr is-bwyllgor, y cyd-bwyllgor neu'r cyd-is-bwyllgor a grybwyllir yn is-baragraff (a) a'ch bod chi'n bresennol pan wnaed y penderfyniad hwnnw neu pan gymerwyd y cam hwnnw.

Cyfrannu mewn Perthynas â Datgelu Buddiannau

14.—(1) Yn ddarostyngedig i is-baragraffau (2), (2A), (3) a (4), os bydd gennych fuddiant sy'n rhagfarnu mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef rhaid i chi, oni roddwyd i chi ollyngiad gan bwyllgor safonau eich awdurdod —

(a) ymadael â'r ystafell, y siambr neu'r man lle y mae cyfarfod i ystyried y busnes yn cael ei gynnal—

(i) pan fo is-baragraff (2) yn gymwys, yn syth ar ôl i'r cyfnod ar gyfer gwneud cynrychioliadau, ateb cwestiynau neu roi tystiolaeth sy'n ymwneud â'r busnes ddod i ben a beth bynnag cyn i ystyriaeth bellach o'r busnes ddechrau, p'un a ganiateir i'r cyhoedd aros yn bresennol ar gyfer y cyfryw ystyriaeth ai peidio; neu

(ii) mewn unrhyw achos arall, pa bryd bynnag y daw i'r amlwg bod y busnes hwnnw'n cael ei ystyried yn y cyfarfod hwnnw;

(b) peidio ag arfer swyddogaethau gweithrediaeth neu fwrdd mewn perthynas â'r busnes hwnnw;

(c) peidio â cheisio dylanwadu ar benderfyniad ynghylch y busnes hwnnw;

(ch) peidio â gwneud unrhyw gynrychioliadau ysgrifenedig (p'un ai drwy lythyr, neges ffacs neu ar ryw ffurf arall ar gyfathrebu electronig) mewn perthynas â'r busnes hwnnw; a

(d) peidio â gwneud unrhyw gynrychioliadau llafar (p'un ai'n bersonol neu ar ryw ffurf ar gyfathrebu electronig) mewn cysylltiad â'r busnes hwnnw neu rhaid i chi roi'r gorau ar unwaith i wneud y cyfryw gynrychioliadau llafar pan ddaw'r buddiant sy'n rhagfarnu i'r amlwg.

(2) Os oes gennych fuddiant sy'n rhagfarnu mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef cewch fod yn bresennol mewn cyfarfod ond dim ond er mwyn gwneud cynrychioliadau, ateb cwestiynau neu roi tystiolaeth sy'n ymwneud â'r busnes, ar yr amod y caniateir hefyd i'r cyhoedd fod yn bresennol yn y cyfarfod i'r un diben, p'un ai o dan hawl statudol neu fel arall.

(2A) Os oes gennych fuddiant sy'n rhagfarnu mewn unrhyw fusnes y mae a wnelo eich awdurdod ag ef cewch gyflwyno cynrychioliadau ysgrifenedig i gyfarfod sy'n ymwneud â'r busnes hwnnw, ar yr amod y caniateir i'r cyhoedd fod yn bresennol yn y cyfarfod at y diben o wneud cynrychioliadau, ateb cwestiynau neu roi tystiolaeth sy'n ymwneud â'r busnes, pa un ai o dan hawl statudol neu fel arall.

(2B) Pan fyddwch yn cyflwyno cynrychioliadau ysgrifenedig o dan is-baragraff (2A), rhaid i chi gydymffurfio ag unrhyw weithdrefn y caiff eich awdurdod ei fabwysiadu ar gyfer cyflwyno cynrychioliadau o'r fath.

(3) Nid yw is-baragraff (1) yn eich rhwystro rhag bod yn bresennol a chyfrannu mewn cyfarfod —

(a) os gofynnir i chi fod yn bresennol mewn cyfarfod pwyllgor trosolwg neu graffu, gan y cyfryw bwyllgor ac yntau'n arfer ei bwerau statudol; neu

(b) os oes gennych y fantais o fod gollyngiad wedi ei roi i chi ar yr amod—

(i) eich bod yn datgan yn y cyfarfod eich bod yn dibynnu ar y gollyngiad; a

(ii) eich bod, cyn y cyfarfod neu'n syth ar ôl i'r cyfarfod orffen, yn rhoi hysbysiad ysgrifenedig i'ch awdurdod a bod hwnnw'n cynnwys —

(aa) manylion y buddiant sy'n rhagfarnu;

(bb) manylion y busnes y mae'r buddiant sy'n rhagfarnu'n gysylltiedig ag ef;

(cc) manylion y gollyngiad a'r dyddiad pryd y'i rhoddwyd; a

(chch) eich llofnod.

(4) Os bydd gennych fuddiant sy'n rhagfarnu a'ch bod yn gwneud cynrychioliadau ysgrifenedig neu lafar i'ch awdurdod gan ddibynnu ar ollyngiad, rhaid i chi ddarparu manylion am y gollyngiad o fewn unrhyw gynrychioliad ysgrifenedig neu lafar o'r fath ac, yn yr achos olaf hwn, rhaid i chi ddarparu hysbysiad ysgrifenedig ar gyfer eich awdurdod o fewn 14 o ddiwrnodau ar ôl gwneud y cynrychioliad.

RHAN 4

COFRESTR BUDDIANNAU AELODAU

Cofrestru Buddiannau Personal

15.—(1) Yn ddarostyngedig i is-baragraff (4), rhaid i chi, o fewn 28 o ddiwrnodau ar ôl—

(a) i god ymddygiad eich awdurdod gael ei fabwysiadu neu i ddarpariaethau gorfodol y cod enghreifftiol hwn gael eu cymhwyso i'ch awdurdod; neu

(b) i chi gael eich ethol neu eich penodi i swydd (os digwydd hynny'n ddiweddarach),

gofrestru eich buddiannau personol, os ydynt yn dod o fewn categori a grybwyllir ym mharagraff 10(2)(a), yng nghofrestr eich awdurdod o fuddiannau'r aelodau drwy ddarparu hysbysiad ysgrifenedig ar gyfer swyddog monitro eich awdurdod.

(2) Yn ddarostyngedig i is-baragraff (4), rhaid i chi, o fewn 28 o ddiwrnodau ar ôl dod yn ymwybodol o unrhyw fuddiant personol newydd sy'n dod o fewn categori a grybwyllir ym mharagraff 10(2)(a), gofrestru'r buddiant personol newydd hwnnw yng nghofrestr eich

awdurdod o fuddiannau'r aelodau drwy ddarparu hysbysiad ysgrifenedig ar gyfer swyddog monitro eich awdurdod.

(3) Yn ddarostyngedig i is-baragraff (4), rhaid i chi, o fewn 28 o ddiwrnodau ar ôl dod yn ymwybodol o unrhyw newid i fuddiant personol a gofrestrwyd sy'n dod o fewn categori a grybwyllir ym mharagraff 10(2)(a), gofrestru'r newid hwnnw yng nghofrestr eich awdurdod o fuddiannau'r aelodau drwy ddarparu hysbysiad ysgrifenedig ar gyfer swyddog monitro eich awdurdod, neu, yn achos cyngor cymuned, swyddog priodol eich awdurdod.

(4) Nid yw is-baragraffau (1), (2) a (3) yn gymwys i wybodaeth sensitif a benderfynir yn unol â pharagraff 16(1).

(5) Nid yw is-baragraffau (1) a (2) yn gymwys os ydych yn aelod o awdurdod perthnasol sy'n gyngor cymuned pan fyddwch yn gweithredu yn eich capasiti fel aelod o awdurdod o'r fath.

(6) Pan fyddwch yn datgelu buddiant personol yn unol â pharagraff 11 am y tro cyntaf, rhaid i chi gofrestru'r buddiant personol hwnnw yng nghofrestr eich awdurdod o fuddiannau'r aelodau drwy ddarparu hysbysiad ysgrifenedig ar gyfer swyddog monitro eich awdurdod, neu, yn achos cyngor cymuned, swyddog priodol eich awdurdod.

Gwybodaeth sensitif

16.—(1) Os byddwch yn ystyried bod yr wybodaeth sy'n ymwneud ag unrhyw un neu rai o'ch buddiannau personol yn wybodaeth sensitif, a bod swyddog monitro eich awdurdod yn cytuno, nid oes angen i chi gynnwys yr wybodaeth honno pan fyddwch yn cofrestru'r buddiant hwnnw, neu, yn ôl y digwydd, newid i'r buddiant o dan baragraff 15.

(2) Rhaid i chi, o fewn 28 o ddiwrnodau ar ôl i chi ddod yn ymwybodol o unrhyw newid yn eich amgylchiadau sy'n golygu nad yw gwybodaeth sydd wedi ei heithrio o dan is-baragraff (1) mwyach yn wybodaeth sensitif, hysbysu swyddog monitro eich awdurdod, neu mewn perthynas â chynghor cymuned, swyddog priodol eich awdurdod gan ofyn am i'r wybodaeth gael ei chynnwys yng nghofrestr buddiannau aelodau eich awdurdod.

(3) Yn y cod hwn, ystyr "gwybodaeth sensitif" ("*sensitive information*") yw gwybodaeth y mae ei rhoi ar gael i'w harchwilio gan y cyhoedd yn creu, neu'n debygol o greu, risg ddifrifol y gallech chi neu berson sy'n byw gyda chi fod yn destun trais neu fygythion.

Cofrestru Rhoddion a Lletygarwch

17. Rhaid i chi, o fewn 28 o ddiwrnodau ar ôl i chi gael unrhyw rodd, lletygarwch, buddiant materol neu fantais faterol, sy'n fwy na gwerth a bennir mewn penderfyniad gan eich awdurdod, ddarparu hysbysiad ysgrifenedig ar gyfer swyddog monitro eich awdurdod, neu mewn perthynas â chynghor cymuned, swyddog priodol eich awdurdod yn nodi bodolaeth a natur y rhodd honno, y lletygarwch hwnnw, y buddiant materol hwnnw neu'r fantais faterol honno.

Appendix 5



Bridgend Town Council Cyngor Cymuned Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Section 83 (4), Local Government Act 1972
Adran 83 (4), Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 1972

Declaration of Acceptance of Office / Datganiad Derbyn Swydd

I STEVEN JAMES BUETSCHE

having been elected to the office of

Member of Bridgend Town Council

declare that I take that office upon myself and will duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of it according to the best of my judgement and ability.

I undertake to observe the code for the time being as to the conduct which is expected of members of *Bridgend Town Council* and which may be revised from time to time.

Yr wyf i.....

a minnau wedi fy ethol i swydd

Aelod o Gyngor Tref Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

yn datgan fy mod yn cymryd arnaf fy hun y swydd honno, ac y byddaf yn cyflawni dyletswyddau'r swydd yn briodol ac yn ffyddlon hyd eithaf fy marn a'm gallu.

Yr wyf yn ymrwymo i barchu'r cod ymddygiad a ddisgwylir oddi wrth aelodau *Cyngor Tref Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr* ac sy'n bodoli am y tro ac a allai gael ei adolygu o dro i dro.

Signed / Llofnodwyd: Steve Buetzsche Date / Dyddiad: 9-5-22

This declaration was made and signed before me,
Cafodd y datganiad hwn ei wneud a'i lofnodi ger fy mron,

Signed / Llofnodwyd: J Edwards

Proper Officer of the Council / Swyddog priodol y cyngor

Appendix 6

Name	Date Declared	General Declarations of Interest			
Steven Bletsoe (Morfa)	8.5.2017 Updated 20.6.2022	• Director of Ella Riley Ltd • No longer Director as of 21.11.2019 • Supplying Confectionery – Ceased trading 10.10.19 • Change for Bridgend – Bridgend County Independents • BCBC Councillor – 20.6.2022 • Member of Coity Higher Community Council – 9.5.2022 • Employed as Operations Manager Wales National Residential Landlords Association – 9.5.2022 • Visit to Malta, HMS Urge Commemoration – 9.5.2022			
Declarations of Interest at Council Meetings:		Date	Agenda Item	Details	Personal or Prejudicial
Full Town Council		16.5.2022		CLlr S Bletsoe declared a personal interest in any discussions in relation to BCBC	Personal
Facilities Committee		26.5.2022		CLlr Steven Bletsoe declared an interest as a BCBC councillor	Personal
Full Town Council		20.6.2022		CLlr S Bletsoe declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor	Personal
Full Town Council		25.7.2022		CLlr S Bletsoe declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor and as an employee of National Residential Landlords Association, Wales.	Personal
Regeneration Committee		24.10.2022		CLlr S Bletsoe declared an interest as a BCBC Councillor	Personal
Facilities Committee		24.11.2022		CLlr S Bletsoe declared a personal interest as a BCBC Councillor	Personal
Full Town Council		12.12.2022		CLlr S Bletsoe made a declaration of personal	Personal

			interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor	
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Appendix 7

From: Kelly Watson <Kelly.Watson@bridgend.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 1:53 PM
To: Louise Morland <Louise.Morland@ombudsman.wales>
Subject: IN - MO - Requested Information (MatEv)

Dear Louise,
Please see attached information from OVW.

The Council does not record meetings.

I will check with the acting Clerk whether the minutes of the 24th October have been approved. From their website it doesn't look like they have had a subsequent meeting of the Regeneration committee.

Kind regards,
Kelly

Kelly Watson

Chief Officer Legal, Regulatory and Human Resources and Monitoring Officer /
Prif Swyddog – Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol, Adnoddau Dynol a Rheoleiddio a Swyddog Monitro
Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr | Chief Executive's Directorate
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Siriol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr | Bridgend County Borough Council



Un Llais Cymru - One Voice Wales
Presenoldeb / Attendance Register
Module 9 - Code of Conduct

1 AUG 2017



Venue: Bridgend Town Council, Carnegie House, Wyndham Street, Bridgend. CF31 1EF

Date: Tuesday 18th July 2017

[illegible]

Code of Conduct Principles

1. The Local Government Act empowered the National Assembly to issue principles to which you must have regard in undertaking your role as a member. The Code is based on these principles which are designed to promote the highest possible standards. These principles draw on the 7 Principles of Public Life which were set out in the Nolan Report “Standards of Conduct in Local Government in England, Scotland and Wales”. Three more were added to these: a duty to uphold the law, proper stewardship of the Council’s resources and equality and respect for others.
2. Members elected to local authorities give generously of their time and commitment for the benefit of their communities. The principles provide a framework for channeling your commitment in a way which will reflect well on you and your council, and which will give your communities confidence in the way that your council is governed.
3. The individual sections of the Code are designed to support the implementation of the Principles. For example, the Selflessness principle is covered by Section 7 of the Code – Selflessness and Stewardship.

The current principles were set out in a statutory instrument¹ and are detailed below.

A) Selflessness

Members must act solely in the public interest. They must never use their position as members to improperly confer advantage on themselves or to improperly confer advantage or disadvantage on others.

B) Honesty

Members must declare any private interests relevant to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflict in a way that protects the public interest.

C) Integrity and Propriety

Members must not put themselves in a position where their integrity is called into question by any financial or other obligation to individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their duties. Members must on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

D) Duty to Uphold the Law

Members must act to uphold the law and act on all occasions in accordance with the trust that the public has placed in them.

E) Stewardship

In discharging their duties and responsibilities members must ensure that their authority’s resources are used both lawfully and prudently.



F) Objectivity in Decision-making

In carrying out their responsibilities including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, members must make decisions on merit. Whilst members must have regard to the professional advice of officers and may properly take account of the views of others, including their political groups, it is their responsibility to decide what view to take and, if appropriate, how to vote on any issue.

G) Equality and Respect

Members must carry out their duties and responsibilities with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion, and show respect and consideration for others.

H) Openness

Members must be as open as possible about all their actions and those of their authority. They must seek to ensure that disclosure of information is restricted only in accordance with the law.

I) Accountability

Members are accountable to the electorate and the public generally for their actions and for the way they carry out their responsibilities as a member. They must be prepared to submit themselves to such scrutiny as is appropriate to their responsibilities.

J) Leadership

Members must promote and support these principles by leadership and example so as to promote public confidence in their role and in the authority. They must respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.

4. The principles are not part of the Model Code, and failure to comply with the Principles is not of itself, therefore, indicative of a breach of the Code. However, it is likely that a failure, for example, to adhere to the principle concerning equality and respect would constitute a breach of the requirements at paragraphs 4 (a) and (b) in the Code in respect of equality of opportunity and respect. In any event, the Principles offer a sound basis for your conduct in office and I encourage members to have regard to them at all times.

January 2017



Members' Code of Conduct Development Sessions - Pentrebacas Scenarios.

1. Councillors Andrews and Young are members of the same Council. Councillor Young has submitted an application to build a swimming pool on his property. Councillor Andrews is a member of the Council's Planning Committee. Other than being members of the Council, Councillors Andrews and Young do not sit on the same Council committees, and have no contact outside of meetings of the Council.

Can Councillor Andrews take part in the meeting of the Planning Committee?

2. Councillor Leyland is employed as a school bus driver. Councillor Leyland's Community Council is to hold interviews to employ a new clerk. The children of one of the candidates for interview travel on Councillor Leyland's bus every day to school. Councillor Leyland has no contact with the children's mother (the applicant) at all or the children other than when collecting them and dropping them off as part of their school journey. Councillor Leyland used to play on the same football team as the children's father, but that ended three years ago.

Can Councillor Leyland take part in the interviews for the clerk?

3. Councillor Arrowsmith loves to play darts. Unfortunately there is only one darts team locally based in a pub in a neighbouring village. There is no other darts team in the area. A member of the darts team in which Councillor Arrowsmith plays for on a Friday night has applied for planning permission for a house. There is no contact between Councillor Arrowsmith and the applicant between darts matches. There is rota of players so Councillor Arrowsmith and the applicant do not see each other every week. Councillor Arrowsmith is a member of the Council's Planning Committee.

Can Councillor Arrowsmith take part in the meeting of the Planning Committee when the planning application is considered?

4. A Council is holding a public meeting to hear a presentation from a wind turbine developer about proposals to erect wind turbines in the area. Members of the Council have been invited to attend the meeting as well as the public. Councillor Evans already has a wind turbine on her land provided by the same wind turbine developer.

Can Councillor Evans participate in the public meeting?

5. Councillor Eddie Kate is a governor of a school not appointed by the Community Council. The Community Council comprises a single area i.e. no wards. The Councillor's two children attend the school, and his wife is Chair of the Friends of the school. The County Council as the Local Education Authority (LEA) is making changes to the school transport policy that



could mean that Councillor Kate's youngest child may have to attend another school as this would be the closest school. As a concerned parent Councillor Kate attended a meeting held by the LEA and intends to report back to the next meeting of the Community Council on the outcome of the meeting.

Can Councillor Kate take part in the meeting of the Community Council?

6. Councillor Howells's son works at a local public house, owned by Mr Beer who is a personal friend of Councillor Howells and his family. Councillor Howells' and Mr Beer's family regularly eat out together and spend much time together during the year. The Council is encouraging the development of an industrial estate the access for which will mean the Mr Beer's public house will lose some of its car park, which cannot be replaced due to the proximity of other properties. Mr Beer's pub, due to its location on a main road, is frequented by "passing trade" which will be affected by the proposals.

Councillor Howells wants to write to the Council supporting his friend. Can he do so?

7. Councillor Iorwerth and his family are on holiday in their caravan at a caravan park in Caernarfon when he meets one of his constituents who is also staying in the same caravan park. The constituent starts a heated discussion with Councillor Iorwerth about the Council's policy relating to the introduction of traffic calming measures in the village where he lives. The constituent thinks it is not necessary. Councillor Iorwerth lives elsewhere in the electoral division and is not affected by the traffic calming measures. Councillor Iorwerth politely advises the constituent that he and his family are on holiday and that he should come and speak to him when they are both back from holiday. Despite repeated attempts to advise the constituent that Councillor Iorwerth is on holiday, the constituent persists. Councillor Iorwerth eventually walks away from the constituent who is very unhappy about being "ignored".

Councillor Iorwerth on his return is concerned that he may have breached the Code of Conduct. What is your advice?

8. Councillor Bull has asked an officer of the Council to undertake pothole repair work in his ward. However after a week of waiting, failing to make contact with the officer despite repeated attempts and then learning that the work has not yet been programmed, Councillor Bull is understandably angry with the officer. When Councillor Bull next visits the Council office, he visits the officer at his office and is overheard to say to the officer "You are a complete waste of space, completely useless, and incompetent. I'm going to make sure that you get the sack and that no-one else in this area will employ you". Subsequently it transpires that the work was insignificant. The officer reports this as an incident to the Monitoring Officer.

What issues would the Monitoring Officer wish to discuss with the Councillor?



9. Councillor Smith has a heated exchange with Councillor Weston at a Council meeting in respect of the Council's awarding of a grant. Later that evening in his local pub Councillor Weston makes comments to his friends that "Councillor Smith is a dodderly old duffer who could not take a decision to save his life. He has no idea and really should give up being a councillor". Councillor Weston's comments are overheard by friends of Councillor Smith who report what they have heard to Councillor Smith.

Councillor Smith has sought your advice as to whether to make a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman. What is your advice?

10. Councillor Ball is a Community Councillor. He is also the Chair of the Local Football Club. He has not been appointed to the Football Club by the Community Council. The Football Club has asked the Community Council for financial assistance of £480 towards purchasing a new scoreboard. The Football Club has also asked Councillor Ball if he will advise the Community Council of the home fixtures which the club is playing to encourage as many people as possible to come and support the team.

Can he take part in the meeting of the Community Council for these two purposes?

11. Councillor North's brother-in-law is the director of a company, operating in his ward, which makes heating equipment. Councillor North is Chair of the local sports centre management committee appointed by the Council. The sports centre is in need of refurbishment. Councillor North's brother-in-law company is one of the companies that has tendered for the replacement heating equipment. Councillor North has decided that he has a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to the provision of the heating equipment, but wants to support his brother-in-law's company.

Can he support his brother-in-law's company?

12. Councillor Owen is a member of a Council committee which received a confidential report giving details of tenders received by the Council for grass cutting work which included details of those who tendered and the prices submitted. Members were advised that the tender would not be formally let until the following week. However on the evening of the meeting Councillor Owen is overheard at the local pub speaking to friends and telling them who has won the grass cutting tender and the price that was submitted. When challenged by a member of the public Councillor Owen argues that the information was in the public interest as it relates to sites in his area.

The member of the public who overheard Councillor Owen has complained to the Council. What issues would need to be raised with the Councillor?



13. Councillor Pugh is stopped by an off duty policeman having driven through a traffic control which was red. When stopped Councillor Pugh told the policeman "I'm a councillor, traffic signals do not apply to me". The Councillor is reported to the Council's Monitoring Officer.

What issues would the Monitoring Officer discuss with the Councillor?

14. Councillor Quick is a trustee of a wildlife sanctuary appointed by the Council. The wildlife sanctuary is applying for a grant from the Council for £50,000 for work to improve the visitor centre.

Can Councillor Quick take part in the meeting which discusses the grant application?

15. Councillor Righteous is a Deacon of the local parish church and Secretary of the parish church council. The wall of the churchyard is in a state of disrepair and the parish church council is applying for a grant from the Council to assist with those repairs. The work to repair the church wall is so significant that it will also require a planning application to be submitted to the Council's Planning Committee. Councillor Righteous is a member of both the Council's Grants Committee and the Planning Committee.

Can Councillor Righteous take part in both the Grants and Planning Committee meetings?

January 2017



One Voice Wales Councillor Training Programme



The Code of Conduct

Welcome..

This session is all about..

Your Commitment to the Code of Conduct

Administrative Arrangements..



- The session lasts 2.5 hours
- There will be a break when refreshments will be served
- Toilets
- Fire exits and assembly point in event of fire

What the Session Includes..

- **Learning Activities**
- **Presentation – an overview and explanation of all the important aspects**
- **The Simulation – the chance to deal with scenarios that real councils face**

By the end of the session you will..



- **Be familiar with the contents of the Code of Conduct**
- **Have a deeper understanding of how to meet your responsibilities as a Councillor**

Any Questions?

The training is interactive and requires an input from you.

A number of “Learning Activities” have been built in and that’s what we will do next.

Learning Activity

**What are the
“Ten Principles”
that can be found in the
Code of Conduct?**

List as many as you can recall

The Code

**The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales)
(Amendment) Order 2016**

Starting Out..

- **Declaration of acceptance of office**
- **Includes an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct**

The Code of Conduct..



- Selflessness
- Honesty
- Integrity and propriety
- A duty to uphold the law
- Stewardship
- Objectivity in decision making
- Equality and Respect
- Openness
- Accountability
- Leadership

What Councillors must do..

- **Promote equality**
- **Treat others with respect**
- **Provide access to information**
- **Make decisions on the merits of a case and with regard to the advice of officers**
- **Abide by rules on expenses**

What Councillors must **NOT** do..



- **Accept unofficial gifts**
- **Disclose information given in confidence**
- **Use Council resources improperly**
- **Make vexatious or malicious complaints**

Personal Interests..

A Professional or Personal interest outside your role, may conflict with your duty as a councillor to serve the community

You must declare a Personal Interest as soon as you are aware that you (or people close to you) may benefit more than other people in the community, from the outcome of a matter under discussion

Prejudicial Interests..



A Personal Interest becomes a Prejudicial Interest..

“If a member of the public with knowledge of the facts, reasonably regards your personal interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest”

Declaring Interests..



- **Standards Committee**
- **Monitoring Officer**
- **Register of Interests**
- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**

“Predetermination and Predisposition”



Localism Act

Provisions relating to Wales

January 2011

What the Code protects..



- **Your Electors**
- **Your Council**
- **And YOU**

Breaches..



What happens if you breach the Code of Conduct?

How is the Code of Conduct policed?

- The County Council's Monitoring Officer
- The County Council's Standards Committee
- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- The Adjudication panel for Wales

Time for a break

15 mins max

Address from the Public Ombudsman for Wales

**DVD to be played at this point in the training
course.**

Pentrebas Community Council..



- **Pentrebas is the fictitious council that we use as the base for our scenarios**
- **Whilst the council is fictitious the scenarios are taken from real life examples.**

Simulation..

You will be given a number of situations

Consider them and decide on what action, if any, should be taken

Scenarios..



Real Situations

Working in groups again go through the exercises and record your decisions and your reasons for them

Feedback Time..

**Please complete the feedback forms
before we continue to the next step**

Your comments are valued

The Next Step..

For the next training session please consult with your Clerk or check the OVW website

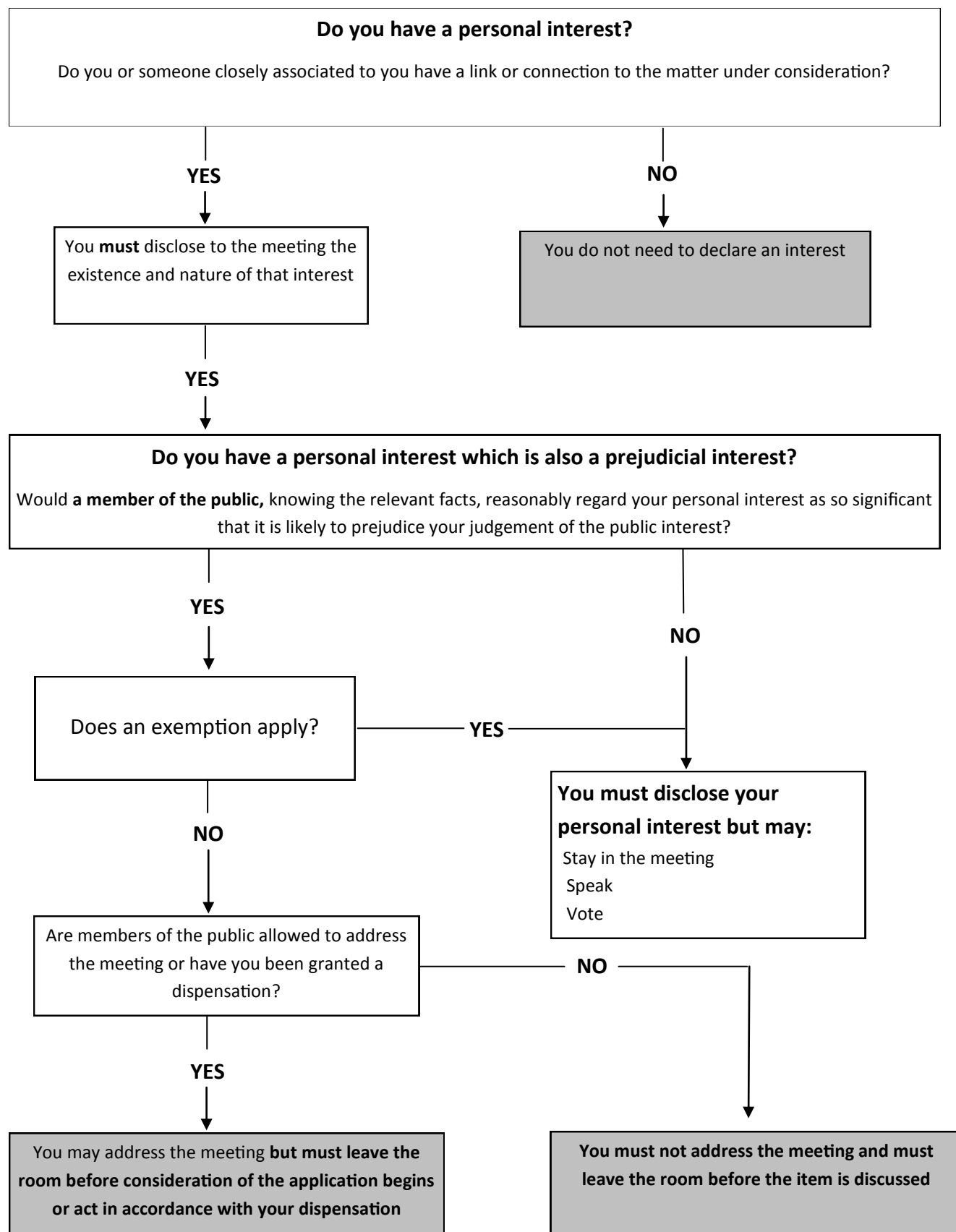
www.onevoicewales.org.uk/training

Thank you

Have a Safe Journey Home

Declaration of personal and prejudicial interests

Questions to ask yourself. If in doubt you should ask your Clerk or your Monitoring Officer.



Appendix 8



MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL REGENERATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Tuesday 14th June 2022

Time: 6.30pm

Location: The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting at both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021

Chairperson: The Mayor, Cllr Tim Wood

Staff: L Edwards (Town Clerk), J Brown (Democratic Officer)

In attendance:

Cllr Steven Bletsoe – Online

Cllr Freya Bletsoe – Online

Cllr Steven Easterbrook – Online

Cllr Allison Felton – Online

Cllr Fran Sullivan – Online – **signal dropped intermittently**

Cllr Tim Wood – In Person

1. To elect a Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2022-23

- Cllr S Bletsoe was proposed and seconded as Chair of Regeneration Committee; there being no other nomination, Cllr S Bletsoe was unanimously elected as Chair of Regeneration Committee for 2022-23

2. To elect a Vice Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2022-23

- Cllr F Sullivan was proposed and seconded as Vice Chair of Regeneration Committee; there being no other nomination, Cllr F Sullivan was unanimously elected as Chair of Regeneration Committee for 2022-23
- The Chair offered his congratulations to Cllr F Sullivan and welcomed her and other new Members to the Committee.

3. To Receive Apologies for Absence

- Cllr I Spiller

4. Declarations of Interest (if any) of Members

- Cllr T Wood declared a personal interest as a Town Trader.
- Cllr S Easterbrook declared a personal interest as a Town Trader.

5. To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting 28th February 2022

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting of 28th February 2022 were received and confirmed as a true record and duly signed.

6. To consider matters arising from the Regeneration Committee Meeting 28th February 2022

- Page 4 – Agenda Item 9. Cllr A Felton requested an explanation about the reverse vending machine project. The Chair explained that a Reverse Vending Machine accepts used, recyclable drinks containers and plastics, and in return provides a payment, either to a bank account or in the form of a voucher for local shops and that BCBC were looking to trial the project. Council had previously resolved to fund one machine.
- Cllr A Felton queried how long the trial would be. Cllr F Bletsoe advised that trials were expected in Windmill, Cefn Glas and The Rhiw Centre but unfortunately the project had been derailed for the moment.

7. To receive a report from the Deputy Clerk/RFO regarding earmarked budget from 2021-22 and agreed budget for 2022-23 for Regeneration projects

- The Town Clerk presented the report and budget (which had been previously circulated) on behalf of the RFO.
- The Town Clerk advised Members that the sum of £13,800.00 was available for earmarked and new projects.
- The Chair recommended to Members that Committee delivered on existing projects and after summer recess look at ideas for new projects and submit motions accordingly.
- The Mayor queried if a wildflower grant would be possible as a new project. The Town Clerk advised that this topic was on the agenda for the next council meeting and that if proposed and accepted, the project could be deferred to this committee.

8. To discuss and agree dates for Blue Plaque unveilings for 2022-23

- The Democratic Services Officer presented the event management plan for the Monsignor Dilwyn Lewis Blue Plaque which had been previously circulated.
- Members discussed the plan and proposed it be approved with two clarifications: 1. The cost of refreshments. 2. That all Members of the Bridgend History Society be added to the Guest list.

RESOLVED: That the Plaque for Monsignor Dilwyn John Lewis be unveiled on Tuesday 12th July at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Bridgend and that The Democratic Services Officer clarify the cost of refreshments and add all Members of the Bridgend History Society to the Guest list.

- The Democratic Services Officer presented a prepared report on the status of the John Thomas Plaque (*John Thomas, 1826 – 1913, Pencerdd Gwalia, Harpist to Queen Victoria, [harp image picked out in Gold], 2022*), which clarified in detail what the responsibilities of Council would be should a High-Profile Guest be invited to this unveiling in respect of the fact that the role of Royal Harpist had now been reinstated.
- The Democratic Officer advised Members of the protocol that would surround such an event and further advised that she had prepared the report with information from two sources.
- A discussion took place regarding extending an invitation to a high-profile guest to attend the unveiling of a blue plaque for John Thomas.
- Cllr A Felton stated that this would be potentially massive. Members were in support of this.
- The Town Clerk highlighted that the initial budget for the blue plaque scheme is only for the purchase of the plaque and noted that an invitation of this nature has wide implications, outside the scope of what was originally agreed by Council. She suggested that as this discussion involves consideration of budget and resource not allocated to the committee by full Council, this matter should be referred to the Council for full consideration.

- Cllr F Bletsoe suggested that the discussion would need to be held in confidence, on pink papers.
- The Town Clerk tried to provide advice on how this would need to be dealt with on the agenda and minutes for full Council. She referred to the wording on the agenda which must be transparent so that the public understand the business to be transacted. She also explained that whilst undertaking the CiLCA qualification she had become aware that in law, there is no scope for confidential minutes of a full Council meeting and therefore the decision taken at the meeting should not be on pink papers.
- Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk and stated that she disagreed. She asked the committee to get 'proper advice' and that this 'undermined the committees delegated authority'
- The Town Clerk raised her hand to request to speak to provide more detailed information.
- Cllr F Bletsoe became irate, announced to the Chair that she did not want to be interrupted by the Clerk and stated that she was angry, despite the Clerk not actually speaking. Cllr F Bletsoe asked the Clerk to specify where the advice came from and 'not just from One Voice Wales as usual' and queried why a curve ball was being thrown.
- The Town Clerk confirmed that the legislation was contained within the Local Government Act of 1972, schedule 12, and suggested she could find the relevant legislation and send it to Members tomorrow morning.
- Cllr F Bletsoe demanded to have the information now and reiterated that she was not happy and annoyed by the Clerk throwing curve balls. The Town Clerk responded that she would need to reference the relevant legislation and asked permission to go to the office to check.
- The Town Clerk left the Council Chamber to check the legislation. Councillors continued to speak on the call.
- The Town Clerk returned to the office and explained that she would need more time and asked again if she could follow-up with the exact reference to the legislation tomorrow morning. She stated that she felt bullied and intimidated by Cllr F Bletsoe' conduct towards her.
- Cllr F Bletsoe abruptly left the meeting without apology at 7.30 pm.
- The Democratic Services Officer advised Members that it would be correct to refer to any prospective Royal Visitor as 'High Profile' or 'Special Guest' and that this would be the manner in which the invitation would be presented except in direct communication with the Lieutenancy and Police.
- Cllr S Easterbrook proposed that the following should be put forward to Full Council for their decision:
 - To request if Council would like to proceed with a High-profile Invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.
 - To request if Council would like to proceed without a High-Profile invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.
 - To request if Council would like to extend an invitation to an eminent Harpist to exhibit and present a programme considering Budget and resource.
 - To request if Council would like to provide refreshments after the unveiling considering budget and resource and confirm venue.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration committee propose that for the installing and unveiling of the plaque for John Thomas, the following should be included in the agenda for Full Council:
To request if Council would like to proceed with a High-profile Invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.

To request if Council would like to proceed without a High-Profile invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.

To request if Council would like to extend an invitation to the eminent World Class Harpist who has requested to exhibit and present a programme of music and letters/documents and journals, considering Budget and resource.

To request if Council would like to provide refreshments after the unveiling considering budget and resource and confirm venue.

- The Democratic Services Officer advised Members that the status of the plaque dedicated to Caroline Williams was unchanged and still awaiting permissions from the Electoral Officer.

9. To receive an update on the Community Notice board project

- The Democratic Services Officer reported that there had been no update from BCBC regarding the installation of the notice boards by BCBC.

10. To receive an update from Cllr F Bletsoe regarding the brief for the Red Telephone Box project

- The Town Clerk referred to a report that had been previously circulated and prepared by the Democratic Services Officer. The Town Clerk thanked the Democratic Services Officer for her in depth report and advised Members that the total budget for the telephone boxes was £2000. (This would include flowers and shelving).
- The Democratic Officer advised that she had received the following email from HD Ltd. 'Further to your email and letter of 7th June 2022, I confirm that the telephone boxes referred to are sited outside the ride line boundary of the former Post/Sorting Office (Title Ref: WA959590) and therefore no permissions are required from HD Ltd'.
- The Mayor advised Members that the flowers to fill the telephone boxes were being grown and he would clarify whether these were free of charge.
- After a thorough discussion Cllr A Felton proposed that the outdoor team take on the installation of the flowers in the telephone boxes if they have capacity to do so.
- The Town Clerk queried if the lead paint would need to be removed. After discussion and referral to the recommendations in the report, as well as a discussion regarding removal of the glass, The Mayor proposed that in order to move forward that he would inspect the telephone boxes, liaise with the flower grower and advise the FM if the outdoor team could tidy up generally and if possible the flowers would be positioned in such a way that no extra glass would need to be removed at this stage.

RESOLVED: That The Mayor would inspect the telephone boxes, liaise with the flower grower and advise the FM if the outdoor team could tidy up generally and if possible, the flowers would be positioned in such a way that no extra glass would need to be removed at this stage.

- The Chair thanked The Mayor and advised that all residents would now benefit from a welcoming site at the train station.
- Cllr S Easterbrook queried if the flower towers could have the Council Crest attached. The Town Clerk explained that as the towers were rented this was not possible but advised that Members could propose to buy towers and planters with the Crest included.
- The Chair thanked all Members for attending and urged Members to think of new projects for presentation to the committee for 2023/24. The Chair urged new Members to ask for guidance if required.

Meeting closed: 8.10 pm

SignedDate.....

Chair of Regeneration Committee



MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL REGENERATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Tuesday 14th June 2022

Time: 6.30pm

Location: The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting at both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021

Chairperson: The Mayor, Cllr Tim Wood

Staff: L Edwards (Town Clerk), J Brown (Democratic Officer)

In attendance:

Cllr Steven Bletsoe – Online

Cllr Freya Bletsoe – Online

Cllr Steven Easterbrook – Online

Cllr Allison Felton – Online

Cllr Fran Sullivan – Online – **signal dropped intermittently**

Cllr Tim Wood – In Person

1. To elect a Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2022-23

- Cllr S Bletsoe was proposed and seconded as Chair of Regeneration Committee; there being no other nomination, Cllr S Bletsoe was unanimously elected as Chair of Regeneration Committee for 2022-23

2. To elect a Vice Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2022-23

- Cllr F Sullivan was proposed and seconded as Vice Chair of Regeneration Committee; there being no other nomination, Cllr F Sullivan was unanimously elected as Vice Chair of Regeneration Committee for 2022-23
- The Chair offered his congratulations to Cllr F Sullivan and welcomed her and other new Members to the Committee.

3. To Receive Apologies for Absence

- Cllr I Spiller

4. Declarations of Interest (if any) of Members

- Cllr T Wood declared a personal interest as a Town Trader.
- Cllr S Easterbrook declared a personal interest as a Town Trader.

5. To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting 28th February 2022

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting of 28th February 2022 were received and confirmed as a true record and duly signed.

6. To consider matters arising from the Regeneration Committee Meeting 28th February 2022

- Page 4 – Agenda Item 9. Cllr A Felton requested an explanation about the reverse vending machine project. The Chair explained that a Reverse Vending Machine accepts used, recyclable drinks containers and plastics, and in return provides a payment, either to a bank account or in the form of a voucher for local shops and that BCBC were looking to trial the project. Council had previously resolved to fund one machine.
- Cllr A Felton queried how long the trial would be. Cllr F Bletsoe advised that trials were expected in Windmill, Cefn Glas and The Rhiw Centre but unfortunately the project had been derailed for the moment.

7. To receive a report from the Deputy Clerk/RFO regarding earmarked budget from 2021-22 and agreed budget for 2022-23 for Regeneration projects

- The Town Clerk presented the report and budget (which had been previously circulated) on behalf of the RFO.
- The Town Clerk advised Members that the sum of £13,800.00 was available for earmarked and new projects.
- The Chair recommended to Members that Committee delivered on existing projects and after summer recess look at ideas for new projects and submit motions accordingly.
- The Mayor queried if a wildflower grant would be possible as a new project. The Town Clerk advised that this topic was on the agenda for the next council meeting and that if proposed and accepted, the project could be deferred to this committee.

8. To discuss and agree dates for Blue Plaque unveilings for 2022-23

- The Democratic Services Officer presented the event management plan for the Monsignor Dilwyn Lewis Blue Plaque which had been previously circulated.
- Members discussed the plan and proposed it be approved with two clarifications: 1. The cost of refreshments. 2. That all Members of the Bridgend History Society be added to the Guest list.

RESOLVED: That the Plaque for Monsignor Dilwyn John Lewis be unveiled on Tuesday 12th July at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Bridgend and that The Democratic Services Officer clarify the cost of refreshments and add all Members of the Bridgend History Society to the Guest list.

- The Democratic Services Officer presented a prepared report on the status of the John Thomas Plaque (*John Thomas, 1826 – 1913, Pencerdd Gwalia, Harpist to Queen Victoria, [harp image picked out in Gold], 2022*), which clarified in detail what the responsibilities of Council would be should a High-Profile Guest be invited to this unveiling in respect of the fact that the role of Royal Harpist had now been reinstated.
- The Democratic Officer advised Members of the protocol that would surround such an event and further advised that she had prepared the report with information from two sources.
- A discussion took place regarding extending an invitation to a high-profile guest to attend the unveiling of a blue plaque for John Thomas.
- Cllr A Felton stated that this event had huge potential. Members were in support of this.
- The Town Clerk highlighted that the initial budget for the blue plaque scheme is only for the purchase of the plaque and noted that an invitation of this nature has wide implications, outside the scope of what was originally agreed by Council. She suggested that as this discussion involves consideration of budget and resource not allocated to the committee by full Council, this matter should be referred to the Council for full consideration.

- Cllr F Bletsoe suggested that the discussion would need to be held in confidence, on pink papers.
- The Town Clerk tried to provide advice on how this would need to be dealt with on the agenda and minutes for full Council. She referred to the wording on the agenda which must be transparent so that the public understand the business to be transacted. She also explained that whilst undertaking the CiLCA qualification she had become aware that in law, there is no scope for confidential minutes of a full Council meeting and therefore the decision taken at the meeting should not be on pink papers.
- Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk, a discussion took place after which Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30pm.
- The Democratic Services Officer advised Members that it would be correct to refer to any prospective Royal Visitor as 'High Profile' or 'Special Guest' and that this would be the manner in which the invitation would be presented except in direct communication with the Lieutenancy and Police.
- Cllr S Easterbrook proposed that the following should be put forward to Full Council for their decision:
 - To request if Council would like to proceed with a High-profile Invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.
 - To request if Council would like to proceed without a High-Profile invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.
 - To request if Council would like to extend an invitation to an eminent Harpist to exhibit and present a programme considering Budget and resource.
 - To request if Council would like to provide refreshments after the unveiling considering budget and resource and confirm venue.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration committee propose that for the installing and unveiling of the plaque for John Thomas, the following should be included in the agenda for Full Council: To request if Council would like to proceed with a High-profile Invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.

To request if Council would like to proceed without a High-Profile invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date.

To request if Council would like to extend an invitation to the eminent World Class Harpist who has requested to exhibit and present a programme of music and letters/documents and journals, considering Budget and resource.

To request if Council would like to provide refreshments after the unveiling considering budget and resource and confirm venue.

- The Democratic Services Officer advised Members that the status of the plaque dedicated to Caroline Williams was unchanged and still awaiting permissions from the Electoral Officer.

9. To receive an update on the Community Notice board project

- The Democratic Services Officer reported that there had been no update from BCBC regarding the installation of the notice boards by BCBC.

10. To receive an update from Cllr F Bletsoe regarding the brief for the Red Telephone Box project

- The Town Clerk referred to a report that had been previously circulated and prepared by the Democratic Services Officer. The Town Clerk thanked the Democratic Services Officer for her in depth report and advised Members that the total budget for the telephone boxes was £2000. (This would include flowers and shelving).

- 124 The Democratic Officer advised that she had received the following email from HD Ltd.
'Further to your email and letter of 7th June 2022, I confirm that the telephone boxes referred to are sited outside the ride line boundary of the former Post/Sorting Office (Title Ref: WA959590) and therefore no permissions are required from HD Ltd'.
- The Mayor advised Members that the flowers to fill the telephone boxes were being grown and he would clarify whether these were free of charge.
 - After a thorough discussion Cllr A Felton proposed that the outdoor team take on the installation of the flowers in the telephone boxes if they have capacity to do so.
 - The Town Clerk queried if the lead paint would need to be removed. After discussion and referral to the recommendations in the report, as well as a discussion regarding removal of the glass, The Mayor proposed that in order to move forward that he would inspect the telephone boxes, liaise with the flower grower and advise the FM if the outdoor team could tidy up generally and if possible the flowers would be positioned in such a way that no extra glass would need to be removed at this stage.

RESOLVED: That The Mayor would inspect the telephone boxes, liaise with the flower grower and advise the FM if the outdoor team could tidy up generally and if possible, the flowers would be positioned in such a way that no extra glass would need to be removed at this stage.

- The Chair thanked The Mayor and advised that all residents would now benefit from a welcoming site at the train station.
- Cllr S Easterbrook queried if the flower towers could have the Council Crest attached. The Town Clerk explained that as the towers were rented this was not possible but advised that Members could propose to buy towers and planters with the Crest included.
- The Chair thanked all Members for attending and urged Members to think of new projects for presentation to the committee for 2023/24. The Chair urged new Members to ask for guidance if required.

Meeting closed: 8.10 pm

SignedDate.....

Chair of Regeneration Committee



MINUTES OF BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Monday 26th September 2022

Time: 6.30 pm

The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021.

Chairperson: Cllr A Wathan

Staff: Mrs D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer), Ms J Brown (Democratic Services Officer), Mrs D Elliott (Community Engagement and Events Officer)

In Attendance:

Cllr Steven Bletsoe – Remote

Cllr Michelle Blundell-Humphreys - In Person

Cllr Nathan Deere – In Person

Cllr Steven Easterbrook – In Person

Cllr C Webster – In Person

Cllr A Wathan – In Person

Cllr D Brown – In Person

Cllr Ann Lloyd – In Person

Cllr Ian Spiller – Remote

Cllr Angela Morelli - Remote

Cllr David Unwin – In Person

Cllr I Williams Remote

Cllr Barry Johnston – Remote

1. To elect a person to preside if the Chair and Deputy Chair are not present

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Council that as both Mayor and Deputy Mayor were away then Council were required to nominate a Chair.
- Councillors proposed and seconded Cllr A Wathan to Chair the meeting.

2. To Receive Apologies for Absence

- Cllr F Bletsoe, Cllr T Wood (Mayor), Cllr D Evans, Cllr A Fenton, Cllr F Sullivan.
- It was noted that Cllr S Bletsoe and Cllr I Williams were going to be late due to another meeting.

3. To Receive Declarations of Interests (if any) of Members in respect of the business to be transacted

- Cllr S Easterbrook made a declaration of personal interest as a Bridgend Town Trader in matters pertaining to Town Centre business and any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr I Spiller made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor

- Cllr A Wathan made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor

4. To receive questions or comments from Members of the Public (Standing Order 3(e) refers)

- There were no questions or comments from Members of the Public.

5. To confirm and sign minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 25th July 2022

- The Deputy Town Clerk apologised to Councillors that the minutes were not yet finalised and asked for them to be deferred to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 25th July 2022 be confirmed and signed at the next Council Meeting.

6. To consider matters arising from the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 25th July 2022

- The Deputy Town Clerk reiterated her apology reference the delayed minutes.

7. To note for information Mayoral Announcements and Engagements:

- The Deputy Town Clerk welcomed new Councillor Darren Brown to the meeting.
- The Deputy Town Clerk read out a personal note from The Mayor to all staff thanking them for their outstanding performance regarding Operation London Bridge. The Deputy Town Clerk advised Councillors that it was a team effort and thanked The Mayor for his support.
- The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the following mayoral engagements had been completed:
- Mayor and Mayoress: Sunday 21st August Maesteg Town Council Civic Service
- Representing The Mayor, Cllrs I Williams and S Easterbrook: Saturday 27th August Official Launch of the Bridgend RBL Poppy Appeal
- Mayor: Thursday 8th September to Tuesday 20th September Operation London Bridge

8. To receive an update regarding the co-option of BTC Youth Representatives

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Council that no applications had been received.
- Cllr D Unwin proposed that this item be deleted from the agenda pending any interest shown.

RESOLVED: That the Agenda item regarding the co-option of BTC Youth Representatives be deleted pending any interest shown.

9. To receive Bridgend Town Council Resolution Register and update on work completed to date

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO referred to her previously circulated Council Resolution Register. The Deputy Clerk/RFO further clarified that the document was in draft form, however detailed all resolutions which clearly gave an overview to the Personnel Committee and Full Council, assisting in management of workload, decision making and acting as a forward planning tool.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO referred to her additional notes which she summarised in brief below:
 - 1) That Operation London Bridge had pulled resources from all teams.
 - 2) That the Facilities Officer had been successful in obtaining a grant for £4,118.00 to aid disabled access at Great Western Avenue allotment.

- 3) That the Battle of Britain Memorial Exhibition was going ahead although the Launch had been cancelled by Air Officer Wales due to Operation London Bridge.
- 4) Plans for Remembrance weekend were in hand in liaison the Community Engagement and Events Officer.
- 5) The additional plaque for the War Memorial had been ordered.
- 6) The Deputy Town Clerk was delighted to report that reopening of Carnegie House had been well received by the public and was now open for classes including half term events.
- 7) The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Facilities Van had undergone work for MOT failures which took one week impacting the dog waste service however with thanks to the outdoor team was now caught up.
- 8) The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that she would prioritise all Councillor Renumeration forms which were outstanding as soon as she was able.

10. Planning

1. To consider draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 1st August 2022

- The Chair presented the minutes to Council and asked Members if they had any questions. There were no questions.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 1st August 2022.

2. To receive update from the Planning Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2022

- The Chair advised Members that the planning committee had received 19 planning applications, two of which had been discussed in detail.
- The Chair reported that a bid to host the anchor site for a New Welsh Contemporary Art Gallery on Wyndham Street had been submitted.
- The Chair advised members that the Planning Committee had discussed the new Bridgend College Building and had identified several initial thoughts of relevance. The Chair asked Councillors if there were any additions to the following points:
 1. External design and fabrics
 2. Connectivity between two buildings (no indication of a linkway bridge across Cheapside)
 3. Up to 200 staff on site plus up to 800 students at any one time
 4. No car parking provided except 42 places for special purposes. Reliance on existing public car parks
 5. 116 cycle stands to be provided
 6. 3-year site upheaval with aim to opening fully in 2025
 7. Suggested Public Exhibition for everyone to have their say – possibly in Carnegie House
- Councillors had no additions and proposed that Cllr D Unwin write to BCBC bringing the points of relevance above to their attention with an offer of space in Carnegie House for a Public Exhibition.

3. To discuss future use of former Ford engine plant site, Bridgend

- The Chair referred to an article by the Glamorgan Gazette which had been previously circulated and asked Members to note contents for information.

11. Community Engagement & Wellbeing

1. To receive an update on Christmas Events 2022

- The Deputy Town Clerk clarified to Members that:
 - a) Further to the last Council meeting the Bridgend Lions Christmas Grotto had been booked and that craft stalls would be cleared away each Saturday to allow Bridgend Town Council to continue to offer classes and workshops during the week.
 - b) That the willow reindeer making workshop had been booked and almost sold out.
 - c) That the Brass Band Bus had been booked and route confirmed.
- The Deputy Town Clerk drew Members attention to the fact that regarding Christmas Lighting, Council own and pay for the installation of the Christmas Lights in collaboration with BCBC. She explained that BCBC usually organise a light switch on event however Bridgend Town Council have yet to be informed if this will take place for 2022 and that BCBC are in discussion and will advise when a decision is made.
- It was noted by Cllr D Unwin that Green Top Events were holding a Christmas Market in the Town Centre on the 3rd December.

2. To receive, update and discuss Remembrance Events 2022

- The Deputy Town Clerk reported that in the absence of the Community Engagement and Events Manager, the Acting Community Engagement and Events Manager was undertaking the organisation on their part of Remembrance and that team meetings had been arranged with the Clerk's and all staff to review and discuss security, risk assessments, staff rota's, preparation and distribution of invitations and anything else required prior to the services.

3. To consider quotes for Security, Stage and Sound provision for Remembrance Events 2022

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO referred Members to the quotes which had been previously circulated. After a short discussion Councillors agreed to employ EPM to provide security, stage and sound to cover the Children's and the Main Remembrance Services for 2022.

RESOLVED: That EPM be appointed to provide security, stage and sound to cover the Children's and the Main Remembrance Services for 2022.

- The Deputy Town Clerk queried if Council wished to open Carnegie House for tea coffee etc on Sunday 13th November only.

RESOLVED: That Councillors agreed to open Carnegie House for the provision of Tea/coffee and distribution of poppy wreaths on Sunday 13th November 2022.

12. Facilities

1. To discuss and consider Utility Supply contracts for Carnegie House and Town Hall

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO asked that she sought guidance from Council in the light of costings for contracts only lasting 24 hours, and if Councillors would allow staff to make an informed decision overseen by Chair of Finance and Councillors.
- After a full discussion Council agreed that: Chair of Finance, Chair of Facilities and Cllr N Deere would oversee and agree the Utility Supply contracts for Carnegie House and Town Hall.

RESOLVED: That The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO would view Utility Supply Contracts with Chair of Finance, Chair of Facilities and Cllr N Deere and confirm a contract subject to cost and terms by 1st October 2022.

13. Finance

1. To receive a balance of accounts and payments since last meeting

RESOLVED: Accounts paid, read, and approved by Members. There were no questions.

2. To receive minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 25th August 2022

- Chair of Finance Committee commended the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 25th August 2022 to Council as a true record.
- Cllr S Easterbrook queried the wages total. The RFO clarified that the total reflected wages for both July and August 2022. Cllr S Easterbrook thanked the RFO for the explanation.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 25th August 2022

Cllr S Bletsoe joined the meeting and apologised to The Chair for his late arrival.

- The Chair queried if Councillors would like to defer agenda item 14 as only one Councillor from the Regeneration Committee (Cllr S Bletsoe - Chair), was in attendance.
- Cllr D Unwin proposed that the agenda item proceed.

RESOLVED: That discussion on agenda item 14 proceed.

14. Regeneration

1. To receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022

- Cllr S Bletsoe stated that he had questions regarding inaccuracies in the minutes and proposed that they be deferred to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022 be received at the next meeting.

- Cllr A Morelli asked for clarification of the inaccuracies in the minutes.
- Cllr S Bletsoe stated that he would like the matter of the High-Profile Invitation moved forward.

2. To request if Council would like to proceed with a High-profile Invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date

- The DSO advised that once an invitation had been extended, Council would be entirely guided by Buckingham Palace on the date, time and also who would be attending.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO proposed that discussion in relation to budget and resource requirements be deferred until a response is received.

3. To request if Council would like to proceed without a High-Profile invitation, considering budget and resource and if so, confirm a date

- After a short discussion it was proposed that the Democratic Services Officer proceed with liaising with the Lieutenancy to extend an invitation from Council to a high-profile visitor to unveil a Blue Plaque dedicated to Royal Harpist John Thomas.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Officer proceed with liaising with the Lieutenancy to extend an invitation from Council to a high-profile visitor to unveil a Blue Plaque dedicated to Royal Harpist John Thomas.

4. To request if Council would like to extend an invitation to the eminent World Class Harpist who has requested to exhibit and present a programme of music and letters/documents and journals, considering Budget and resource

- After a short discussion Council proposed to defer the invitation to the eminent World Class Harpist who has requested to exhibit and present a programme of music and letters/documents and journals once a date for the unveiling had been confirmed.

RESOLVED: To defer the invitation to the eminent World Class Harpist who has requested to exhibit and present a programme of music and letters/documents and journals once a date for the unveiling had been confirmed.

5. To request if Council would like to provide refreshments after the unveiling considering budget and resource and confirm venue

- It was suggested that this be discussion is deferred until further information is received.

15. Town Hall Project

1. To receive Town Hall Refurbishment Project update

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO apologised for the fact that she hadn't communicated with Council as much as she would like to have done due to staff shortages but could confirm that most internal works were now finished.
- Cllr S Easterbrook quired if there was a completion date. The Deputy Town Clerk replied that an estimated full completion date would be January 2023.

2. To receive Window Replacement update

- The Deputy Town Clerk /RFO reported that since their last review, over a year ago, the windows had been deemed not fit for purpose and posed a security risk, she had therefore called a special finance meeting in order for Members to urgently discuss and decide if a replacement scheme was needed and review 3 quotes for the works.
- The Chair of Finance reiterated that the matter was fully discussed and that the budget was available. The Chair of Finance confirmed that the estimated finish date for the new windows was the 27th November 2022.

3. To consider quotes for CCTV installation

- The Chair requested a short recess in order for Members to look at the CCTV installation quotes which had been previously circulated.

Cllr I Williams joined the meeting and apologised to The Chair for his late arrival.

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO expanded on the two quotes received and advised Members that she was not able to get 3 quotes within the required time frame.

- After a short discussion Cllr D Unwin recommended that Council proceed with the company Cameratech Projects Ltd.

RESOLVED: That Council proceed with the company Cameratech Projects Ltd for CCTV installation.

4. To receive Rough Sleepers update

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO requested that this agenda item be discussed under confidential matters.

RESOLVED: That agenda item 15.4 should be discussed under confidential matters and considered after the Personnel agenda item.

5. To receive update and discuss Room Names

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Members that she was not expecting a decision this evening, but there was a need to move forward with a plan. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO referred Council to a plan prepared by the Facilities Manager and previously circulated and requested that Members bring ideas to the October meeting for discussion and approval.

16. Recording of Council Meetings

To consider a Motion from Cllr F Bletsoe that:

'I propose that this council move towards better equality for all residents with digitally accessible recordings of our meetings that constituents can access at a time that is convenient for them.'

Proposed Resolution: That this Town council henceforth record and upload to YouTube/social media all council, committee and working group meetings. This is to allow for full democratic transparency as per the Nolan Regulations and Accessibility for all under the Equalities Act, as well as for educational purposes under the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act.'

- Cllr D Unwin advised that this item be deferred as The Proposer was not present. The Chair referred to standing orders and agreed.

17. To receive Periodic Survey of Town Centre Empty Shops/Business Premises and Allied Matters

- Cllr D Unwin referred Councillors to his report which had been previously circulated.
- Cllr D Unwin gave his views on matters in relation to Bridgend Town Centre. Members discussed a number of issues and Cllr Unwin thanked Councillors for their comments.
- Cllr D Unwin advised that it has been customary to invite South Wales Police to attend a Council meeting to answer questions posed by Members relating to police activities in the 3 wards. Cllr D Unwin proposed that an approach be made to SW police to attend the meeting on the 21st November and Councillors questions be circulated in advance.

18. Correspondence:

a. Email from BCBC: Summer of Fun Activities 2022

- Cllr D Unwin advised Members that Council had supported the scheme for many years and that this year a donation had been made of £3,850
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO confirmed that the BTC Logo had been included in all marketing.

- Cllr N Deere reported that the scheme had developed and now extended for 6 weeks to include ages 8 – 11 years and 12 plus years. Cllr N Deere thanked Councillors on behalf of HALO for their support.

19. Town and Community Forum

- a) To consider items for inclusion on the Town and Community Council Forum agenda - NOTED
- b) To consider feedback from meetings of the Town and Community Council Forum – NOTED – that the next meeting would be held on Monday 1st August 22.
- c) To identify proposals for inclusion on the TCC Charter Action Plan which would aid the development of the Charter - NOTED

RESOLVED: That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of agenda item 20 as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

IN CONFIDENCE

- The Chair of the Town Council Meeting (Cllr A Wathan) asked all Members accessing the meeting remotely to turn on their cameras and confirm that they were on their own to ensure confidentiality.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO checked that any Members of the public had left the meeting and confirmed that only Councillors were present on the call.
- The Deputy Town Clerk requested permission from Council that two members of staff remain in the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Officer and the Acting Community Engagement and Events Manager remain to take minutes and advise respectively.

13. Personnel (In Confidence)

1. To consider draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 8th July 2022.

- Cllr A Wathan, The Chair of Personnel presented the minutes of the meeting to Council and invited questions. There were no questions.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on 8th July 2022

2. To receive update from the Personnel Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2022

- The Deputy Town Clerk advised that minutes had not yet been produced, however staff were continuing to work hard to deliver Council requests.
- The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Clerk had passed her CiLCA qualification and explained that The Town Council were now able to use The General Power of Competence (GPoC).
- The Deputy Town Clerk asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

3. To receive an update on staff sickness absence and the impact on planned work

- The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that the CE&EM would not be returning to work until the New Year. The Community Engagements and Events Officer would be covering the role and commitments made by the team would be fulfilled to the end of the calendar year.
- The Deputy Town Clerk advised that The Town Clerk had returned to work on the 22nd of September 2022 for a phased return and that the The Facilities Manager had also returned to work on a phased return, commencing with desk duty as planned.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Councillors that she and staff would continue to deliver prioritised projects and commitments as best they could as follows:
 - a. Utilities.
 - b. The Civic Service
 - c. Remembrance Weekend Services
 - d. Budget reviews, forecasting budgets to 31st March 2023 and Precept Setting
 - e. Damp Issue in Carnegie House
 - f. Christmas Events.
 - g. That The CE&EM was collating a programme for the New year. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Members that this was resource intensive and would

be planned around the move to The Town Hall.

15.4 To receive Rough Sleepers update

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO gave a verbal report and update on the situation.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO informed members of the next steps, which included legal advice from Howells Solicitors.

Cllr S Bletsoe declared a personal interest.

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO confirmed to Members that the situation was a concern to staff who were working on the premises.
- Councillors held a thorough discussion, underlining duty of care to staff, the plights of rough sleepers, and concerns of residents.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO would employ bailiffs with immediate effect and work out a strategy moving forward.
2. That the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO was authorised to use the contingency fund.
3. That BTC should write to BCBC to discuss the issue within two weeks of this meeting.
4. That staff be advised not to work alone at The Town hall or liaise with the rough sleepers in any way.

Meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Signed

Date

Mayor



MINUTES OF BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Monday 17th October 2022

Time: 6.30 pm

The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021.

Chairperson: The Mayor, Cllr Tim Wood

Staff: Mrs D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer), Mrs L Edwards (Town Clerk), Ms J Brown (Democratic Services Officer - Remote), Mrs D Elliott (Community Engagement and Events Manager)

In attendance – Mayors Chaplain, Mavis Martin

In Attendance:

Cllr Tim Wood (Mayor) – In Person
 Cllr Steven Bletsoe – In Person
 Cllr Freya Bletsoe – In Person
 Cllr Ann Lloyd – In Person
 Cllr Michelle Blundell-Humphreys - In Person
 Cllr Ian Spiller – Remote
 Cllr Nathan Deere – Remote
 Cllr Steven Easterbrook – In Person
 Cllr David Unwin – In Person

Cllr Clair Webster – In Person
 Cllr I Williams - Remote
 Cllr Alan Wathan – In Person
 Cllr Barry Johnston – Remote
 Cllr Chris Harding - Remote
 Cllr Darren Brown – In Person
 Cllr Alison Felton - Remote

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

- Cllr A Morelli, Cllr D Evans & Cllr B Johnston

2. To Receive Declarations of Interests (if any) of Members in respect of the business to be transacted

- Cllr A Wathan declared an interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr F Bletsoe declared an interest in agenda item 11 and in any discussions relating BCBC as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr S Easterbrook declared a personal interest personal as a Bridgend Town Trader in matters pertaining to Town Centre business and any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr T Wood declared a personal interest as a Bridgend Town Trader in matters pertaining to Town Centre business and any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor

- Cllr I Spiller declared an interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr I Williams declared an interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr N Deere declared an interest in agenda item 15 as an employee of Halo Leisure.

3. To receive questions or comments from Members of the Public (Standing Order 3(e) refers)

- There were no questions

4. To confirm and sign minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 25th July 2022

- Page 308 – Cllr S Bletsoe highlighted that the name on the record of vote should read ‘Mr R Thomas’ not ‘Mr R Morgan’. It was agreed that the minutes would be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 25th July 2022 be amended to correct the errors highlighted, and that they be confirmed as a true record and duly signed.

5. To consider matters arising from minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 25th July 2022

- Page 307, agenda item 5, Cllr Unwin enquired about progress regarding the Hedgehogs R Us Highway Project. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that she had passed this to a member of staff to place the order.
- Page 311, agenda item 12b, Cllr Unwin enquired if there was any progress with the damp situation. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that a grant had been approved in principle and that the Facilities Team are working on progressing this work as soon as possible.
- Page 313, agenda item 18, Cllr Unwin asked if staff could request information on the outturn for the Summer Play Scheme from BCBC. This was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: To write to BCBC to request the outturn figures for the Summer Play Scheme.

- Page 313, agenda item 17, Cllr Spiller noted that Laleston Community Council have resolved to write to BCBC with Merthyr Mawr Community Council and Bridgend Town Council to ask that an urgent review of highway safety on the A48 between Ewenny and Broadlands roundabouts be considered, outside the LDP if necessary. Cllr Unwin enquired if Laleston Community Council could write on behalf of all three councils. This was agreed by Cllr Spiller.

6. To note for information Mayoral Announcements and Engagements:

- The Mayor made an announcement regarding his Civic Service
- The Mayor advised that he had been delighted to present a local resident with an award for 40 years of selling poppies for the Royal British Legion and that he had attended a concert of Bridgend Male Voice Choir.

7. Planning

1. To receive draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2022

- The Chair presented the minutes to Council and asked Members if they had any questions. There were no questions.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 23rd September 2022.

2. To receive draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 10th October 2022

- The Chair presented the minutes to Council and asked Members if they had any questions. There were no questions.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 10th October 2022.

Cllr F Bletsoe enquired if there had been a planning application for Jubilee Crescent. Chair of Planning Committee responded that there had not been a planning application for Jubilee Crescent. It was suggested that if Cllr F Bletsoe provide the details to the Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk, staff can make enquires with BCBC.

8. Community Engagement & Wellbeing

1. To receive update regarding the planning for Remembrance Events 2022

- It was noted that the sound system and equipment is booked, invitations are currently being issued and arrangements for the HMS Urge families are being planned by Councillors.

2. To receive an update regarding plans for Christmas 2022 and consider costs for additional entertainment for the Brass Band Bus

- Members were provided with an update on plans for Christmas activities and marketing.
- The Acting Community Engagement and Events Manager explained that she had sought costs for a new Christmas scene for the railings outside Carnegie House and additional entertainment for the Brass Band Bus.
- Members discussed the materials used for the Christmas scene on the railings outside Carnegie House. It was noted that the materials need to be stronger to ensure it does not break and can be reused again next year.
- Acting Community Engagement and Events Manager informed members that two performing circus elves were available at a cost of £500. They would jump on and off the Brass Band Bus and entertain the residents who had gathered to watch. Members agreed that this would be good additional entertainment to enhance the Brass Band Bus and requested that the elves be booked.

RESOLVED: Community Engagement and Events Manager to book the two elves for the Brass Band Bus on 10th December 2022.

RESOLVED: To approve a budget of up to £2,000 for a new Christmas scene for the railings of Carnegie house that should be made of strong material so that it can be re-used.

- The Mayor referred to a Christmas Light Switch on in Bridgend Town Centre.
- Cllr F Bletsoe highlighted that there is also Christmas lights switch on at Westward Community Centre on 4th December.
- It was noted that there is a new management board in place at Wildmill Community Centre and they may be interested in arranging a Christmas Light switch on in future.
- Cllr S Bletsoe & Cllr D Brown made a declaration on this matter.

9. Facilities

1. To consider hire of storage container to be sited within the grounds of the Town Hall

- The Town Clerk advised that she has sourced costs to hire or purchase a storage container for the Town Hall, however the cost is dependent on the size of the container. It was suggested that the container could be obtained in liaison with the Chair of Finance.
- Cllr I Spiller highlighted that there is currently a disturbance to residents in this area and the sooner that this matter can be resolved, the better.
- It was agreed that delegated authority be granted to staff to arrange bailiffs, a storage container and boulders for the grounds of the Town Hall, in liaison with the Chair of Finance and Chair of Facilities Committee.
- Cllr S Bletsoe spoke of a duty of care to residents and staff and advised that three separate requests had been submitted to BCBC to ask them to allow BTC representatives and The Mayor to a BCBC meeting to discuss this matter. He advised that BCBC had refused to allow BTC representatives to the meeting and suggested that given the scale of the problem, BTC may wish to write to BCBC as a corporate body.
- Cllr Unwin enquired which BCBC Officer had blocked the attendance at the meeting and suggested that BTC could contact the Chief Executive directly. This was agreed by members.
- The Town Clerk asked if Cllr S Bletsoe could provide the wording for the letter regarding the BCBC meeting requests.

RESOLVED: That delegated authority be granted to staff to arrange bailiffs, a storage container and boulders for the ground of the Town Hall, in liaison with the Chair of Finance and Chair of Facilities Committee.

RESOLVED: To send a letter to the BCBC Chief Executive regarding repeated requests for BTC to be included in a meeting regarding rough sleepers.

7.10pm - It was noted that the minute taker was not on the remote meeting. The Mayor requested a ten minute recess.

10. Finance

- 1. To receive a balance of accounts and payments since last meeting**
 - Noted

11. Regeneration

- 1. To receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022 (deferred from September meeting)**
 - The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Councillors that further to the September meeting she had sought legal advice on this matter. She explained that any discussion regarding the accuracy of the minutes should be discussed by the Regeneration Committee at their next meeting, which is to be held on the 24th October 2022.
 - The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised that any changes proposed should be sent to her in writing and that she would then include them with papers for the meeting.
 - The Chair of the Regeneration committee agreed to submit his comments to the Deputy Town Clerk in writing.

12. Town Hall Project

- 1. To receive Town Hall Refurbishment Project update**
 - The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO explained that further to the appointment of the contractor for the CCTV at the Town Hall, if BTC manage the contract, the Council would need to wait

for Manning Construction to finish work on site before the CCTV installation can commence. She explained that alternatively, Manning Construction could be appointed to manage the contractor carrying out the installation of the CCTV.

- The Deputy Clerk explained that if Manning Construction project manages the installation, they take the risk and as the cables need to be chased through walls, this could be done in conjunction with other work. She asked how the Council would like to proceed.
- Cllr David Unwin proposed that Manning Construction be appointed.

RESOLVED: Recommended that Manning Construction be appointed to arrange the installation of the CCTV system at the Town Hall.

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO reported that the contractors had identified that the Town Hall has no electrical isolation switch. Members were advised that electrical works could not be carried out without an isolation switch and that quotes were being sought to rectify the situation as soon as possible.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Members that she had met with BCBC in relation to the installation of the IT network and Wi-Fi at the Town Hall. She reported a one-off cost with BT of £4,737.57 for the installation, plus an annual line rental cost of approximately £1,500. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO explained that the estimated installation time is 9 months, however as an interim solution, the Council could purchase a portable Wi-Fi system.

RESOLVED: To approve the cost and proceed with the BT installation and for the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO to investigate an interim Wi-Fi solution.

- Council thanked the Deputy Clerk/RFO for all her work on this.

Cllr I Williams advised that the sound quality of the remote link was poor

2. To receive update and discuss Room Names & Signage

- Cllr Unwin proposed the following names for the three community rooms:
 - Oldcastle, Newcastle & Morfa
 - Elizabethan, Dunraven & Ogmores
- After discussion amongst Members, Cllr D Unwin proposed that Members send further proposals they may have for room names to the Town Clerk and defer this agenda item for discussion at the November Town Council meeting.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO highlighted that the signage will be bilingual and in braille.

RESOLVED: That Members send proposals for room names to the Town Clerk and deferred this agenda item to the November Town Council meeting.

13. To consider item deferred from September Town Council Meeting:

Recording of Council Meetings

To consider a Motion from Cllr F Bletsoe that:

'I propose that this council move towards better equality for all residents with digitally accessible recordings of our meetings that constituents can access at a time that is convenient

for them.

Proposed Resolution: That this Town council henceforth record and upload to YouTube/social media all council, committee and working group meetings. This is to allow for full democratic transparency as per the Nolan Regulations and Accessibility for all under the Equalities Act, as well as for educational purposes under the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act.'

- Cllr F Bletsoe proposed an amendment to her motion to delete the words 'working group'. This was seconded.
- Cllr F Bletsoe presented her motion, adding that it would assist note taking and could help streamline the minuting process. She explained that the motion would make meetings more accessible to residents at different times, as well as to school groups who may like to learn more about the democratic process. Cllr F Bletsoe added that the motion would encourage transparency, reaching a wider audience and comply with Equalities and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.
- Cllr S Bletsoe explained the recording and broadcastings of BCBC meetings and suggested that a transcript of the meeting could assist with the minutes. He referred to a delay with recent Council minutes and highlighted that this could benefit staff.
- Cllr I Spiller was in favour of the motion, echoing Cllr Bletsoe's remarks about the benefits. He agreed with the comments about the democratic process and therefore supported the motion.
- The Chair of Personnel Committee, Cllr A Wathan, stated that he was not against the motion, but enquired how much the proposed motion would impact staff.
- Cllr A Felton agreed with Cllr A Wathan and added that she would like to know how staff felt before continuing. She explained that although no one would dispute transparency, Council should consider capacity.
- Cllr A Lloyd queried if the staff should be consulted.
- Cllr S Bletsoe advised that he had taken advice from the BCBC Monitoring Officer, and that as Officers, staff are already in the public domain. Cllr S Bletsoe added that Council could also be mindful of any specific personal issues and could offer support.
- Cllr Harding expressed concern that the staff had not been asked to comment and that he felt they were being ignored.
- The Chair of Personnel Committee, Cllr A Wathan, declared that he was affronted by Cllr Harding's remarks, and that the wellbeing of staff was at the forefront of his concerns. Cllr A Wathan requested that Cllr C Harding be dismissed from the meeting.
- A heated debate took place and Cllr Harding was asked to apologise for his remark.
- Cllr Harding responded that until the Council looks after the interests of staff, he stood by his comments.
- After further discussion by Members, The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO requested to speak and advised Members that BCBC use an external company to broadcast their meetings. She added that the BTC Employment Solicitor had provided advice to Council on this proposal which had been included in Section b of the Notice of Motion Form.
- The Town Clerk provided the Chair of Personnel Committee with a hard copy of the Notice of Motion Form and he read out sections of the legal advice from Howells Solicitor to Members.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Council to carefully consider the legal advice.
- Members were asked to consider the following:
 - That new contracts would need to be drawn up for all staff and staff consent obtained for the recording and broadcasting of staff.

- That the current technology for remote meetings including the Owl System and facility to record and upload videos, will need to be looked at and that staff will require additional training.
- That Staff would still need to take and prepare the minutes, which are not verbatim.
- Cllr I Spiller proposed an amendment to the motion:
‘That Council henceforth record and upload to YouTube/social media, all Council meetings subject to the renegotiation of staff contracts’.
- Cllr C Harding seconded the amendment. Cllr F Bletsoe agreed to the amendment.
- Cllr A Felton disagreed with the motion and expressed that she felt staff were being railroaded. She urged Council to speak to the staff.
- The Mayor asked the Town Clerk to clarify the amended motion and asked that a vote be taken.

Proposed Amended Resolution: That this Town council henceforth record and upload to YouTube/social media all council and committee meetings. This is to allow for full democratic transparency as per the Nolan Regulations and Accessibility for all under the Equalities Act, as well as for educational purposes under the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act. subject to the renegotiation of staff contracts.

RESOLVED: That a vote be taken to determine if the motion be accepted.

- The Town Clerk advised Councillors to verbally vote either ‘In Favour’, ‘Not In Favour’ or ‘Abstain’. The Result was recorded as follows:

NAME OF COUNCILLOR	AGREE	DISAGREE	ABSTAIN
Cllr F Bletsoe	X		
Cllr S Bletsoe	X		
Cllr M Blundell-Humphreys	X		
Cllr N Deere	X		
Cllr S Easterbrook	X		
Cllr C Webster	X		
Cllr A Felton		X	
Cllr C Harding	X		
Cllr B Johnston (left meeting)			
Cllr A Lloyd	X		
Cllr I Spiller	X		
Cllr D Unwin			X
Cllr A Wathan			X
Cllr D Brown	X		
Cllr I Williams (no sound)			
Cllr T Wood (Mayor)	X		

- The Mayor declared the result of the vote as:

In Favour	11
Abstentions	2
Not in favour	1

RESOLVED: To record and upload to YouTube/social media all council and committee meetings. This is to allow for full democratic transparency as per the Nolan Regulations and

Accessibility for all under the Equalities Act, as well as for educational purposes under the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act. subject to the renegotiation of staff contracts.

- A member of staff advised that she had recently been registered as disabled and expressed concern regarding this decision.
- Cllr F Bletsoe requested a timeframe for this to be implemented.
- Chair of Personnel Committee advised that further legal advice would be required regarding the renegotiation of staff contracts.

RESOLVED: That the motion and decision be referred to the Personnel Committee to seek further legal advice.

14. Cllr. Martyn Jones, the new Armed Forces Champion for Bridgend would like to invite a representative from Bridgend Town Council to the first Armed Forces Covenant Forum for Bridgend of 2022. The forum will be held in person on Friday 25th November at 11am until 1pm and will take place in Bridgend Civic Centre.

- a) **To consider the appointment of a BTC representative for the Bridgend Armed Forces Covenant Forum**

RESOLVED: That Cllr A Wathan be appointed as the BTC representative for the Bridgend Armed Forces Covenant Forum

15. To discuss antisocial behaviour surrounding Bridgend Bowls Hall (Cllr T Wood)

- The Mayor reported that residents were at their wits end with the antisocial behaviour situation at the Bowls Hall Car Park and that he had been reporting the situation to Police since 2020. Residents were now reporting nightly disturbance, and although the police attended, they seemed to appear at the wrong times. The Mayor suggested that a lockable gate at the exit would solve the problem.
- Councillors were also aware of the problems and unanimously agreed.
- Cllr S Bletsoe highlighted that although it is not within the direct remit of BTC, the Council could request action on behalf of local residents.
- Cllr A Wathan proposed that a letter be written to the Police Divisional Commander.
- Cllr D Unwin proposed that a letter be also sent to The Chief Executive of BCBC and offered to provide wording for this.

Cllr C Harding and Cllr I Spiller left the Meeting at 8.48pm

16. To consider the BTC Statutory Training Plan in line with Local Government and Elections Act 2021, Section 67

- The Town Clerk highlighted that the Council have a statutory duty to prepare and approve a Training Plan by 5th November 2022. The Town Clerk referred to the report and a draft Training Plan she had prepared in accordance with Section 67 of the 2021 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, which had been previously circulated to Councillors.
- Members reviewed and discussed the draft Training Plan.
- Cllr A Wathan proposed that items that included a timescale for completion of 6 months should be reduced to 2 months. This was agreed by Members.
- Cllr S Bletsoe enquired whether skills acquired in the workplace or at other Councils would be taken into account. The Town Clerk explained that a skills audit will be required.

- The Town Clerk added that the Town Council does not currently have a specific Councillor Training Budget for 2022-23, however there is a Members Expenses budget of £1,000 and that a specific budget for Councillor training should be considered for 2023-24.
- After a short discussion Councillors agreed to accept the BTC Training Plan and allocate a budget accordingly.

RESOLVED: To approve the Bridgend Town Council Training Plan 2022-23 subject to the amendment of timescales for completion being reduced from 6 months to 2 months.

The Mayor's Chaplain left the Meeting

17. Personnel (In Confidence)

- 1. To consider draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2022**
- 2. To receive an update on staff sickness absence**

RESOLVED: That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of agenda item 17 as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

- Chair of Personnel Committee, Cllr A Wathan provided an update to Council regarding agenda item 16.
- Discussions took place in confidence.

RESOLVED: That The Democratic Services Officer and the Community Engagement and Events Manager remain to take minutes and advise respectively.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on 23rd September 2022

Meeting closed at 9.08 pm.

Signed

Date

Mayor



MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL REGENERATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Monday 24th October 2022

Time: 6.30pm

Location: The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting at both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021

Staff: D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk and RFO), J Brown (Democratic Officer)

In attendance:

Cllr Steven Bletsoe (Chair) – in person

Cllr Freya Bletsoe – In person

Cllr Steven Easterbrook – In person

Cllr Allison Felton – online

Cllr Ian Spiller – online

Cllr Tim Wood (Mayor) – in person

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

- The Deputy Clerk advised that there were no apologies, however Cllr Fran Sullivan had stepped down from the committee. The Chair thanked Cllr F Sullivan for sitting on the committee and the work that she had put in as Vice Chair.
- The Chair advised that the vacancy would be placed on the next full Town Council Agenda.

2. Declarations of Interest (if any) of Members

- Cllr T Wood declared a personal interest as a Town Trader and BCBC Councillor
- Cllr S Easterbrook declared a personal interest as a Town Trader and BCBC Councillor
- Cllr S Bletsoe declared an interest as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr I Spiller declared an interest as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr F Bletsoe declared a prejudicial interest in agenda items 3 and 4
- Cllr F Bletsoe declared a personal interest as a BCBC Councillor

Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting

3. To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting held on 14th June 2022

- The Chair asked Members who were online to confirm and noted that one member of the public had joined the meeting online.
- The Chair stated that the minutes from the previous meeting needed to be reviewed.
- The Chair reminded Members that they could not discuss matters of personnel which would be on pink papers and discussed at Personnel Committee meetings. The Deputy Town

146 Clerk/RFO advised Councillors that there were no pink papers at the meeting and that the minutes reflected discussions held in the public domain.

- The Chair apologised to the Deputy Town Clerk that his proposed amendment reference the minutes were not forwarded in writing.
- The Chair made the meeting aware that he was not commending the minutes for sign off as he felt that 'one or two' references should not have been included and that the purpose of the minutes was not to record conflict just resolutions, as stated at the October Full Council Meeting. The Deputy Town Clerk responded that while the minutes provide a record of decisions made, a summary of discussion is normally recorded as was advised at the October Full Council meeting.
- The Chair stated that he did not believe one or two matters were accurate.
- The Deputy Town Clerk referred to and reiterated the advice received from One Voice Wales; that The Chair advise Committee of the proposed amendments in order that Members who attended the meeting could agree or not agree to the proposal.
- Cllr I Spiller made Members aware that although he was not present at the last meeting, he believed the minutes to be too detailed and not a summary. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the minutes, recorded by the minute taker were a summary, not verbatim. Cllr I Spiller advised that he had no issue with the minute taker and did not dispute the accuracy of the minutes.
- Cllr S Easterbrook advised that the meeting was 4 months ago and added that it was useful for new Committee Members to have an overview. Cllr S Easterbrook stated that he was in support of both Councillors and Officers, and that transparency was important.
- Cllr A Felton stated that she was happy to accept the minutes as presented and proposed that the minutes be confirmed and signed as a true record.
- Cllr I Spiller advised that he was happy that the minutes had been taken accurately, but was not comfortable with page 3, bullet points 3 to 10 and proposed that bullet points 3 to 10 be removed and replaced with 'Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk, a discussion took place after which Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30pm'.
- The Chair stated that other Councillors have left previously without apology and not been recorded and that he had heard Cllr F Bletsoe say "I'm sorry I can't do this" prior to leaving the meeting.
- Cllr A Felton made reference to the power balance and stated that in this case the detail was important and that she did not agree that the minutes be redacted. The proposal was seconded by Cllr S Easterbrook. Cllr S Easterbrook apologised and withdrew his second to the proposal. There was no second to the proposal from Cllr A Felton.
- Cllr I Spiller referred to his prior proposal. The proposal was seconded by Cllr S Easterbrook.
- The Chair requested that The Deputy Town Clerk oversee a vote for or against the proposal from Cllr I Spiller. The Deputy Town Clerk recorded the following:

Cllr I Spiller	For
Cllr A Felton	Against
Cllr S Bletsoe	Abstain
Cllr S Easterbrook	For
Cllr T Wood	For

RESOLVED: That page 3, bullet points 3 to 10 be removed and replaced with 'Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk, a discussion took place after which Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30pm'.

4. To consider matters arising from the Regeneration Committee Meeting 14th June 2022

- Page 1 – Item 2 to correct Chair to read Vice Chair.

- ~~174~~ – Cllr S Easterbrook referenced another harpist that could be approached; Members agreed to defer the matter to when arrangements are being discussed.

Cllr F Bletsoe returned to the meeting

5. Blue Plaques

5.1 To discuss and agree dates for Blue Plaque unveilings for John Thomas and Caroline Williams

- The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that Council were awaiting a response from the Lieutenancy regarding the John Thomas blue plaque.
- The Deputy Town Clerk advised that considerable research had been undertaken to find any family of Caroline Williams without success and that the DSO was still awaiting services from the Electoral Office. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that if a response wasn't received from the Electoral Office, then Council would write to the house occupiers.
- The Deputy Town Clerk advised that both unveilings were a cross team project and with current workload and commitments to January 2023 the Caroline Williams unveiling could possibly be held in March 2023 and the John Thomas unveiling be considered and reviewed when a response is received. The Chair agreed.

5.2 To receive update and discuss Blue Plaque project for 2022/23

- Members discussed the Blue Plaque project for 2022/23 and likely timescales for completion.
- Members agreed that 2021/22 Blue Plaques should be installed before moving forward with new plaques. In light of timescales The Chair proposed that the 2022/23 budget be put back into general reserves and the project be reinstated for 2023/24.

6. To receive an update and discuss the Reverse Vending Machine project

- Cllr F Bletsoe advised Members that she had been working as an individual on this project and requested that the Reverse Vending Machine project be removed, and the budget put back into general reserves.

RESOLVED: That the Reverse Vending Machine project be removed, and the budget put back into general reserves.

7. To receive an update on the Community Notice board project

- The Deputy Town Clerk advised committee that a new quote had been obtained, and the lead time was 12-14 weeks. The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that this quote of £3,279.92 may have expired.
- The Deputy Town Clerk referred Members to an email received from BCBC highways:
 - a) There are some considerations beyond highways when installing such boards – Planning need to be consulted.
 - b) We would need to see details of construction / foundation requirements etc.
 - c) You would also need to check on the locations of underground apparatus – typically these can be attained by any appointed contractor.
 - d) With regards to BCBC installing the boards I am waiting for confirmation from the highway network manager and will respond as soon as I am able to advise further.
- After discussion The Chair confirmed that he would seek further guidance.

8. To receive an update and discuss the Red Telephone Kiosk project

- The Deputy Town Clerk asked Members how they would like to move forward with the project; she asked if the committee wished for the Facilities/Outdoor Team to facilitate winter planting.

- Cllr S Easterbrook asked for clarification on the original budget. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO confirmed that this was £2,000 originally intended to fund an art project.
- Cllr F Bletsoe proposed that The Mayor co-ordinate the volunteer winter planting and that the budget of £2,000 be vired to the wildflower and tree planting budget.

RESOLVED: That the Red Telephone Kiosk project budget of £2,000 be vired to the wildflower and tree planting budget.

9. To discuss Wildflower and Tree Planting project

- The Chair proposed that Councillors F Bletsoe, D Unwin and The Mayor undertake a walk around to identify areas for planting and inform the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO.
- The Deputy Town Clerk RFO advised that plating would normally be undertaken during the months of March to May and therefore budget may be earmarked if the project continues into the new financial year. She advised that further to areas for planting being identified, groundwork could be undertaken in the new year in readiness for plating in the spring.

10. To discuss replacement of damaged WWII Heritage Trail Panels in Bridgend Town Centre

- The Chair commented that the panels were not wearing well and suggested that a 3-year maintenance plan budget be put in place, with quotes being sought as a priority.
- The Mayor proposed that an information board be set up for HMS Urge. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO proposed that this suggestion be discussed under agenda item 13.
- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised that the Facilities Officer has sought quotes and as soon as workload allows will facilitate the replacement of the damaged Perspex.
- Members alternative materials for the panels and the addition of braille to the panels.

11. To discuss Welsh Government and National Lottery Heritage Fund: Local Places for Nature Grant Scheme

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised that the timeframe for grant application was the 28th of October 22, and that members note for discussion in July 2023.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration Committee discuss Welsh Government and National Lottery Heritage Fund: Local Places for Nature Grant Scheme in July 2023.

12. Budgets

1. To receive and discuss 2022/2023 Regeneration Committee Budget Review to date

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO referred members to the budget review to date spreadsheet; members reviewed and noted income and expenditure to date.

2. To consider 2022/2023 forecast spend to 31 March 2023 and identify earmarked projects

- The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO referred members to the forecast spend to 31 March 2023 spreadsheet.
- The Chair explained to new Councillors the background behind the business awards and proposed that the committee consider reinstating the business awards and a Mayors Award for 2023.
- Members reviewed each budget and associated project and proposed forecast income and expenditure; the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO updated the spreadsheet in situ.

13. To consider date for next meeting to discuss Regeneration projects and budget for 2023/24

RESOLVED: That the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO be given authority to call the next meeting date in line with precept setting timescales.

Meeting closed: 8.40 pm

SignedDate.....

Chair of Regeneration Committee



MINUTES OF BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Monday 12th December 2022

Time: 6.30 pm

The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021.

Chairperson: The Mayor (Cllr Tim Wood)

Staff: Mrs L Edwards (Town Clerk), Mrs D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer), Ms J Brown (Democratic Services Officer), Mrs D Elliott (Acting Community Engagement and Events Manager)

In Attendance:

Cllr Steven Bletsoe – In person
Cllr Nathan Deere – In Person
Cllr D Evans – In Person
Cllr Steven Easterbrook – Remote
Cllr C Webster – In Person
Cllr A Wathan – In Person
Cllr D Brown – In Person

Cllr Ann Lloyd – In Person
Cllr Freya Bletsoe – In Person
Cllr B Johnston - Remote
Cllr David Unwin – In Person
Cllr I Williams – In Person
Cllr A Fenton – Remote

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence

- Cllr A Morelli, Cllr I Spiller & Cllr M Blundell-Humphries
Cllr S Easterbrook was unable to hear the proceedings online and therefore gave apologies and left the meeting.

2. To Receive Declarations of Interests (if any) of Members in respect of the business to be transacted

- Cllr T Wood made a declaration of personal interest as a Bridgend Town Trader in matters pertaining to Town Centre business, any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor and in agenda item 19
- Cllr F Bletsoe made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor & motions
- Cllr S Bletsoe made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor
- Cllr A Wathan made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor

- Cllr D Unwin made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to Merthyr Mawr Community Council and Brynteg School
- Cllr I Williams made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor and in matters relating to Oldcastle School and Brynteg School
- Cllr A Felton made a declaration of personal interest in discussions relating to Agenda Item 12 because her husband works for Seren Books.

3. To receive questions or comments from Members of the Public (Standing Order 3(e) refers)

- There were no questions or comments from Members of the Public.

4. To confirm and sign minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 17th October 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 17th October 2022 be confirmed and signed.

5. To consider matters arising from the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 17th October 2022.

- There were no matters arising

6. To confirm and sign minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 22nd November 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 22nd November 2022 be confirmed and signed.

7. To consider matters arising from minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 22nd November 2022

- Page 339 – Cllr F Bletsoe enquired if there was any update on the invitation to South Wales Police to attend a future BTC meeting. It was noted there was no further update on this.
- It was noted that an invitation is also extended to the Town Centre Manager and this will be progressed as soon as possible.

8. To note for information Mayoral Announcements and Engagements:

- 25th November - SAS Night with Welsh Guards at United Service Club, Bridgend
- 26th November – Christmas Lights Switch on in Bridgend Town Centre
- 2nd December - Friends of Tenovus Fund Raising Concert, St Mary's Nolton Church
- 4th December – Christmas Lights Switch On, Westward Community Centre, Cefn Glas
- 7th December - Welsh Guards AGM & Christmas Dinner, The Caeffatri Restaurant & Bar
- 10th December - Cor Bro Ogwr Concert, All Saints Church, Porthcawl
- 10th December – Bridgend Town Council Brass Band Bus
- Heronsbridge Carol Concert attended by Deputy Mayor

9. Planning

1. To fill one vacancy on the BTC Planning Committee

RESOLVED: That Cllr D Evans be elected to the Planning Committee for 2022/23

2. To receive draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 5th December 2022

- Chair of Planning Committee referred to application P/22/756/FUL regarding Bridgend Police Station in Cheapside and the development of the site for Bridgend College. He explained that the Planning Committee had agreed to submit a holding objection because the Council was awaiting a response regarding a public exhibition at Carnegie House.
- Chair of Planning Committee suggested that given an exhibition will not take place before the full planning application process, Bridgend Town Council may wish to consider submitting the comments already submitted to the agent as part of the pre-application process in response to this application. This was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: That the comments already submitted to the agent as part of the pre-application process in response to the development of land at Bridgend Police Station & former Cheapside multi storey car park Cheapside Bridgend be submitted in response to planning application P/22/756/FUL.

- Chair of Planning Committee referred to application P/22/85/RLX regarding Coed Parc. He explained that the Planning Committee had agreed to submit a holding objection whilst they seek the views of local residents. Chair explained he had since spoken to residents and provided his view on the application, which was to submit no objection in principle, subject to a number of observations including references to bus routes and the impact on air quality.
- Cllr S Bletsoe declared an interest in this item as a BCBC Member and referred to an email sent by the BCBC Group Manager for Planning & Development Services and explained that residents in Phase 1 of the development have contacted BCBC Members about this application. He noted that a site meeting is planned for early January and that this is an extremely contentious issue. It was noted that he would feedback any further information through the Town Clerk and the Chair of Planning Committee.
- Cllr A Wathan highlighted that the Town Council would be supporting the application but with reservations. He noted that the proposed route for HGV lorries is a walking route for young families and therefore suggested that the Council should therefore submit an objection.
- Cllr F Bletsoe supported the comments from Cllr Wathan and commented that the Council cannot support with reservations and should object to this application.
- The Chair of Planning Committee, Cllr D Unwin, explained that the developer had recognised that the residents of Walters Road had concerns and suggested that this proposal was conciliatory. He acknowledged that the residents in Walters Road now appear to have a better deal, however the residents of Phase 1 of the development are not happy.
- Cllr S Bletsoe referred to condition 19 of the planning consent for this development in relation to an Access Plan. He explained that this plan should have been agreed before Phase 1 was built and therefore the development is in contravention of the planning approval. It was noted that the Phase 3 of the development is now ready.
- The Town Clerk highlighted the deadline for the submission of a comment on this application and asked Council to make a decision on whether to submit an objection or not. She explained that if Council submit an objection it will need to clarify the material considerations for an objection.
- Cllr S Bletsoe announced that he would abstain from the BTC decision on this application.

- Cllr F Bletsoe highlighted that the developer is in breach of a condition of the planning consent and proposed that Council submit an objection to this application for the reasons set out as concerns by Cllr D Unwin.
- Cllr A Wathan declared an interest in this item as a BCBC Member.

RESOLVED: That Bridgend Town Council does not support application P/22/85/RLX due to the access plan and submits an objection for the following reasons:

- a) The understanding of the current bus services within the area is flawed and there is too much emphasis placed on this aspect of provision for site workers.
- b) Attention to the listed building aspect on site requires regular attention by BCBC to ensure all aspects are being respected relating to the planning permission granted.
- c) Site information boards proposed for a prominent Park Street location must show precise details of contact to the developer in respect of any potential complaints.
- d) HGV deliveries via the Park Street entrance must not commence before 10am on any day due to current and regular congestion of this section of Park Street. Any extra vehicles waiting for a 9am entry would cause huge congestion at this peak period. By 10am, the flow of traffic could better cope with such vehicle movements.
- e) Concerns regarding air quality – How will such extra traffic movements impact air quality considering the problems already identified in this area?
- f) A vehicle booking system regime has been relaxed. There is still a major need for this to remain and it should be reinstated.
- g) Wheel washing is stated for the Park Street exit. Why is there none in place for the Walters Road exit? Any delivery vehicle on a building site will encounter mud so this should be considered for the Walters Road exit as well. There should be no relaxation on landscaping. There is no justified reason for any detrimental downgrade of this well-established environment.

Bridgend Town Council reserves the right to attend any site meeting that may be called and to attend any subsequent Development Control meeting and speak as may be appropriate.

- Cllr D Unwin referred to page 3 of the minutes in relation to a pre-planning application Consultation for the demolition of Sunnyside House and a proposed development of 65 one and two-bedroom apartments and associated works.
- The Chair advised that a public meeting had been held which he attended, along with other Councillors and residents. He explained that at the meeting, attendees viewed the plans and discussed the following points:
 - The over intensification of the area
 - The height of the development
 - Car Parking and lack of provision
 - Misleading reference to local bus services that are no longer running
 - Could have an impact on the fire station which is next door
 - The impact on local schools
 - No room for landscaping
 - Further impact on air quality
 - Section 106
 - The consideration of future generations
 - The inadequate entry point for traffic
- The Chair advised that a response is required by the 16th December 2022 and presented a proposed objection for Council consideration.

- Members agreed that they fully opposed this development and supported the response proposed by Cllr D Unwin.

RESOLVED: to provide the following comments in response to the pre-planning consultation for the redevelopment of Sunnyside House:

In principle, as the application stands, the Council fully opposes the submission for the following reasons:

- a) This proposed development is alongside a well-established street of dwellings which would be entirely overpowered and overshadowed by such a high storey development and therefore constitutes complete over intensification of the site.
- b) The height of the proposed development is totally out of keeping with surrounding and opposite commercial buildings.
- c) It totally overpowers the Fire Station alongside and could impact on the essential operations of this vital community service.
- d) Lack of major car parking on site for such a development is unacceptable. The developer is paying way too much attention to Welsh Government diktats on future car parking needs and nowhere near enough to the realities of everyday life; now and in the foreseeable future.
- e) The report contains wholly misleading statements about bus services on Angel Street. There are in fact none, so this aspect of public transport holds no credence.
- f) Impact on local schools has not been addressed. What Section 106 offers will be made?
- g) The development is close to the most polluted street, Park Street, in the BCBC area. How does such a development address these problems?
- h) What landscaping provision will be made to enhance the area? We see none that overwhelmingly improves the current area.
- i) This area of Bridgend Town is already under intense pressure from a major promised development on the other side of the road – currently a derelict site. How can this additional development be justified by the same developer?

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 5th December 2022.

10. Regeneration

1. To receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 24th October 2022

- The Chair of Regeneration Committee, Cllr S Bletsoe, noted he would like to raise one issue with the Deputy Clerk and minute taker regarding these minutes.
- Cllr F Bletsoe declared a prejudicial interest in this agenda item and left the Chamber.
- Cllr S Bletsoe referred to page 2 of the minutes and in reference to wording regarding Cllr F Bletsoe leaving the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022, he stated that he believed he said that Cllr F Bletsoe had said 'I can't do this, I'm leaving' as opposed to that of the minutes which state "I'm sorry I can't do this" Cllr S Bletsoe requested that this is recorded in the minutes.
- The Deputy Clerk explained that the minutes reflected the notes taken by herself and the minute taker. She explained that the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting would be presented at the next Regeneration Committee meeting and if Cllr S Bletsoe's proposal to amend the minutes is seconded and approved at the meeting, the minutes can be changed.

- Cllr A Felton commented that she felt that the previous redaction of the minutes was problematic and had impacted 'tone and intent'. She expressed concern that the changes to the minutes could be construed as interfering with the minutes.
- Cllr S Bletsoe requested that his comments are recorded in the minutes.
- The Deputy Clerk enquired where Cllr S Bletsoe wanted his comments to be recorded.
- The Mayor was asked if he recalled what was said at the meeting. The Mayor, Cllr T Wood could not recall either way.
- Cllr S Bletsoe confirmed that he was happy for his comments to be recorded in the minutes of this full Council meeting and that he believed he had commented in the October Regeneration Committee meeting that Cllr F Bletsoe had said 'I can't do this I'm leaving'.
- It was agreed that the minute taker will check her notes.
- Cllr S Bletsoe presented the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 24th October 2022 to Council for consideration.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 24th October 2022

Cllr F Bletsoe returned to the meeting

2. To consider Regeneration Projects and agree budget required for 2023/24

- The Chair of Regeneration Committee explained why the meeting scheduled in November to discuss the budget had been cancelled.
- The Deputy Clerk explained that at the Regeneration Committee meeting in October, the committee had reviewed the expenditure to date and forecast spend to the end of the financial year.
- It was noted that it was the view of the committee to finish existing projects and continue with the Blue Plaque Scheme for 2023/24.
- £2,000 was proposed as a budget for Regeneration projects for 2023/24. This would cover £1,300 for three new blue plaques and a small budget for an event.
- Cllr S Bletsoe commented that next year's Blue Plaque Scheme could build on relationships with HMS Urge families.
- Cllr F Bletsoe added that Brian Lloyd, who was killed on a special operations mission operating from HMS Urge, was from Bridgend and had connections to Park Street and Merthyr Mawr Road. It was noted that he had won a school cup which is currently on loan from his nephew to the Town Council and is currently in the possession of the Mayor. It was proposed that a blue plaque for 2023/24 is dedicated to Brian Lloyd. This was seconded by The Mayor, Cllr T Wood.
- Cllr A Wathan suggested that the officer's rank and the HMS Urge crest should be included on the plaque. This was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: To allocate £2,000 for Blue Plaques in 2023/24 and to dedicate a BTC Blue Plaque for 2023/24 to Sub-Lieutenant Brian Lloyd, a resident from Bridgend who lost his life on HMS Urge.

- The Deputy Clerk explained that the committee had also briefly discussed reinstating the business awards and a Mayors Award for 2023 however no budget had been discussed for this.

- Members considered a budget for tree planting and maintenance and Cllr D Unwin proposed a budget of £3,000, which was seconded by The Mayor.

RESOLVED: To allocate a budget of £3,000 for tree planting in 2023/24

- Cllr I Williams enquired where the trees would be planted. No decision was made regarding locations.
- Members discussed an HMS Urge information panel. It was suggested that the Council should start the planning process for an HMS Urge information panel and if planning permission is granted, budget could be allocated from the contingency fund for this project or budget could be allocated in 2024/25.

RESOLVED: To defer a project to develop an information panel for HMS Urge to the Regeneration Committee without a budget, to be considered at a later date.

- Cllr D Unwin proposed that the Tourism & Signage budget should be nil for the next financial year and suggested that BCBC Members could take this work forward.

11. Community Engagement & Well-being Committee

1. To receive draft minutes of the Community Engagement & Well-being Committee meeting held on 17th November 2022

- Chair of Community Engagement & Well-being Committee, Cllr I Williams, presented the minutes to Council.
- Cllr S Bletsoe referred to page 4 of the minutes and commented that the Town Council should be very proud of the Brass Band Bus.
- Deputy Clerk informed members that there had been a Facebook comment saying that Santa and the Car in Wildmill was disappointing as the car went past quite quickly. The Acting Community Engagement Manager said that this comment had been taken on board and this would need to be reviewed for next year.

RESOLVED: Community Engagement and Wellbeing Committee to consider alternative provision for the Christmas event in Wildmill for 2023.

- Members considered if the Council should make plans for an event to mark the King's coronation. It was proposed that the Council should establish what other Town and Community Councils are doing and to discuss this in early 2023.

RESOLVED: To include agenda items to discuss the King's coronation at the January 2023 Town Council meeting.

- Cllr A Wathan explained that he was assisting the BCBC Armed Forces Champion in discussions to celebrate Armed Forces Day 2023 in conjunction with Bridgend Town Council and referred to the Rhondda Armed Forces Day brochure.
- Cllr T Wood added that at a dinner he had attended with the Welsh Guards, members of this organisation had expressed views in favour of a parade. He explained that the Ogmere branch are one of the biggest branches and he referred to the Army Benevolent Fund.
- Cllr I Williams noted that Hugh James Solicitors had expressed an interest in providing sponsorship for the Wartime Bridgend event and therefore may be interested in supporting an Armed Forces Day event.

- The Deputy Clerk advised that Armed Forces Day is on Saturday 24th June 2023. She explained that it would be difficult to amalgamate a parade through the town on the same day as the Wartime Bridgend event due to the logistics of the stalls etc. It was also noted that the Council would need to consider the availability of the military groups to participate in a parade.
- Members were asked to consider the timings and resource required to plan a Wartime Bridgend event and an Armed Forces Day parade.
- It was noted that a budget had not been allocated for an Armed Forces Day parade and that the Remembrance parade cost approximately £4,000.
- It was suggested that the event could be organised as a joint project with BCBC. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that one organisation would need to take responsibility from an insurance and health and safety perspective.
- Cllr I Williams suggested that the Council contact Hugh James Solicitors about sponsorship or a donation to both the Wartime Bridgend event and Armed Forces Day parade, prior to the January Town Council meeting.

RESOLVED: To include an agenda item to discuss Armed Forces Day at the January 2023 Town Council meeting.

*The Mayor announced a short recess at 8pm
Cllr B Johnston left the meeting at 8pm
The meeting resumed at 8.15pm*

12. To consider use of Carnegie House in 2023 and beyond:

- 1. Letter from Bridgend History Society regarding a project called “Bridgend Through Time”**
 - The Town Clerk referred to the letter and suggested that a Working Group and a member of staff could arrange to meet with a representative from the History Society to seek further information.
 - Cllr Unwin highlighted that the Bridgend Standing Stone should be a starting point for a history project. He explained that the Standing Stone is older than the Old Stone Bridge.
 - Members spoke of the need to clarify which rooms would be required and the time and frequency of the events.
 - Cllr F Bletsoe proposed a letter is sent to the Bridgend History Society to seek clarity and bring further information back to Council.
 - The Acting Community Engagement & Events Manager added that she would also need to enquire what facilities they would require in terms of access to laptops etc.
 - Cllr N Deere highlighted that the capacity for building has been reduced to 50 people.

RESOLVED: Cllr C Webster, Cllr M Blundell- Humphries and the Acting Community Engagement & Events Manager meet with Bridgend History Society to seek further information regarding this letter and report back to Council.

- 2. Letter from Seren Books regarding Carnegie House being used as an anchor institute for the National Poetry Library of Wales**

- Cllr A Felton declared a personal interest in this agenda item and explained that she could help seek further information regarding this request if needed.
- Members highlighted that the Council would need to be aware of the finer details of the request such as how would it be staffed and when it would be open to the public.

- Cllr F Bletsoe highlighted that the building is no longer a library and queried how it would work.

RESOLVED: Cllr A Felton and the Acting Community Engagement & Events Manager to meet with Seren Books to seek further information regarding using Carnegie House as an anchor institute for the National Poetry Library of Wales and to report back to Council.

3. Report on Heritage Space Development at Carnegie House

- Town Clerk referred to a previous decision by the Town Council to develop a flexible Heritage Space at Carnegie House. She presented a report on the feasibility of this project and explained that if the Town Council would like to use Carnegie House as a local heritage space, the first phase of the project would be to produce a project plan which could include consideration of the following:
 - What type of heritage space does the Council want to create
 - What areas of Carnegie House will be used
 - How will the space be used
 - How often will the heritage space be open to the public
 - How this could work with the current use as an Art & Culture space
 - What capital works will be required
 - What equipment will be required
 - How could the project be funded
 - How the heritage space could be resourced
- The Clerk reported that there are a number of options for funding that can be explored, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF). She advised that she had liaised with the BCBC Conservation Team and they would be able to facilitate a meeting with their contact at the AHF however a project proposal would be required in order to make a grant application.
- The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council could consider appointing a Heritage Interpretation Consultant to research, design, and oversee the implementation of a compelling and interactive heritage project for Carnegie House from initial project development and grant application, through to the delivery phase, pending funding.
- The Town Clerk explained that the project brief could be to interpret the town's history in a vibrant, interactive, inclusive and engaging way and develop a plan for a Heritage Space at Carnegie House. She noted that the proposals would need to be developed into a fully costed plan and provided a list of Heritage Space development consultants for consideration by Council.
- Cllr A Wathan suggested that the Council should consider this for next financial year.
- Cllr Unwin noted that no budget had been allocated for this in the draft budget for 2023-24 but suggested that some of the companies provided in the report could be contacted to establish estimated costs.
- Cllr F Bletsoe commented that she was mindful that the Council have lots going on with the damp situation and the Town Hall and therefore suggested that this is an agenda item for consideration next year.
- Members agreed not to allocate a budget towards this project in 2023-24.

RESOLVED: To note the report and defer consideration of a heritage space at Carnegie House for another year.

4. To consider any additional budgetary requirements in respect of the use of Carnegie House in 2023 and beyond that has not been discussed at the Community Engagement & Well-being Committee meeting

RESOLVED: No additional budget for the use of Carnegie House in 2023 and beyond is required for financial year 2023-24.

13. Facilities

1. To receive draft minutes of the Facilities Committee meeting held on 24th November 2022

- Cllr A Wathan presented the minutes of the Facilities Committee meeting held on 24th November 2022 to Council.
- Cllr F Bletsoe enquired if the floral displays are temporary displays or permanent displays.
- It was confirmed that the displays are temporary seasonal displays in flower towers and the Town Council will not be arranging hanging baskets in the future.
- Cllr F Bletsoe enquired if a flower tower could be placed in an area outside the Coity Castle pub in future. This was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: To investigate the possibility of locating a BTC flower tower in the area outside the Coity Castle pub.

- The Chair of Facilities Committee referred to issues at the Great Western Avenue Allotment Site and proposed that the Council discuss the next matter in confidence.

RESOLVED: That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of agenda item 16 as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

IN CONFIDENCE

- The Chair of Facilities Committee explained that the committee had decided that there should be no site representatives or site contacts for the site and instead, all contact should be in writing via the staff.
- Cllr N Deere declared a personal interest as a plot holder at Great Western Avenue Allotment Site.
- Cllr S Bletsoe highlighted the unnecessary drain on staff resource. He informed Members that the Brackla allotments are managed by a separate body and enquired if this would be a possibility for Bridgend Town Council.
- The Town Clerk noted that further investigations would be required to look at the legal situation in respect of the lease agreements.
- Cllr F Bletsoe provided information about how the rent is managed at the Brackla allotment site and noted that Brackla Community Council have relinquished the lease.
- Cllr D Unwin noted that the Council would lose the income from the allotments if the lease were relinquished.
- Members discussed seeking advice on outsourcing the allotments and whether this should be for the GWA site or all sites.

RESOLVED: To seek advice regarding the outsourcing of the Town Council allotments.

RESOLVED: To permit Members of the public to re-join the meeting.

RESOLVED: To seek advice regarding the outsourcing of the Town Council allotments.

14. Town Hall Project

1. To receive Town Hall Refurbishment Project update and discuss next steps

- The Town Clerk presented a report regarding the Town Hall Refurbishment Project and referred to an email sent to Members regarding the Isolation Switch to be installed at the Town Hall. The latest progress was briefed as follows:
 - It was noted that the installation of the Isolation Switch would begin on 8th December and that power will be reconnected before the Christmas break.
 - The Town Clerk advised that there has been a gas leak at the property and she is awaiting a report regarding the repairs required and associated costs.
 - The gas has been temporarily switched off and the radiators have been drained.
 - The contractor is making enquiries about whether a generator is required to ensure there is frost protection for the heating/pipes.
 - Tents from the area where the rough sleepers set up a camp have gone. The area needs to be cleared of rubbish (including sharps) and the Heras fencing will be moved to the perimeter of the land to prevent people accessing the site through the bushes.
 - The Clerk provided quotes for the rubbish clearance. Members appointed a contractor and delegated this to the Clerk to arrange prior to Christmas.
 - The Clerk provided an update on boulders to prevent the campsite being re-established. Members agreed that these were required before Christmas if possible and delegated authority to the Clerk to make the necessary arrangements.
 - The door access/fob system has been reviewed, amended and agreed. The door to the Maintenance Depot needs a different type of access system which is required for Health & Safety purposes. Members considered Variation Item 6 – Maintenance Doors at a cost of £1,565.67. This was agreed by Council.
 - The Fire Panel is very old, is out of service and needs to be replaced. In consultation with the Chair of Finance Committee, Chair of Facilities Committee and Facilities Manager it has been agreed that the replacement is progressed in order to avoid further issues and delays. The new alarm panel will work with the existing smoke detectors and alarm system installed throughout the building. Members were asked to consider Variation Item 21 at a cost of £1,273.44. This was agreed by Council.
 - The commissioning of all electrical equipment will be completed by 16th January 2023.
 - Carpets and flooring will be laid from 16th – 20th January.
 - A leak in the roof above the Council Chamber must be repaired prior to the carpet being fitted. The Facilities Manager will contact the company that have been appointed to repair the damage to the roof that was caused prior to the refurbishment works, to enquire if they can also repair the new leak. If this company is unavailable before 16th January, the contractor for the Town Hall refurbishment can provide a quote. Members agreed to delegate authority to the Clerk in liaison with the Chair of Finance Committee and Chair of Facilities Committee to arrange the roof repair as soon as possible.
 - The Clerk explained that the new staff entrance at the rear of the building does not have access control. She explained that this posed a security and fire safety issue in relation to access. Members reviewed and discussed a quote for the installation of access control and emergency release for this door however it was agreed that it

would be more cost effective to have a thumb screw for this door. The Clerk was asked to enquire if this proposal would meet fire regulations and if so, seek a quote for the installation of a thumb screw for this doorway.

- The contractor has been requested to provide a quote for the relocation of the Mayoral Board from Carnegie House and installation at the Town Hall.
- All final decorating works, snag list works and cleaning will be undertaken between 23rd January – 4th February.
- The building will be ready to hand back to BTC on Monday 6th February 2023.
- The Council was requested to review variation quotes that had been circulated to Members

RESOLVED: To note the report from the Clerk regarding the Town Hall refurbishment project, delegate authority for time sensitive matters and approve the quotes for the additional access control for the maintenance depot doors at a cost of £1,565.67 and a replacement fire panel at a cost of £1,273.44.

15. Personnel (In Confidence)

- 1. To consider draft minutes of the Extraordinary Personnel Committee meeting held on 28th October 2022**
- 2. To consider draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 18th November 2022**

RESOLVED: That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of agenda item 16 as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

IN CONFIDENCE**Personnel (In Confidence)****1. To consider draft minutes of the Extraordinary Personnel Committee meeting held on 28th October 2022**

- The Chair of Personnel Committee, Cllr A Wathan, provided an overview of the purpose of the meeting and commended the minutes to Council. There were no questions.

RESOLVED: To note the draft minutes of the Extraordinary Personnel Committee meeting held on 28th October 2022.

2. To consider draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 18th November 2022

RESOLVED: To note the draft minutes Personnel Committee meeting held on 18th November 2022.

RESOLVED: To permit Members of the public to re-join the meeting.

RESOLVED: To note the draft minutes of the Extraordinary Personnel Committee meeting held on 28th October 2022.

RESOLVED: To note the draft minutes Personnel Committee meeting held on 18th November 2022.

Cllr D Unwin referred to the time in relation to the remaining agenda items and proposed that agenda items 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22 & 23 are deferred to the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

16. To discuss a motion submitted by The Mayor, Cllr T Wood:

‘To discuss purchasing BTC ties and scarfs for councillors’

- Cllr S Bletsoe suggested that the Town Council grant authority for Councillors to purchase these at their own cost with use of the BTC logo.
- Cllr Unwin’s proposal to defer agenda items was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 16 to be considered at the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

17. To discuss a motion submitted by The Mayor, Cllr T Wood:

‘To consider how Bridgend Town Council can replicate the Maesteg Christmas parade for next year’

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 17 to be considered at the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

18. Finance

1. To receive a balance of accounts and payments since last meeting

RESOLVED: Accounts paid, read, and approved by Members.

2. To receive draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 6th December 2022

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 6th December 2022.

3. To consider the general reserves forecast for the year ending 31st March 2023

RESOLVED: To receive and note the general reserves forecast for the year ending 31st March 2023.

4. To consider a draft budget, general reserves allocation and precept recommendation for 2023/24

- The Chair of Finance Committee explained that each committee had reviewed its budgets and proposed a draft budget for 2023/24. The draft budget had then been prepared based on these discussions and had been thoroughly reviewed by the Finance Committee.
- It was noted that the Finance Committee propose a nil increase in the precept for 2023/24 by using general reserves to offset the budget. This would leave the reserves figure at approximately two months of expenditure.
- Cllr S Bletsoe thanked the Finance Committee, Cllr D Unwin and the staff for their work and fully supported the draft budget. This was also supported by Cllr I Williams.

- The Mayor sought the views of Members and confirmed that the Council unanimously approve the draft budget and use general reserves to offset the budget not to increase the Bridgend Town Council precept for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: To approve a total budget of £ £830,120.74 for Bridgend Town Council for financial year 2023/24 and to offset forecast income of £14, 757.36 and general reserves of £177,383.75 to keep the precept at £637,979.63 which is a 0% increase for 2023/24.

19. To receive a report from BCBC to the Town & Community Council Forum regarding a Community Governance Review

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 19 to the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

**20. To discuss a motion submitted by The Mayor, Cllr T Wood:
'To consider how the Remembrance Poppy wreaths can be recycled'**

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 20 to the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

**21. To discuss a motion submitted by The Mayor, Cllr T Wood:
'To consider additional BTC Facebook posts'**

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 21 to the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

**22. To discuss a motion submitted by Cllr D Unwin:
'To consider the weekly news items issued by BCBC Media Office and to establish ways in which they can be curtailed and be more relevant to the true situations and foundations of making claims put into the public domain'**

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 22 to the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

**23. To discuss a motion submitted by Cllr D Unwin:
'To consider ways in which BCBC Officers can be made to understand that giving Town & Community Councils a matter of a few days notice of consultation exercises is no way to exercise democracy. Six weeks must be a minimum period'**

RESOLVED: To defer agenda item 23 to the Town Council meeting in January 2023.

Meeting closed at 9.36 pm.

Signed

Date

Mayor



MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL REGENERATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Details:

Date: Monday 3rd July 2023

Time: 6.30pm

Location: The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting at both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021

Staff: D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk and RFO), K Davies (Facilities and Project Officer)

In attendance:

Cllr Steven Bletsoe (Chair) – In person

Cllr Freya Bletsoe (Mayor) – In person

Cllr Steven Easterbrook – Apologies

Cllr Allison Felton – online

Cllr Ann Lloyd – In person

Cllr C Webster – In person

Cllr Tim Wood – In person

1. To appoint Chair of Regeneration Committee for 2023/24

The Deputy Clerk requested nominations for Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2023/24.

Cllr S Bletsoe nominated Cllr T Wood which was seconded by Cllr A Lloyd.

RESOLVED: Cllr T Wood was duly elected as Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2023/24.

2. To appoint Deputy Chair of Regeneration Committee for 2023/24

The Deputy Clerk requested nominations for Deputy Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2023/24. Cllr A Lloyd nominated Cllr C Webster which was seconded by Cllr S Bletsoe.

RESOLVED: Cllr C Webster was duly elected as Deputy Chair of the Regeneration Committee for 2023/24.

3. To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr S Easterbrook.

4. Declarations of Interest (if any) of Members

- Cllr T Wood made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor and as a Bridgend Town Trader in matters pertaining to Town Centre business.
- Cllr S Bletsoe made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor.
- Cllr C Webster made a declaration of personal interest in agenda item 16.

- Cllr F Bletsoe made a declaration of personal interest in any discussions relating to BCBC as a BCBC Councillor.

5. To confirm and sign Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting 14th June 2022.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting held on 14th June 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true and correct record.

6. To consider Matters Arising from the Regeneration Committee Meeting 14th June 2022

- There were no matters arising from the minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting held on 14th June 2022.

7. To confirm and sign Minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting 24th October 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Regeneration Committee Meeting held on 24th October 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true and correct record.

8. To consider Matters Arising from the Regeneration Committee Meeting 24th October 2022

- Page 3 – item 5.1 The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the unveiling of the Caroline Williams Blue Plaque will be held on International Women’s Day 2024 (Friday 8th March 2024) with a reception held at St Johns House. She explained that all avenues to confirm the precise location of residence for the siting of the plaque had been exhausted. Cllr S Bletsoe stated that given the current condition of the Chapel at the bottom of Newcastle Hill he wouldn’t support the siting of the plaque there. Members received and reviewed all the information received to date and The Mayor proposed that the siting of the plaque remain at the original proposed location of 12 Newcastle Hill; she added that the unveiling could be tied in with a Meet the Mayor Event as part of International Women’s Day. Members agreed and it was proposed that the High Sheriff be invited. The Facilities and Project Officer advised that she would liaise with the residents of the property in relation to suitable location/height of the plaque installation and unveiling times.
- Page 4 – The Deputy Clerk confirmed that two of the WWII Heritage Trail panels have been repaired and extra acrylic panels delivered in case any front panels are damaged again; she advised that the double sided panel will be attended to in due course. Members discussed the proposed alterations to the panels including the addition of Braille and agreed that this be deferred to the next Regeneration Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Caroline Williams Blue Plaque be installed at 12 Newcastle Hill with a reception held at St Johns House.

RESOLVED: That a Meet the Mayor Event be held on International Women’s Day in conjunction with the Caroline Williams Blue Plaque unveiling.

9. Community Notice Boards

9.1 To receive update on purchase and installation of Community Notice Boards

- The Deputy Clerk asked if item 10.1 To receive update on installation of Commemorative Benches could be discussed in conjunction with agenda item 9.1; Members agreed.
- The Mayor asked for the project be prioritised due to the ongoing time the installation is taking to complete.
- The Facilities & projects Officer gave an overview of the outcome of discussions with BCBC Highways Department and a recent site visit that had been undertaken to determine precise locations for the installation of notice boards and benches.

- ¹⁶⁸ Members reviewed and discussed locations for the Newcastle ward bench and notice board; committee agreed that the grass verge area adjacent to the recreation centre car park is a suitable location for both the bench and notice board subject to underground services checks.
- Members reviewed and discussed locations for the Oldcastle ward notice board; committee noted that the location discussed was not the original suggestion for the notice board. Committee agreed that the Facilities and Projects Officer reinvestigate locations for the Oldcastle ward in relation to underground services around the original proposed location.
- Members reviewed and discussed locations for the Morfa ward bench and notice board; committee reviewed the proposed installation of a bench and notice board near a school and the issues highlighted and agreed that it is not a suitable location. Members proposed the installation of the bench where the previous bench was located and suggested that the notice board could be installed next to the bench; Members agreed subject to underground services checks and permission from the landowners.
- Members reviewed and discussed locations for the Oldcastle ward bench; committee discussed the original proposed location and issues raised with skateboarding on a previous bench installed in that area. Further to discussion Members proposed that the bench be installed near Westward Community Centre, Llangewydd Road. Members concluded that the bench could be installed in the grassed area near to a recent planting scheme subject to underground services checks and permission from the landowners.
- The Facilities and Project Officer queried if an additional notice board was required for the Town Hall as planning permission could be applied for, for all four notice boards together. Members agreed and deferred review of location and design to the Town Hall Working Group.
- The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed the allocation of £4,000 budget for the three Notice Boards and referred to the last quote in January 2022 of £3,279.92; Members noted that the cost may have now increased.
- The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the three Benches were purchased and delivered and that there was no budget allocated for installation; this was noted by Members.

9.2 To investigate Bridgend Town Council utilising Waunscil Avenue and Wildmill Notice Boards (deferred from previous meeting)

- The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that BTC require permission from the notice board owners to utilise the boards. She explained that in order to progress, staff need the exact locations and total number of boards proposed. The Deputy Clerk advised that she believes some of the Wildmill boards were installed by Communities First and are locked. Members agreed that they would investigate the exact locations, number of boards and point of contact to move forward. Members also agreed that in addition to staff a councillor(s) is appointed to each notice board to assist with adding new and removing old notices/information.

10. Benches

- This item was discussed under agenda item 9.1 above.

11. Blue Plaques

11.1 To discuss Blue Plaque Project for 2023/24

- The Deputy Clerk confirmed the allocation of £2,000 budget for Blue Plaques in 2023/24.
- Members discussed and proposed three recipients of a BTC Blue Plaque for 2023/24:

1	Recipient: Sub-Lieutenant Brian Lloyd To be discussed under agenda items 11.2 and 11.3.
2	Recipient: William Evans (Wil Ifan)

169	William Evans (22 April 1883 – 16 July 1968), better known by his bardic name of Wil Ifan, was a Welsh poet who served as Archdruid of the National Eisteddfod of Wales from 1947 to 1950. In 1909 he became the minister of the English Congregationalist church in Bridgend. Apart from time spent in the Richmond Road English Congregational Church, Cardiff, between 1917 and 1925, Evans spent the rest of his life in Bridgend. Plaque Design: bilingual sign with red, white and green around the edge to highlight the Welsh provenance or a dragon or Welsh flag, costs depending. Proposed Location: Tuskers/Phoenix Building, Wyndham Street
3	Recipient: Kee Club Where bands played in the 1960's such as Pink Floyd in March 1969, Roy Harper, Pete Brown's Battered Ornaments, the original Yes, The Nice, Third Ear Band and Edgar Broughton. Plaque Design: tbc. Proposed Location: Market Street (alleyway adjacent to 35 Market Street).

RESOLVED: To investigate the installation of Blue Plaques for William Evans (Wil Ifan) and the Kee Club for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: To carry out public engagement in 2023/24 to seek proposals from members of the public for three Blue Plaque recipients to be installed in 2024/25.

11.2 To discuss and agree the wording for the blue plaque for Sub-Lieutenant Brian Lloyd

- The Deputy Clerk advised members that Cllr A Wathan suggested that the Officer's rank and the HMS Urge Crest should be included on the plaque which was agreed by Members at the December 2022 Full council Meeting.
- Cllr S Bletsoe confirmed the name and rank as follows: Sub Lt Brian NT Lloyd Royal Navy
- Members requested that the plaque wording be:

Bridgend Town Council
(Outline of HMS Urge in white)
Sub Lt Brian NT Lloyd Royal Navy
Son of Bridgend 1920-1941
K.I.A. Sicily, serving HMS Urge

11.3 To discuss and agree an appropriate location for the blue plaque for Sub-Lieutenant Brian Lloyd and discuss the logistics for the unveiling ceremony.

- Cllr S Bletsoe advised that he visited the last known Bridgend address for Brian Lloyd, 54 Park Street, and spoke to a resident in relation to installing the plaque on their property; the resident welcomed the approach and Cllr S Bletsoe advised the resident that the Town Council will contact them officially in due course.
- The Facilities and Project Officer advised that they had undertaken a search and established the property ownership in readiness to contact the property owners if agreed by Members. The Regeneration Committee agreed this location and resolved to formally seek the landowners' permission to install the Blue Plaque on their property.
- The Deputy Town Clerk referred Members to the proposal from Cllr S Bletsoe to install the plaque on a pillar at the entrance to the property because the house is very set back from the road and therefore may not be seen by the public.
- Members were made aware of and discussed a safety concern around the unveiling ceremony due to the proximity of the busy road and narrow pavement. It was noted that there is no pavement on the street opposite, however, there are long driveways leading to both 54 Park

¹⁷⁰Street and their next-door neighbours 56 Park Street; Members proposed, provided permission is given from both property owners for invited guests to stand in this location for the ceremony.

- Committee confirmed the plaque unveiling date of Friday 10th November 2023 prior to the BTC Remembrance events; the Deputy Clerk advised that the plaque must be received in October 2023 to enable installation and that it would be ordered as a priority.
- Members confirmed that the HMS Urge families will be invited to the unveiling and requested that the Lord Lieutenant and BCBC Armed Forces Champion are also invited.
- Committee discussed the creation of a Blue Plaque Trail as a future project and the addition of QR codes to link to further information on the BTC website going forward.

RESOLVED: that the Brian Lloyd Blue Plaque wording is Bridgend Town Council, (Outline of HMS Urge in white), Sub Lt Brian NT Lloyd Royal Navy, Son of Bridgend 1920-1941, K.I.A. Sicily, serving HMS Urge.

RESOLVED: that a letter be sent to the owners of 54 Park Street to seek approval for the installation of the Brian Lloyd Blue Plaque on a pillar at the entrance of their property; in addition, permission is sought for the use of their driveway to accommodate invited guests at an unveiling event on Friday 10th November 2023.

RESOLVED: that a letter be sent to the residents of 56 Park Street to seek permission for the possible use of their driveway to accommodate invited guests at a Blue Plaque unveiling event at 54 Park Street, on Friday 10th November 2023.

RESOLVED: that the Brian Lloyd Blue Plaque be unveiled on Friday 10th November 2023 and invited guests will include the HMS Urge families, the Lord Lieutenant and BCBC Armed Forces Champion.

12. To discuss Wildflower and Tree Planting Project for 2023/24

- The Deputy Clerk confirmed the allocation of £3,000 budget for the Wildflower and Tree Planting Project for 2023/24.
- The Deputy Clerk updated Committee of discussions held in relation to Wildflower and Tree Planting at a previous meeting. She also advised that the CE&W Committee were also considering planting 3 trees for the Queen's Jubilee and the BCBC Countryside Manager gave a report to the CE&W Committee on Wednesday 28th June identifying the importance of location, species and long-term maintenance of any trees planted.
- Committee advised that Cllr D Unwin has given staff tree planting location plans; the Deputy Clerk and Facilities and Project Officer advised they would review the plans.
- A short recess was held for Members to read a Wildflower and Tree Planting Report presented from Cllr D Unwin. Members discussed the report and were in support of Cllr D Unwin approaching HDL in relation to Coed Parc Walk and Elmbank Court. Cllr S Bletsoe advised he has been approached by many local people as a BCBC councillor regarding the felling of trees in this location; he stated that he was in support of Cllr D Unwin's proposal of an environmental project in conjunction with the landowner if permitted, provided that BTC are credited for the planting.
- The Mayor referred to the working group meeting of town stakeholders and asked if Cllr T Wood and Cllr D Unwin could enquire what HDL plan for the area and put the proposed BTC Environmental Project forward. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the BCBC Countryside Manager had advised that they were happy to help suggest suitable trees for the location.

RESOLVED: that at the working group meeting of town stakeholders, Cllr T Wood and Cllr D Unwin enquire what HDL plan for the Coed Parc Walk and Elmbank Court area and seek the views of HDL in relation to a BTC Environmental Project in the area.

13. To discuss Business Awards and Mayors Award Project for 2023/24

- The Deputy Town Clerk advised that at the December 2022 Full Council Meeting Members discussed reinstating the business awards and a Mayors Award for 2023 however no budget had been discussed for this.
- Committee noted that five businesses were awarded in 2018 and 2019 but the project was paused because of the pandemic. Members discussed the format of the awards and agreed to replicate the project as it was, prior to the pandemic.
- Cllr T Wood proposed that in conjunction with the Business Awards that a Mayors Award be introduced. The Mayor supported the proposal and made suggestions for the format of the award; Members were in favour of an outstanding citizen or business award from the local community chosen by the Mayor.
- Committee agreed that moving forward the Business Awards be presented annually in March or April at the end of the Mayor's term, with every sitting Mayor having the option to grant a Mayors Award Plaque; it was proposed that the presentation of the awards could be held as pre council meeting business.

RESOLVED: to reinstate the Business Awards and introduce a Mayors Award to be presented annually in March or April as pre council meeting business.

14. To discuss development of an Information Panel for HMS Urge (deferred from previous meeting)

- The Deputy Clerk advised Members It was suggested at the December 2022 meeting of Full Council that the Council should start the planning process for an HMS Urge information panel and if planning permission is granted, budget could be allocated to the project from the contingency fund or budget could be allocated for 2024/25.
- The Facilities and Project officer reported that she had spoken with the BCBC Conservation Officer who advised that a panel could possibly be installed at the location depending on the size and material of the panel, subject to consent from the BCBC Highways Department and the granting of Planning Permission.
- Committee noted that the planning application will require specific details such as the panel dimensions and height, material, location, and drawings.
- The Mayor suggested that the panel could be installed at an angle on the railings opposite the HMS Urge mural, in a similar style to the panel in Elder Street. The Mayor confirmed the specific location on a map which was recorded by the Facilities and Projects officer and The Mayor suggested a site meeting could be held if required. Members were in support of the proposed location and spoke of disability access in relation to the height and size of the panel.
- Committee proposed that the wording be a short bilingual paragraph with the inclusion of a QR code for further information.

RESOLVED: that the Facilities and Project Officer investigate the development and installation of an HMS Urge Information Panel on the railings opposite the HMS Urge mural.

15. To discuss Welsh Government and National Lottery Heritage Fund: Local Places for Nature Grant Scheme (deferred from previous meeting)

- The Deputy Clerk advised that application for funding was still closed. Committee asked staff to not prepare an application in readiness as the fund may not reopen in 2023 but to

¹⁷²investigate other grant opportunities in relation to nature and for example urban highways for pollinators.

- The Facilities and Project officer proposed that Committee could investigate using the flower tower by the old stone bridge as an area for planting; following discussion Committee resolved to ask the Facilities Committee to consider changing the way BTC provides flower towers away from renting on a seasonal basis to purchasing permanent planting towers through possible grants. Members spoke of the possibility of working with local community groups for example v2c who has a planting scheme and B-Leaf and Wood-B. The Facilities and Project Officer advised that BTC could also possibly link in with the BCBC Countryside Manager regarding urban routes for wildlife and wildlife corridors.

RESOLVED: that the Deputy Clerk and Facilities and Project Officer investigate grant opportunities in relation to nature and urban highways for pollinators for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: to ask the Facilities Committee to consider changing the way BTC provides flower towers away from renting on a seasonal basis to purchasing permanent planting towers.

16. To investigate the cost and feasibility of a Changing Places Toilet in Bridgend Town Centre (deferred from a previous meeting)

- The Deputy Clerk referred Members to the Changing Places website: <https://www.changing-places.org/> for information.
- Committee discussed the feasibility of a Changing Places Toilet in Bridgend Town Centre in relation to suitable location, design and installation costs, BTC budget, security and access requirements, ongoing maintenance and cleaning, the planning application process, public consultation, project management and freelance support, utilities and pipework requirements and grant funding available for Changing Places Toilets in Wales.
- Members spoke of the research previously carried out by BTC for the installation of public toilets in Bridgend town centre and how BTC provided funds for the installation of toilets in the indoor market.
- It was noted that the provision of public toilets is costly as evidenced by Porthcawl Town Council and The Mayor spoke of the possibility of getting sponsorship from large companies such as local supermarkets with corporate social responsibilities.
- Cllr S Bletsoe proposed approaching HDL to enquire if they have a suitable location available such as Derwen Road id BTC were to pay the capital costs and suggested that this could be raised at the working group meeting of town stakeholders.
- Committee noted that the Local Authority Funding referred to on the Changing Places website applied to England and Members made suggestions of where grant applications may be available in Wales. The Mayor proposed that she would contact Whizz-Kidz and the Variety Club Great Britain to enquire if any grants are available.
- Committee were in agreement to take the project forward and investigate the feasibility of a Changing Places Toilet in Bridgend Town Centre but highlighted the need to manage expectations in relation to resource, budget and timescales.

RESLOVED: that councillors will carry out research to investigate the feasibility of a Changing Places Toilet in Bridgend Town Centre for further discussion at a future meeting.

17. To discuss priority and timescales of Regeneration Projects for 2023/24

- The Deputy Clerk referred Members to the Regeneration Committee Project Priority List; Committee reviewed the projects discussed and agreed to prioritise the regeneration projects as follows:

Priority	Project	Deadline
1	Blue Plaque (1) for 2023/24 Brian Lloyd - October 2023 for Friday 10 th November unveiling	Friday 10 th November 2023
2	Installation of 3 benches	As soon as possible
2	Installation of 3 notice boards	As soon as possible
3	Blue Plaque (3) for 2022/23 Caroline Williams – February 2024 for Friday 8 th March unveiling	Friday 8 th March 2024
4	Business Awards and Mayors Award Project	18 th March or 15 th April 2024
5	Blue Plaque (2) William Evans (Wil Ifan)	Start project but unveilings are likely to be June/July 2024/25
5	Blue Plaque (3) Kee Club	Start project but unveilings are likely to be June/July 2024/25
6	Adoption of 2 notice boards	As soon as possible
7	Wildflower and tree planting	ASAP further to advice from BCBC Countryside Manager
8	Development of an HMS Urge Information Board	Friday 8 th November 2024
9	WWII Heritage Trail Panels X 3	Defer to 2024/25
10	Changing Places Toilet	Dependant on feasibility and grants research

Meeting closed: 21.28 pm

Signed

Date

Chair of Regeneration Committee

Appendix 9



Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman
 Cymru • Wales

WITNESS STATEMENT

Statement of: Ms Leanne Edwards
 Age if under 18: Over 18
 Occupation/Position: Clerk to Bridgend Town Council

1. I, Leanne Edward, make this statement in connection with a complaint made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that Councillor Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council ("the Council") has breached the Code of Conduct for elected members. The facts in this statement come from my personal knowledge.
2. I submitted a complaint about Councillor Steven Bletsoe to the Ombudsman's office via its online facility on 4 November 2022, regarding his conduct at the Council's Regeneration Committee meeting on 24 October 2022, which involved proposed amendments to the minutes of the Council's previous Regeneration Committee meeting dated 14 June 2022 (Exhibit LE01).
3. I was first employed by the Council in 2013 as the Deputy Clerk and Arts Project Officer and I became the Town Clerk in 2017 when the former Clerk retired. As Town Clerk I advise the Council on appropriate legislation, I attend Council meetings, I prepare agendas and I am the head of paid service and support a team of staff that work for me and the Council.
4. When Councillors are elected, I meet with them and provide them with an induction pack, and we go through the governance, standing orders and financial regulation documents. I provide guidance to help them in their role and they will often come to me for advice. I provide them with information on training opportunities and book them onto courses.
5. I understand Councillor Steven Bletsoe has been a member of the Council since 2017. I am aware that in 2019 following a previous investigation by the Ombudsman and a breach of the Code of Conduct it was recommended that he attend a Code of Conduct training course, and specifically in the context of interests. I am not aware of whether he did attend the course or not.
6. I have had cause to make a previous complaint to the Ombudsman about Councillor Freya Bletsoe (who is Councillor Steven Bletsoe's wife). This encompassed an incident at the Council's Regeneration Committee meeting

Case reference number: 202204885

on 14 June 2022. Following the incident, I took some time off work due to bullying by Councillor Freya Bletsoe. I returned to the Council in September 2022 with some measures in place to create distance between myself and Councillor Freya Bletsoe, whilst the investigation into my previous complaint with the Ombudsman was ongoing, which included not Clerking certain meetings.

7. A Council meeting was held on 26 September which I watched as a guest. In this meeting the draft minutes of the 14 June Regeneration Committee meeting came up for consideration. Councillor Steven Bletsoe queried the minutes and said he felt there were some inaccuracies. It was agreed that the discussion on the minutes would be deferred, and the Deputy Clerk sought some advice from One Voice Wales. It was my understanding that the advice we received indicated that the minutes could not be amended by the full Council, and they had to go back to the Regeneration Committee for consideration by those who had attended the relevant meeting.
8. A Regeneration Committee Meeting was held on 24 October, and I watched it online as a member of the public. The draft minutes for the 14 June Regeneration Committee Meeting were on the agenda for consideration and Councillor Freya Bletsoe declared an interest in the item and left the room. Councillor Steven Bletsoe did not declare an interest and he remained and queried the minutes again. I recorded the part where he queried the minutes on my mobile phone because I was concerned that he wanted to amend them when the incident they covered was the subject of my previous complaint to the Ombudsman. I felt it was tampering with evidence for my previous complaint and that was wrong, and I recorded it to find out how the evidence was being changed (Exhibit LE02). It was agreed that the draft minutes of the 14 June Regeneration Committee meeting would be redacted.
9. The draft minutes for the 24 October Regeneration Committee meeting were submitted to a full Council meeting on 12 December. Councillor Freya Bletsoe declared an interest in the item and left the room. Councillor Steven Bletsoe did not declare an interest and he queried the minutes again, with reference to what was recorded about what Councillor Freya Bletsoe had said in the 14 June meeting. The Deputy Clerk said the minutes for the 24 October meeting reflected the notes that she and the minute taker had taken, and she explained that the 24 October draft minutes would be presented at the next Regeneration Committee meeting and any change would have to be approved at that meeting. One of the Members who had been at the 14 June Regeneration Committee meeting said the previous redactions to the minutes were problematic and impacted the tone and content and she thought it could be construed as interfering. The discussion was noted.
10. Councillor Steven Bletsoe did not come to me for any advice about what he should or should not declare in advance of these meetings. I am concerned that the evidence I provided for an ongoing Ombudsman investigation (in the form of the original minutes) has been tampered with and the reference to the incident with Councillor Freya Bletsoe at the 14 June Regeneration Committee meeting has been redacted. If something happens in a meeting

Case reference number: 202204885

the only evidence is the minutes and now because they have been redacted, the evidence has been removed. This was at Councillor Steven Bletsoe's instigation, and I think what he has done is wrong. Councillor Steven Bletsoe is Councillor Freya Bletsoe's husband and therefore he has an interest in what happened. I think he used his position of power as Chair of the Regeneration Committee to influence those minutes.

11. I feel in a very difficult position because of the impact of the complaint on my relationships with both Members. I was unsure about whether to make a complaint about this initially, but I have been through a situation in 2018/2019 with both Members which was very unpleasant, and I was concerned it might start again. This is my workplace, if it could happen to me, it could happen to other staff and it just does not feel right.

Statement of truth:

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed:

J Edwards

Dated:

3/11/2023

Case reference number: 202204885

From: Leigh McAndrew
Sent: Fri, 28 Oct 2022 09:48:36 +0000
To: 'Workpro@workpro.ombudsman.wales'
Subject: new complaint

From: Lea Edwards <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 25 October 2022 14:00
To: Louise Morland <Louise.Morland@ombudsman.wales>
Subject: Re: [REDACTED]

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]

Good afternoon Ms Moorland,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

It is regular practice at the Town Council for draft minutes of all committee meetings to be presented to full Council for information. At the Town Council meeting on 26th September 2022 the following item was included on the agenda:

'14.1 To receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022'

Under this agenda item, Cllr Steven Bletsoe raised a concern regarding the accuracy of the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting. The Deputy Clerk explained that she had taken advice from One Voice Wales and that the accuracy of the minutes could only be discussed at the next Regeneration Committee meeting by councillors who were present at the meeting. She requested that Cllr Steven Bletsoe submit his proposed amendments to the minutes in writing to her which she explained could be considered at the next Regeneration Committee meeting.

A Regeneration Committee meeting took place last night (24/10/2022) and as agreed, I did not work for this meeting. I observed this meeting remotely as a guest.

In attendance at the meeting were:

- The Mayor, Cllr Tim Wood
- Cllr Steven Bletsoe (Chair of Regeneration Committee)
- Cllr Freya Bletsoe
- Cllr Steven Easterbrook
- Cllr Alison Felton
- Cllr Ian Spiller
- Plus two members of staff: Debra Jones (Deputy Clerk) and Julie Brown (Minute taker)

The following agenda item was included on the agenda for the meeting:

‘To confirm and sign minutes of the Regeneration meeting held on 14th June 2022’

For this agenda item, Cllr Freya Bletsoe declared a prejudicial interest and left the room for the discussions involving page 1-3 of the minutes.

Cllr Freya Bletsoe’s husband, Cllr Steven Bletsoe, who is Chair of the Regeneration Committee, did not declare an interest in relation to the discussions of page 1-3 of the minutes and stayed in the meeting and participated in the discussions.

As Chair, Cllr Steven Bletsoe advised the committee that the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022 were also a matter for the Personnel Committee and reminded members not to discuss matters regarding personnel. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that Personnel minutes were not on the agenda for discussion.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe proceeded to apologise to the Deputy Clerk that he had not submitted his comments about the accuracy of the minutes in writing before the meeting due to being busy.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe explained the reason that he did not support the minutes as an accurate record to be approved, is that he felt there were references in the minutes that perhaps should not have been included.

He referred to a discussion that had been held in the October full council meeting and implied that staff had advised Council that the purpose of minutes was to only reference resolutions and not detail any conflict that takes place during the meeting. The Deputy Clerk stated that staff had not given that advice and she reminded Members that at the October meeting there had been some conflict and the Clerk had advised Council at the meeting that it would be recorded in the minutes as it had taken place.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe stated that his proposal, for the public record, was to state that there had been a disagreement between a Councillor and the Clerk and the clerk had stated that she felt bullied and intimidated. He did not provide information about which elements of the minutes he claimed were inaccurate.

He expressed a concern that the committee could not openly discuss this matter because as people who were in attendance at the meeting on 14th June 2022, Councillors and staff may be asked individually to give witness statements.

The Deputy Clerk asked that Cllr Steven Bletsoe propose his amendments or changes to the minutes so that those who were in attendance at the meeting could agree or disagree to his proposals. She highlighted that the minutes were taken by a minute taker and they were a reflection of what happened on the evening. She highlighted that she was unsure of which parts Cllr Steven Bletsoe is claiming are not accurate.

Although he was not present at the meeting on 14th June 2022, [REDACTED] suggested that the minutes should be a summary and that they were more detailed than other minutes. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that the minutes were a summary and not verbatim.

Cllr Steven Bletsoe and committee members proceeded to discuss this matter at length and on several occasions, [REDACTED] noted that she felt that the minutes were accurate. [REDACTED] initially agreed with [REDACTED] then changed his mind.

[REDACTED] proposed amendments to the minutes to remove several bullet points and this was taken to a vote. Cllr Steven Bletsoe abstained from the vote, [REDACTED] voted against the proposed changes and [REDACTED] voted in favour of amending the minutes. The minutes will now be amended as instructed.

I would like to note that the Councillors that voted for the amendments to the minutes are all part of the Bridgend County Independents Group and friends of Cllr Steven Bletsoe and Cllr Freya Bletsoe.

It appears that the Councillors did not deny the events that took place at the Regeneration Committee meeting on 14th June 2022 and did not dispute the accuracy of the minutes as such, but have instead chosen to manipulate the minutes to remove the detail of the proceedings at the meeting from the public minutes.

I feel that Cllr Steven Bletsoe has manipulated the situation and used his personal connections to remove details about his wife's behaviour at a public meeting for his own and his wife's benefit. This conduct is not acceptable and undermines the member of staff who prepared the original minutes and tampers with the evidence for the complaint I have submitted.

Kind regards,

Leanne Edwards

From: Lea Edwards
Sent: Thu, 3 Nov 2022 20:31:06 +0000
To: Leigh McAndrew; Louise Morland
Subject: Re: Complaint made to the Ombudsman - 202204885 [REF/xP/w5/rA/m6/]

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Mr McAndrew,

c.c. Ms Moorland

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I feel it is important for you to be aware of the details on page 4 and 5 of my original letter (attached). On these pages there is a section titled '*Regeneration Committee Meeting – Tuesday 14th June 2022*'. The information sent to Ms Morland on 25th October refers to how the minutes of this meeting have now been manipulated to remove any detail of the bullying behaviour [REDACTED]

Despite having a significant conflict of interest, Cllr Steven Bletsoe failed to declare a prejudicial interest at the public meeting. He fully participated in the discussions, disclosed that the contents of the minutes of the Regeneration Meeting on 14th June 2022 were subject to a Personnel matter and advised Councillors present that they may be required to give witness statements (this information was not in the public domain). Cllr Steven Bletsoe also stated at the meeting that if Councillors wished to discuss any of the personnel matter, they should raise it with him as Chair. I believe Cllr Steven Bletsoe misused his position of authority as Chair of

the Regeneration Committee to influence fellow Councillors and subsequently succeeded in redacting public records for the personal gain of his wife.

Kind regards
Leanne Edwards

From: Leigh.McAndrew@ombudsman-wales.org.uk <Leigh.McAndrew@ombudsman-wales.org.uk>
Sent: 28 October 2022 12:53
To: lea_edwards@[REDACTED]
Subject: Complaint made to the Ombudsman - 202204885 [REF/xP/w5/rA/m6/]

Dear Mrs Edwards

Reference: 202204885

Please find attached my letter of today which is being sent to you by email only. I also attach a declaration form for your signature.

Yours sincerely

Mr Leigh McAndrew
Rheolwr Ymchwilio Cynorthwyol/Assistant Investigation Manager
Ffôn/Tel: 01656 644216

--

Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru/ Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
Pen-y-Bont ar Ogwr/ Bridgend/
CF35 5LJ

www.ombwdsmon-cymru.org.uk / www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
<https://twitter.com/OmbudsmanWales>

Hybu'r Gymraeg

Gallwch ysgrifennu atom yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg. Ni fydd hyn yn arwain at oedi cyn ymateb.
Welsh Language Promotion

You can write to us in Welsh and we will reply in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding.

Sganiwyd y neges hon am bob feirws hysbys wrth iddi adael Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru.

Mae Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru yn cymryd o ddifrif yr angen i ddiogelu eich data.

Mae ein Hysbysiad Preifatrwydd yn esbonio sut rydym yn defnyddio eich gwybodaeth a sut rydym yn diogelu eich preifatrwydd.

On leaving the Public Services Ombudsman, this email was scanned for all known viruses.

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Our Privacy Notice explains how we use your information and the ways in which we protect your privacy.

Bydd pob galwad yn cael ei recordio ar gyfer dibenion hyfforddi a chyfeirio

All calls are recorded for training and reference purposes

Ystyriwch yr amgylchedd – a oes wir angen i chi argraffu'r neges e-bost hon?

Please consider the environment - do you really need to print this email?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Regeneration Committee Meeting – Tuesday 14th June 2022

At the Regeneration Committee meeting on 14th June 2022 a discussion took place regarding Bridgend Town Council extending an invitation to a member of the Royal Family to unveil a blue plaque in Bridgend Town Centre. During the discussion I explained that the initial budget for the blue plaque scheme is only for the purchase of the plaque. I also highlighted that an invitation of this nature has wide budget and resource implications, outside the scope of what was originally agreed by Council. I therefore advised that extending an invitation of this nature should be referred to the Council for full consideration.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Chair of the Regeneration meeting, Cllr Steven Blestoe allowed a fellow councillor to behave abusively towards me and did not publically call out the behaviour at the time. If it had been any other councillor chairing the meeting, I do not believe they would have tolerated the disrespect shown to me.

[REDACTED]

Although the minutes of this meeting will be provided, as I will note below, minutes do not record the tone of the meeting and therefore witnesses are the only people that can verify this appalling conduct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

EXHIBIT LE02

TRANSCRIPT

FOR: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

PN No: 8873

TITLE: ENC - COMP - Via OC 280723

TYPE: Meeting

CONVENTION: Verbatim

AUDIO LENGTH: 7 minutes

TRANSCRIBER: EST/CA1

AT: ESSENTIAL SECRETARY LTD

COMPLETION DATE: 21.08.2023

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

Any difficulties experienced, accents and general comments

NUMBER OF UNCLEAR	12	NUMBER OF INAUDIBLES	0
SPELL CHECK PERFORMED	Yes	PROOFING PERFORMED	Yes
WORD COUNT	1224	PAGES	5
AUDIO QUALITY	Poor		
SPEAKER RELATED ISSUES	Very poor, muffled, echoey audio		
EQUIPMENT RELATED ISSUES			
TERMINOLOGY ISSUES			
OTHER COMMENTS			

Please find attached your completed transcript.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the attached transcript is an accurate record of your audio recording, sometimes difficulties are encountered in understanding technical words, people speaking with a foreign accent and in some cases when somebody is speaking from a crowded room with a lot of background noise and from mobile phones.

Where we have had difficulty understanding words we have indicated this as [unclear] with the appropriate time stamp, or simply attempted to spell the word phonetically but followed it with [ph].



Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Transcript of a Segment of Recording

ENC – COMP – Via OC 280723

SB: ... June 2022 and, erm...

DJ: If you don't mind, just bear with me, do you want to go in there because you can sit down.

DJ: Yes, yeah. I will be closer to the centre...

SB: There's seats in there [unclear 00:00:14].

DJ: What are you doing, love, come and sit down [unclear 00:00:17]...

F: ...[unclear 00:00:27] [pause].

F: Thank you.

SB: Okay?

DJ: Yeah.

SB: Can I just double check, Debs, this is all a bit in the middle of the [unclear 00:00:43] meetings, so we have your computer on that's in there.

DJ: That's right, it's on mute.

SB: We have the Mayor [unclear 00:00:51] who's is that copy here?

DJ: Yes.

SB: We have, er, Alison and, sorry, Councillor Alison [unclear 00:00:58].

DJ: We have a guest, yes.

SB: You do have a member of the public?

DJ: We do have a member of the public, yes. That's what I've recorded.

SB: Erm, and, and just, erm, so to mention to all councillors, erm, I stated in the full council meeting within the minutes of the previous regeneration committee was to be ratified by full council, erm, and our Deputy Clerk took advice that we need to come back to this basically because I personally have, er, one or two issues with the meeting, er, minutes. I would, er, make

Case Reference:



all members of this regeneration committee aware that the minutes that we are due to discuss for, erm, confirming are also a matter for the Personnel Committee, er, for matters that have been discussed on pink papers, erm, so we have to remember that matters relating to these minutes and to the Personnel Committee that relates to it are to be done so in confidence, so I would encourage all councillors that we can't discuss matters that are on the papers of the Personnel Committee and how they relate to these minutes. Does that make sense?

DJ: We don't quite...

SB: [Unclear 00:02:17].

DJ: We don't have any Personnel Committee minutes here, though, do we?

SB: No, but what I mean is that these minutes also correspond to matters that have been discussed on pink papers in personnel and we can't discuss those personnel minutes openly in this committee. We can't discuss those minutes...

DJ: No, you couldn't discuss-....

SB: [Unclear 00:02:39] a full council meeting, so we can't discuss them either.

DJ: No, are we going to discuss them, no?

SB: Well, I, I had no intention to...

DJ: Right.

SB: I just wanted to remind all the councillors of their responsibility to that at the same time, that's all.

DJ: Okay.

SB: So it's not done accidentally.

D: Okay, I'm with you.

SB: Erm, but, but if any councillor feels the need to discuss the matters to be discussed in personnel, they will need to raise that with me as Chair, so that you and I can assess whether we go into committee here.

DJ: Okay.

SB: I'm just trying to cover bases to protect everybody, being over cautious. Erm, so, erm, we come onto the confirmation of the minutes and I must apologise to the Clerk, er, sorry Deputy Clerk as well because when we were in full council, I did say I would try and speak to you, didn't I?

Case Reference:



DJ: Yeah.

SB: Everything's been so busy I haven't been able, so I do apologise to you for that, er, Debs.

DJ: Okay.

SB: Erm, in relation to my exact, erm, reasons for, for not, not, erm, offering them to full council as a true and accurate record is that, erm, I do feel that there are one or two, erm, I don't want to use the word mistakes, but almost, erm, there, there are one or two references in these minutes that perhaps shouldn't be in there. Erm, we did have a full discussion in full council, erm, last week about the minutes and we were told that it's the [unclear 00:04:13] of emphasis to actually, erm, reference resolutions rather than any potential conflicts and the conflict at the time was between two councillors.

DJ: We, we didn't say that. We didn't say that they didn't reference conflict, and there was a bit of an issue in full council and the Clerk did say that would be recorded because it happened.

SB: Mhm. Okay, I mean that, that's just my personal opinion as well...

DJ: Mhm.

SB: ... councillor, erm, that's what I was putting forward, erm, but if, if we are to detail, erm, everything that happened, and then if that's the case then there are one or two matters that I don't believe are accurate with them. Firstly my original proposal for the minutes, erm, was to state for the public record that there had been a disagreement between a councillor and the Clerk and the Clerk has taken that she has felt bullied and intimidated and that's been added to the public record Erm, if, if they're going to, erm... My concern is that we can't openly discuss this because there are people who are in attendance, both officers and councillors who maybe asked for witness statements so we can't discuss it, around our recollection of this because we may be asked individually...

DJ: Okay.

SB: ... to give witness statements.

DJ: Can we just go back a second.

SB: Yeah.

DJ: What I need you to do is propose your amendments or your changes...

SB: Okay.

Case Reference:



DJ: ... and then those who were in attendance at the meeting can agree or disagree to your proposal.

SB: Yeah.

DJ: The minutes were taken, erm, by your minute taker, they were a reflection of what happened on the evening, erm, so I'm not sure which bits you're saying are inaccurate, but I think the best thing to do is for you to tell us your proposed changes. Er, this happened not in committee, this was in a public meeting, erm, so it is in the public domain what happened, erm, so we're not talking about anything else other than what was in the minutes and what happened on that evening. I'm not asking you for, erm, recollection...

[End of recorded segment]

Appendix 10



**Ombwdsmon
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WITNESS STATEMENT

Statement of: Ms Debra Jones
Age if under 18: Over 18
Occupation/Position: Deputy Town Clerk to Bridgend Town Council

-
1. I, Debra Jones, make this statement in connection with a complaint made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that Councillor Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council ("the Council") has breached the Code of Conduct for elected members. The facts in this statement come from my personal knowledge.
 2. I joined the Council in 2015. I was initially brought in to implement a finance system and my hours were part-time, but I was then promoted to Deputy Town Clerk in 2018. I am also the Council's Responsible Finance Officer. My roles encompass looking after the Council's finances, clerking certain meetings, giving legal advice to Members and ensuring we comply with statutory duties. I tend to deal with the Council's Finance and Facilities Committees, the Clerk tends to deal with the Community Engagement, Regeneration and Planning Committees and we both attend Personnel Committees and share staffing matters.
 3. I am aware that the Council held a Regeneration Committee meeting on 14 June 2022, but I did not attend this meeting. When the Clerk was on leave for a period in 2022, I was asked to stand in for her at meetings, and I have attended the Council's Regeneration Committee meetings since then.
 4. I attended a full Council meeting on 26 September 2022 (when the Clerk was absent) with the Council's Democratic Service Officer, who was acting as minute taker. At this meeting Councillor Bletsoe raised a query with regard to Item 14 about the draft minutes for the Council's Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14 June 2022. I advised him that I would seek advice on how to proceed, so it was agreed to defer the item to the next meeting. I should explain that I had been standing in at Council personnel meetings as well, so I understood the circumstances around why the minutes were being disputed, and I wanted to ensure I was giving correct advice.
 5. I attended a full Council meeting on 17 October 2022, where I relayed advice I had received from One Voice Wales that the way forward was for the person

Case reference number: 202204885

who disputed the minutes to put their proposed changes or amendments to me in writing, so that they could then be circulated to the Regeneration Committee, in advance of their next meeting, and those who were at the meeting on 14 June 2022 could then agree or disagree the proposed amendments.

6. I did not receive any proposed amendments for the minutes in advance of the Regeneration Committee meeting on 24 October 2022, so I was not aware of what they would be, and I was not able to circulate anything about that to the Members. Councillor Steven Bletsoe chaired the Regeneration Committee meeting on 24 October 2022. We had apologies and declarations and when we got to Item 3, which was to confirm the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting on 14 June 2022, Councillor Freya Bletsoe left the meeting.
7. Councillor Steven Bletsoe started the item by referring to the matters to be discussed in relation to a personnel issue, pink papers and a confidential matter that could not be discussed. I advised the Members that we did not have any personnel minutes or pink papers as part of that 14 June 2022 meeting. Councillor Steven Bletsoe repeated that personnel matters could not be discussed, he said he was reminding Members that anything relating to personnel could not be discussed. I was not sure why he was saying that, and I tried to draw things back to the matters in hand. He apologised that he had not provided proposed amendments to the minutes in writing and then kept saying that there were some items which he believed should not be in the minutes, and that there was a conflict. I believe he said something like he did not think people who were at that meeting could actually comment because they might be asked to give a witness statement.
8. I was aware that there were some members at the meeting on 24 October 2022 who were not on the Council's personnel committee and might therefore not be aware of what Councillor Steven Bletsoe was referring to, so I intervened and said all I needed from him was his proposed amendments, and that those members who were at the meeting on 14 June 2022 could then agree or disagree his proposed changes.
9. I recall that Councillor Spiller then intervened and said he did not have an issue with the accuracy of the minutes, but he thought that they were too detailed. I explained the minutes were not verbatim and were a summary. There was a discussion about the minutes and Councillor Spiller proposed that some bullet points were removed from the minutes. One Member disagreed and said it was wrong to change the minutes. I think she referred to a power imbalance in the situation. The Members took a vote, and it was resolved that various bullet points should be taken out.
10. I am aware that Councillor Steven Bletsoe and Councillor Freya Bletsoe are partners and live together. Whilst Councillor Steven Bletsoe and other Members have asked for advice about declaring interests in the past, I do not recall him declaring an interest or asking about declaring an interest at the meeting on 24 October 2022 regarding Item 3. If he had it would have been

Case reference number: 202204885

recorded. I am satisfied that the draft minutes of the meeting on 24 October 2022 accurately reflect what was discussed.

11. I would like to say regarding Councillor Spiller's intervention about the minutes, that he was not at the meeting on 14 June 2022 and no one challenged him about that. It is only my opinion, but it appeared to me at the time that the parties concerned had discussed the matter beforehand and were ready to say what was said. It would have been much more helpful if we had received the proposed amendments in writing beforehand and we could have put them into the minutes. To my mind it was strange that Councillor Bletsoe did not give the proposed amendments in writing, and it felt like there was a game being played and there was a narrative that they wanted in the minutes in the public domain.
12. It is an uncomfortable thing to say, but the Members understand the situation with investigations and the requirement for strong evidence and that the Ombudsman can ask for minutes, so I kind of knew what was happening. It did feel really uncomfortable for the staff and particularly with regard to the Clerk because she had no voice and it seemed like a power imbalance. The members are politicians and a part of a close group, but they are employers as well. I felt that being a good employer was their least priority and not on their agenda.
13. I would say that from what Councillor Steven Bletsoe said in the meeting on 24 October 2022, and the way the discussion went, that he was influencing matters about the minutes, because he referred to the personnel issues at the outset. The minutes record that he abstained from the vote on the proposed amendments, but I do not recall if he said why he had abstained.
14. I think the Democratic Services Officer's confidence was affected by the dispute about the minutes for the Regeneration Committee meeting on 14 June 2022 and I explained to her that it was not personal. The next Regeneration Committee meeting on 24 October 2022 was a hybrid meeting, it was not recorded, and the Democratic Services Officer and I both wrote notes because I felt that we needed to ensure that the minutes for that meeting were as accurate as possible. Once minutes are agreed we aim to put the notes in the confidential waste and copies are no longer available.
15. The minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting on 24 October 2022 were discussed under Item 10 of the full Council meeting on 12 December 2022. Councillor Steven Bletsoe questioned the wording with reference to something that had been recorded about what Councillor Freya Bletsoe had said in the Regeneration Committee meeting on 14 June 2022. I explained that the minutes reflected what both I and the Democratic Services Officer had in our notes, and if he wanted to propose amendments he would have to put them in writing. Councillor Bletsoe then asked that his comment was recorded in the full Council meeting minutes. When the Regeneration Committee meeting minutes for June and October 2022 are finally approved they will be put on the Council's website.

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16. I would say Councillor Steven Bletsoe is a good councillor and it's a shame really that this has come about. I am aware of all sides of the matter and in my view, he should have left the meeting on 24 October 2022 and not led the discussion about the minutes. He could have handed the chairing of the meeting to the Vice Chair. His behaviour gives the appearance of trying to keep information out of the public domain and possibly out of evidence for the Ombudsman.

Statement of truth:

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed: 

Dated: 09/10/2023

Appendix 11

From: Lisa.Sheldon@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
Sent: Mon, 9 Sep 2019 12:40:02 +0000
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: EgressEncrypt Complaint made to the Ombudsman - 201707583 [REFJ7wZ5v5N]

Dear Councillor Bletsoe

Our reference: 16227/201707583

I have been asked by Investigation Officer, Annie Ginwalla to provide you, by email only, with a covering letter and final non-public interest letter report which you will find as attachments to this email.

If you have any queries in relation to the report, please contact Annie Ginwalla directly either by telephone on 01656 644201 or via email at Annie.Ginwalla@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Lisa Sheldon
Casework Support Officer
Tel/Ffôn:01656 644212

Our ref: 16227/201707583/AG/LS

Ask for: Annie Ginwalla



01656 644201

Date: 9 September 2019



Annie.Ginwalla
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Councillor Steven Bletsoe

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Councillor Bletsoe

Code of Conduct complaint made by [REDACTED]

The Ombudsman has now concluded his investigation into the complaint made by Councillor [REDACTED]. I enclose a redacted copy of his report.

The Ombudsman found that no action needs to be taken in respect of the matters investigated. However, you will note from my letter to the complainant that the Ombudsman has proposed that you should undertake training on the Code of Conduct with a particular emphasis on interests. The Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Council has agreed to provide this training.

The file on this complaint will now be closed. Once we have issued a decision not to investigate a complaint, or we have reached our final conclusions following an investigation, if the complainant is dissatisfied, they can ask us for a review. If we agree to re-open a case following a review, we will let you know.

We routinely destroy hard copies of complaint files after two years following the date on which a complaint is closed, unless there is an exceptional reason to keep the information for longer. We will destroy personal information held on electronic records after ten years following the date on which the complaint is closed.

Yours sincerely

Annie Ginwalla

Investigation and Improvement Officer

Enc: Ltr to Complainant



Our ref: 16227/201707583/AG/LS

Ask for: Annie Ginwalla

 01656 644201

Date: 9 September 2019

 Annie.Ginwalla
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Councillor [REDACTED]

By email only

Dear Councillor [REDACTED]

Code of Conduct complaint made against Councillor Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council

The investigation into the complaint which you made against Councillor Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council ("the Council") has now been concluded. The Ombudsman has delegated to me the task of determining the outcome. In reaching my conclusions, I have had an opportunity to consider the information you submitted in support of your complaint as well as the evidence gathered during the investigation.

Summary of complaint

You complained that Councillor Steven Bletsoe breached the Code of Conduct for members ("the Code") at a meeting of the Council on 19 February 2018 by failing to appropriately declare an interest in an agenda item relating to an allotment plot allocated to his wife, Councillor Freya Bletsoe. In addition, you complained that he participated in discussions about this item and attempted to influence the outcome of the same by criticising the allotment site representatives and proposing a meeting excluding them. Finally, you complained that Councillor Steven Bletsoe attempted to use his position improperly to gain an advantage for his wife when he proposed that the Council should remedy a weed infestation on the allotment plot.

Page 1 of 6

Investigation

When determining how to proceed in an investigation of this kind, the Ombudsman applies a two-stage test. At the first stage, he will aim to establish whether there is direct evidence that a breach of the Code has occurred. At the second stage the Ombudsman considers whether an investigation or a referral to a standards committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales is required in the public interest. This involves the consideration of a number of public interest factors such as whether the member has deliberately sought a personal gain at the public expense for themselves or others or misused a position of trust, whether an investigation is required to maintain public confidence in elected members and whether a referral is proportionate in the circumstances.

Any member of a relevant authority must observe the Code whenever that member is acting in his official capacity.¹ Members must in all matters consider whether they have a personal interest, and whether the code of conduct requires them to disclose that interest.² The Code states that Members with a personal interest will also have a prejudicial interest, where the personal interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice that members judgement of the public interest.³ In such situations the Member must usually declare that interest and leave any meeting where the matter is being considered.⁴

Further, the Code states that Members must not in any capacity use or attempt to use their position improperly to confer on or secure for themselves, or any other person, an advantage.⁵

Copies of relevant documents were obtained from the Council and witness evidence was sought from a cross section of Members who were present at the meeting of 19 February 2018 and the Clerk to the Council. A response to the complaints was also sought from Councillor Steven Bletsoe.

Analysis of evidence

I will briefly summarise below the key events and evidence gathered during the investigation. Whilst I have not included every detail investigated in this decision letter I am satisfied that I have considered all of the evidence relevant to your complaint.

¹ Paragraph 2, The (Model) Code of Conduct for Members

² 10(1)

³ 12(1)

⁴ 14(1)(a)

⁵ 7(a)

From the evidence gathered, it appears that, in or around March 2016, Councillor Freya Bletsoe became the tenant of plot 10 at Coychurch Allotment Site. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain a copy of the tenancy agreement from within the Council's records. I note, however, that a 'Non-Cultivation Notice' ("the NCN") issued on 6 October 2017 was addressed to 'Freya Sykes', otherwise known as Councillor Freya Bletsoe.

The NCN issued stated that, in the event of failure to comply with the request for weeds and waste to be cleared by 6 November 2017, the tenancy would be terminated. Evidence obtained from the Clerk has confirmed that a 'Notice to Quit', the formal document confirming the end of a tenancy, was not issued, despite the fact that the request to clear weeds and waste was not complied with, at the direction of the Council's personnel committee. The Clerk said in her statement that this decision was taken partly due to a breakdown in the relationship between the Clerk and Councillor Freya Bletsoe, arising from the circumstances leading to a previous complaint to the Ombudsman, and because Councillor Freya Bletsoe had asked expressly in email correspondence that there be no contact from the Council or the Clerk, as she was on leave and experiencing personal difficulties.

The agenda for the Council's meeting of 19 February 2018 included, at item 10, a point to 'Consider Town Clerk's notes from the Allotment Committee Meeting of 29th January 2018', which related to Councillor Freya Bletsoe's allotment plot.

Further, the evidence shows that Councillor Steven Bletsoe completed a Declaration of Interests form on 19 February 2018, stating that he was a 'previous allotment holder' prior to the start of the meeting. He did not, however, stipulate whether he determined that his interest was personal or prejudicial in nature.

It is also apparent, from the witness evidence received, that Councillor Steven Bletsoe remained in the room for, at the very least, the start of the discussions on the agenda item relating to plot 10, and spoke about this issue prior to leaving the room with his wife. Councillor Steven Bletsoe said during this investigation that he felt that he could remain and discuss the issue as a 'former allotment holder.' He expressed the view that the allotment tenancy came to an end when the NCN expired on 6 November 2017.

In order to determine whether Councillor Steven Bletsoe's actions in remaining in the room and participating in the discussions relating to plot 10 are suggestive of a breach of the Code, I must determine firstly whether he had an interest under the Code pursuant to paragraph 10(2).

You indicated in your complaint that you consider that an interest arose under paragraph 10(2)(a)(x), which provides that Members must regard themselves as having a personal interest in any business of their authority if it relates to, or is likely to affect, any land in their authority's area in which they have a licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy for 28 days or longer.

I have carefully considered this paragraph in the context of the evidence gathered which suggests that 'Freya Sykes' was the tenant of the plot and not Councillor Steven Bletsoe. I am therefore not persuaded that an interest would arise in this context.

Nevertheless, it appears that Councillor Steven Bletsoe described himself to be a former allotment holder when he completed the declaration form ahead of the meeting and acknowledged during the course of this investigation that he had spent a significant amount of time working on the plot with his wife. In addition, he explained that the allotment was important to his wife and her general wellbeing at that time. In these circumstances, I consider that an interest would arise in respect of any decisions taken by the Council relating to this plot if they could reasonably be regarded as affecting the wellbeing of a person with whom Councillor Steven Bletsoe lived or with whom he had a close personal association. On this basis, I consider that the agenda item, which included the consideration of the plot allocated to Freya Sykes, his wife with whom he lives, could reasonably be regarded as affecting her wellbeing and thereby gave rise to a personal interest, even if, as he asserts, he was of the belief that the tenancy had been terminated.

This leads to the consideration of whether Councillor Steven Bletsoe's personal interest was also prejudicial in nature. The Ombudsman's Guidance sets out the objective test that must be considered in these circumstances which is whether a member of the public, with knowledge of all the relevant facts, would think that the personal interest was so significant that it would be likely to prejudice the member's judgement. In other words, the interest must be perceived as likely to harm or impair the member's ability to judge in the public interest. On the basis of the facts relating to the plot and the events which led to the consideration of the matter at the meeting, I consider that a member of the public would reasonably regard Councillor Steven Bletsoe's personal interest as being so significant as to prejudice his judgement of the public interest.

Whilst recognising that he omitted to state the nature and type of interest and appears to have cited a different reason for that interest, it is clear that Councillor Steven Bletsoe had, at the very least, considered his obligations under paragraph 10(1) of the Code ahead of the meeting.

However, in addition to the completion of the declaration form, the Code requires members with a personal and/or prejudicial interest to disclose this orally in any meeting where it arises or the matter is discussed. The evidence obtained suggests that Councillor Steven Bletsoe referred to the fact that he and his wife were the former tenants of plot 10 and continued to express his views on the issue of the non-cultivation notice and the problems at the site. Whilst this may not constitute an oral declaration in the strictest sense and be in full compliance with the requirements of the Code, it appears to have been clear to all concerned that the matter related to them.

Given the prejudicial nature of the interest, Councillor Steven Bletsoe should not have participated or continued to be present when discussions ensued. I am satisfied therefore that his actions in remaining and making representations on the item are suggestive of a failure to comply with paragraphs 14(1)(a), 14(1)(c) and 14(1)(e).

I turn now to your complaint that Councillor Steven Bletsoe used his position improperly to gain an advantage by suggesting that the Council should undertake remedial work on the plot and hold a meeting without the site representatives to discuss the issues with plot 10. I am satisfied, on the basis of the witness evidence obtained, that suggestions of this nature were made. Councillor Steven Bletsoe explained during the investigation that the suggestions relating to remedial works were made not for his or his wife's benefit, but for the benefit of any future tenant of that plot. Similarly, he said that the proposal of a meeting was based on his belief that a full Council meeting was not the appropriate forum for discussion of this matter.

Whilst recognising that he should not have been present for the discussion about plot 10 and should not have made representations, I am not persuaded that, by making these suggestions, Councillor Steven Bletsoe was seeking to use his position to gain an advantage for his wife or disadvantage anyone else. These suggestions appear to have been made at a time when he considered that his wife's tenancy had been terminated and that they no longer had the right to occupy/work the plot, in any event. In this context, the suggestions would not, in my view, attract an advantage for him or anyone with whom he had a close personal association. On this basis, I am not satisfied that there is evidence to support your contention that paragraph 7(a) of the Code has been breached.

In conclusion, I have determined that, on balance, the evidence is suggestive that Councillor Steven Bletsoe failed to appropriately declare a personal and prejudicial interest at the meeting of the Council on 19 February 2018. In addition, his actions in failing to leave the room and making representations on the matter are also suggestive of a failure to comply with the relevant provisions of the Code.

When deciding on the most appropriate course of action to take in such cases, the Ombudsman is entitled to consider all the relevant background to a complaint, any mitigation offered and previous case outcomes. With this in mind, I have taken into consideration information received from the Clerk to the Council that, at the relevant time, it was not common practice within the Council for members to orally declare their personal interests to the meeting. Rather, members would complete the declaration form, as Councillor Steven Bletsoe did, and then remain in the meeting, sometimes not participating and, on other occasions, leaving the room. Whilst Councillor Steven Bletsoe's actions in failing to state that he had a personal and prejudicial interest are suggestive of a breach of the Code, it does offer some explanation for the approach taken by him initially. Further, I have been advised during this investigation of the extenuating family difficulties which were being experienced by Councillor Steven Bletsoe in 2017/8 which may have influenced his actions and decision making at the time of the meeting. I am also mindful that the failures to comply with the Code identified by this investigation relate to one occasion

only and I am not aware of any previous or subsequent findings of a breach of the Code. In these circumstances, I am not persuaded that it would be proportionate and in the public interest to make a referral to the Standards Committee. I am not satisfied, having considered outcomes of previous similar cases that, even in the event of confirmation of breach of the Code, a sanction would be imposed in this case.

Finding

Therefore, under Section 69(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 2000, my finding is that no action needs to be taken in respect of the matters investigated. Nevertheless, I do consider that it is appropriate to recommend that Councillor Steven Bletsoe undertakes additional Code of Conduct training with the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Council particularly in the context of interests.

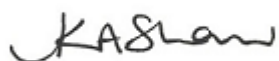
This letter is being sent only electronically. A hard copy will not be sent unless you ask for one.

A copy of this letter will be sent to Councillor Steven Bletsoe, the Clerk to Bridgend Town Council and the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Council.

The file on your complaint will now be closed. We routinely destroy hard copies of complaint files after two years following the date on which a complaint is closed, unless there is an exceptional reason to keep the information for longer. We will destroy personal information held on electronic records after ten years following the date on which the complaint is closed.

If you have not already done so, I would be grateful if you could complete customer satisfaction and equality questionnaires. These can be accessed at www.ombudsman.wales/customersatisfaction If you would prefer paper copies please contact us.

Yours sincerely



Katrin Shaw

Chief Legal Advisor and
Director of Investigations

Appendix 12

TRANSCRIPT

FOR: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

PN No: 8992

TITLE: CASE 2022048858

TYPE: Hearing

CONVENTION: Verbatim

AUDIO LENGTH: 103 minutes

TRANSCRIBER: EST/CA1

AT: ESSENTIAL SECRETARY LTD

COMPLETION DATE: 31.01.2024

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

Any difficulties experienced, accents and general comments

NUMBER OF UNCLEARs	3	NUMBER OF INAUDIBLES	0
SPELL CHECK PERFORMED	Yes	PROOFING PERFORMED	Yes
WORD COUNT	20200	PAGES	64
AUDIO QUALITY	Good		
SPEAKER RELATED ISSUES	A bit of cross-talking and mumbling		
EQUIPMENT RELATED ISSUES			
TERMINOLOGY ISSUES			
OTHER COMMENTS			

Please find attached your completed transcript.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the attached transcript is an accurate record of your audio recording, sometimes difficulties are encountered in understanding technical words, people speaking with a foreign accent and in some cases when somebody is speaking from a crowded room with a lot of background noise and from mobile phones.

Where we have had difficulty understanding words we have indicated this as [unclear] with the appropriate time stamp, or simply attempted to spell the word phonetically but followed it with [ph].



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Interview Record

Date: 22nd January 2024

Interviewing Officer(s): Louise Morland
Emily Fletcher

Others Present:

LM: Okay, so we're now recording. Okay, the date is 22nd January 2024, the time is, what have we got...

EF: 10:20am

LM: 10:20 by the clock on the machine. This is an interview in relation to a complaint made by Leanne Edwards, Clerk to Bridgend Town Council, against Councillor Steven Bletsoe which alleges breaches of the Code of Conduct for members of Bridgend Town Council. I'm Louise Morland, I'm an investigator for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and present to assist me is my colleague...

EF: Hello, I'm Emily Fletcher, I'm also an Investigator for the Ombudsman.

LM: ... and being interviewed is...?

SB: Er, Steven Bletsoe.

LM: Thank you. So, you were offered the option to have a friend with you at interview but you've chosen to attend alone. Can you confirm for the record that you're happy for the interview to take place without a friend present?

SB: I'm happy for the interview to progress without a friend present.

LM: Great, okay, the interview's being simultaneously recorded onto two CDs. One CD will be sealed in your presence and will be kept securely in case it's needed by an adjudication tribunal or a Standards Committee hearing, and the other will be a working copy to which the Ombudsman or her staff may listen and for which further copies can be made. Both CDs are protected against tampering and before making final recommendations the Ombudsman will provide you with a written transcript of the interview, okay. If you have any, er, legal representative or friend acting for you who, who may require an additional copy of the CD, it may be provided, although the Ombudsman does reserve the right to charge and request for an additional copy should be made to the Ombudsman's Information Governance Manager. The interview is listed to last a maximum of about two hours, can you confirm that you've allowed enough time for that today?

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: I have.

LM: Great, and you're well enough to attend and answer questions.

SB: I am.

LM: Great, and have you everything with you that you might need like...

SB: Yes.

LM: ... glasses, paperwork, whatever.

SB: Yeah, of course, yeah and, and you provided me with a copy of the file so that's great.

LM: Great, okay. Can I just check that mobile phones, etc, are switched off.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay, if you need a comfort break or a break for any reason just let me know and we can stop and start again when you're ready.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Erm, and can you just confirm for the recording, er, that prior to it being switch-, the machine being switched on, we've not discussed the case or any other matter subject to the interview in any way?

SB: I can confirm that.

LM: Great, right. Er, can you confirm that you received the evidence bundle which was enclosed with my letter to you on 14th December and that was 193 pages, erm, there is a copy of it in front of you, but you have received...

SB: I received an electronic copy which I've gone through.

LM: Okay, right, so I'll tell you a little bit about the allegations and then I'll pose a series of questions and I'd ask that you listen to them carefully and answer them as fully as you can. Erm, they're my opportunity to cover the issues I need to and your answers are your opportunity to respond to the allegations, okay and provide the Ombudsman with any information which may assist her in reaching conclusions. I need to ask you to be aware that any information or evidence that you give today is likely to be detailed in, or appended to any report that the Ombudsman may, may produce on her findings. Any such report, depending on the finding may be shared with the Standards Committee as a local authority or the Adjudication Panel for Wales who may hold any hearing in public and may also public the report and appendices in the public domain. So, you've been asked to attend an interview today because it's been alleged that you failed to declare an interest at a council meeting regarding an item which concerned another member who is actually your wife.

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Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB : Correct, yeah.

LM: Okay? Erm, and the Ombudsman's investigating whether your conduct breached the following paragraphs of the Code, so I'm going to read all these out to you, okay? So we have 6.1a, which is not to conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonable be regarded as bringing your office of authority into disrepute. 7a, you must not, in your official capacity or otherwise use or attempt to use your position improperly to confer on, or secure for yourself or any other person an advantage or create or avoid for yourself or any other person, a disadvantage...

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay. 11.1, where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you attend a meeting at which that business is considered you must disclose orally to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest before or at the commencement of that consideration or when the interest becomes apparent. 14.1a, where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority you must, unless you've obtained a dispensation from your authority's Standards Committee, withdraw from the room, chamber or place where a meeting concerning the business is being held. 14.1c, where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority you must, unless you have obtained a dispensation from your authority's Standards Committee not seek to influence a decision about that business. 14.1e, where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority you must, unless you have obtained a dispensation from your authority's Standards Committee not make any oral representations whether in person or some form of electronic communication in respect of that business or immediately cease to make such oral representations when the pre-ju-prejudicial interest becomes apparent. Okay. Do you understand the allegations as they have been made.

SB: I do.

LM: Great, and have you any questions or is there anything you want to say before we carry on with the interview?

SB: Er, nothing about what you said, erm, but I would like to thank you for, formally for allowing me to have this in person, er, because I know the proposal was to do it online...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... so I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to come in, in person, it's, er, greatly appreciated.

LM: That's great, that's fine. Erm, okay, so I need to ask you first to turn to page 54 of the bundle, er, and confirm that it contains a copy of a form which confirms your acceptance of the office of Member and undertaking to all the Codes. It should be on page 54.

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: That is my name and that is my signature, on election of May 2022.

LM: Great, okay, so just a bit of background then, just to start with, erm, and obviously I'm aware that you've made a written submission and we will, we will get onto that...

SB: Mm.

LM: ... but just a bit of background to start with, er, can you tell me a bit about your experience in this council as a Member and I've got a few general questions. When did you first join the Town Council?

SB: May 2017, after election for the Morfa Ward.

LM: Okay and were you, so were you co-opted or elected?

SB: Elected, in the local authority elections.

LM: Okay, any experience of a Member, being a Member anywhere before that?

SB: No.

LM: No, and have you undertaken training for your role?

SB: Er, bits of training here and there.

LM: Yes.

SB: Erm, too much for me to try and remember, erm...

LM: Yes.

SB: Erm, I'm a, erm, Member of Bridgend Town Council since 2017, a Member of BCBC since 2022, a Member of Coity Higher since 2022. I, I take lots of different trainings from all different...

LM: Okay.

SB: ... erm, various councils I'm on.

LM: So you've had training sort of on an ongoing basis.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay, alright. Erm, right and, er, for Bridgend Town Council then had, what sort of roles have you held there?

SB: Erm, so I was made Chair of the Regeneration Committee in 2017, erm, there was a little bit of to'ing and fro'ing at the start of the, the, erm, the term erm, some people for political purposes in my opinion didn't want the Regeneration Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

Committee to meet, so they didn't even meet for the first six months of the council, er, so it was around about September, October time I became Chair of the Regeneration Committee. Erm, I held that role up until I took the role of Mayor, erm, so I was elected as Mayor in 2020...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... then Covid hit...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... and my appointment was delayed drastically, so I wasn't appointed as Mayor until January of 2021, at which point I had to step down from being Chair of Regeneration.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Er, and then on my end of term as Mayor I retook the Mayor of Regeneration on, erm, May 2022, erm, whilst I was Mayor and I, I had the opportunity to be ex officio, I sat on every single committee, erm, because I believed in the role of ex officio.

LM: Okay.

SB: Erm, so I've sat, I've sat on every committee in the council.

LM: So your current roles are...?

SB: Nothing, I'm just a Councillor there now.

LM: Okay, so you're not Chair of the gen-, Regeneration...

SB: No, I stepped down.

LM: Okay, okay, whe-when did that happen?

SB: In May of this year.

LM: May of this year.

SB: Part, partly because of this, partly because of responsibilities...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... you know, I'm on, I'm on two of the heavy lifting committees at BCBC and, and I'm a Coity councillor, erm, because the role of BCBC Councillor is remunerated but not much. I've got a full time job as well.

LM: Yeah.

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: It's not something I could dedicated a lot of time to. Being honest and I hope to be honest the whole day with you, this situation led me to not want to be Chair of Regen any more.

LM: Yeah, okay, okay. Er, right, okay, would you describe yourself, erm, as an experienced Councillor?

SB: I'd describe Councillor David Unwin as an experienced councillor with 42 years. I'd describe myself as a Councillor who's always willing to learn, always learning to better myself and always willing to do what I feel's best for the community.

LM: Okay, alright, okay. Obviously, you know, we're here today because there's been a complaint made, but since you joined the council how would you describe your relationship with the staff there?

SB: Initially?

LM: Well, the history...

SB: Amazing.

LM: Yeah, yeah.

SB: Based on trust and a willingness to work together...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... since this, completely, I can't trust anyone there. I don't believe I want to work with them, erm, but up until this, er, one based on mutual confidence that we could confide in each other and have very open conversations and, erm, work very productively together.

LM: Okay, okay. Alright then. I'm going to go through, I know we went through the paragraphs of the Code at the start...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... but I'm going to go through them again now and I'm just going to ask you to give us your understanding of what they mean.

SB: Of course, yeah.

LM: Okay so we've got 6.1a, which is not to conduct yourself...

SB: Is this, is this in here? Just so I can read it as well? Is that, do you know?

LM: Yeah, it will be, I think the Code of Conduct is under Paragraph 4, erm, sorry Appendix 4.

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Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: Yeah, no, that's fine... Yeah.

LM: Yes, so 6.1a, yeah...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... so it's not to conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute. So what, what does that mean to you?

SB: That you, trust me, and I mean this very sincerely, the reputation of Bridgend Town Council is one of the most important things to me and I, I make reference to that in my written submission.

LM: Mm.

SB: I act at all times to make sure I don't bring Bridgend Town Council into disrepute. Er, the, I, born and raised in Wildmill, I'm a proud, proud Bridgend person and the town council is one of its strongest institutions. I wouldn't, in my, in my own opinion do anything to bring the council into disrepute ever.

LM: Okay, okay and 7a... So that's about official capacity and not using or attempting to use your position improperly...

SB: That was it.

LM: ... yeah to confer an advantage or disadvantage on others. Okay?

SB: Mhm.

LM: So what does that mean to you?

SB: Er, erm, I'm sure we'll come onto this fully in relation to the charge against me...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... erm, but pretty much as it reads that I shouldn't use my privileged position of being an elected councillor to get an advantage for somebody, anybody, regardless of whether they're my wife, my friend or anybody else. Erm, you know, a councillor or non-councillor. You know, if, if something comes up and there's a tender... Perfect example, I'll give you a quick example, Bridgend Town Council's bought Ty'r Ardd, we're looking for somebody to come in and fix a boiler. My cousin's a builder, I tell you one company I didn't put forward was my cousin's company.

LM: Mm.

SB: Because that would be conferring an advantage and it's something I would never, ever do, so regardless of whether in the case, in this case there's a charge

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against me conferring an advantage to my wife or my cousin or my next door neighbour I, I wouldn't do it.

LM: Okay, okay, that's fine. Alright so then we have 11.1, okay, so that's where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you attend a meeting at which the business is considered you must disclose orally to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... before the commencement of that consideration or when the interest becomes apparent, so what does that mean, to you?

SB: A-again as it reads, erm, and, and again I hope that we'll come onto this in, in, when you ask me the questions but, erm, if I have a personal interest which is less than a prejudicial one, which is... If you asked me in a Mastermind style what the difference was, I'd probably say I couldn't give you the, the perfect wording to what the difference is, I always err on the side of caution when it comes to interests. Erm, but, but yeah, if, if, if there is a meeting where something's being discussed and it's in... The thing I always take from it, it's the, in the public interest...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... so in the perception of the public, so, so I always weigh that up in my opinions as to whether... I also believe that, you know, if we've got an ag-agenda item on Bridgend Town Council which has 26 items, if I went looking I could probably 24 of them that I've got an interest in.

LM: Mm.

SB: So it's a balance...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... and I have to weigh that up.

LM: Mm.

SB: You know, we, we had a situation in BCBC's full council meeting last week where they were discussing the, erm, the council tax reduction scheme and during the presentation of that, er, by the Section 151 officer, erm, she mentioned the fact that this will be of benefit to people who are widowed and live in the house on their own and my father's widowed, so I put my hand up, and I declared an interest. A personal interest because I can't influence it, I also didn't speak on the matter and I didn't vote on the matter. I just literally sat there. So it's constantly weighing that up...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... but is, I, I feel it's a balance.

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

LM: Mm.

SB: Because, as an example, there's a town council meeting tonight where they're discussing town twinning and, and residents from Villenave-d'Ornon, are coming to Bridgend in March to sign a Charter. I have friends in Villenave-d'Ornon, do I have to declare that interest?

LM: Mm.

SB: So it's a balance, erm, and I, I constantly weigh that up as I go through meetings...

LM: Yeah fair enough, okay. Okay, so, erm, I'll go through the other thing, paragraphs before...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... which are about prejudicial interest...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... so we have 14.1a...

SB: Yeah.

LM: Yeah, and that's where you have a prejudicial...

SB: Oops, sorry...

LM: Yeah, yeah, no worries, have you got that?

SB: Yeah.

LM: Yeah, where you have a prejudice-prejudicial interest in any business of your authority. You must, unless you've obtained a dispensation from your authority Standard's Committee, withdraw from the room.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay, so wh-what does that mean to you, what's a prejudicial interest?

SB: Prejudicial interest to me would be something where I could be accused of having an, erm, a financial gain, so again using the example earlier of the tender document now, for the boiler for Ty'r Ardd, er, there are eight people coming forward. I don't know who those eight are, if I'd seen one of the names on there and the person who is the cheapest and the best value, and I know them, then I would declare a prejudicial interest and I would leave.

LM: Okay, and similarly 14.1c, which is about prejudicial interest, erm, which is, er, un-unless you've obtained a dispensation...

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... er, you must not seek to influence a decision about that business, what does that mean?

SB: Same, that I shouldn't look to influence the other 18 councillors on the council.

LM: Okay, and 14.1e, where you have a prejudicial interest, er, unless you've obtained a dispensation you must not make any oral representations whether in person or some form of electronic communication.

SB: Mhm, yeah.

LM: Erm, or, and cease to make such oral representations...

SB: Of course.

LM: ... when the interest becomes apparent.

SB: Again, you know, I, I know we'll come onto this later on, er, but there's an accusation that I led councillors before the meeting. I don't do that.

LM: No.

SB: I simply don't do that.

LM: Okay, okay.

SB: And that, that, that's part of my defence if, if you want to call it that...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... in this.

LM: Yes.

SB: Is that, is that (e) is an extremely important part because meetings happen in public, meetings are open for people to watch...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... you know, on line, under, under the new rules that we live under Covid, my actions on the night could be scrutinised by the public.

LM: Mm.

SB: My actions using a mobile phone and a WhatsApp message can't, which is why I don't seek to influence councillors before that, because I find that abhorrent and I find it, coming back to the integrity of the council is fundamental to me. That's, out of everything that's in there, the fact that there's an accusation I tried to

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convince other councillors or, or, or influence them before the meeting. I simply don't do that.

LM: Mm.

SB: I, I wouldn't do that, I've never done that...

LM: Okay.

SB: ... erm, and, and that's kind of... I know I'm moving forward a little bit but that, that's my understanding.

LM: Mm.

SB: I don't try to influence anybody before meetings...

LM: Okay.

SB: ... electronically, down the pub, in the garden on a bench, passing a newspaper as a code word, I don't do any of that.

LM: No.

SB: Erm, because the integrity of the council is important.

LM: Okay, okay, alright, that's helpful. Alright, so, erm, obviously you, you've provided us with a written submission and thank you very much for that, that's very helpful...

SB: And apologies it took so long.

LM: No, that's fine.

SB: But I think you know why it took so long...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... because I wanted it to be very detailed.

LM: And it is detailed and it's very comprehensive, obviously it's a 14 page response.

SB: Yeah.

LM: And that will be appended to any report that we make, okay?

SB: Yeah.

LM: Erm, so you set out that you, you contest, you know, the breach of the code in your response, erm, and I understand that you would like that to be appended to any report that we make...

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SB: Yeah.

LM: ... that's your formal response.

SB: And I, and I, I base that on my interpretation of the code because I, I, look the accusation is, is that I've tried to take part in a meeting which would confer an advantage to my wife. My response to that is the fact that myself and my wife are councillors is, is one matter and we're both democratically elected, separately to represent different parts of the town. But if I didn't do what I did in the public meeting that's open to scrutiny then I was deferring her a disadvantage because I knew the minutes were wrong and if I couldn't do that in a public forum, open to, to scrutiny then I was doing her a disservice because I couldn't, in any way, get other councillors to do that for me.

LM: Mm.

SB: Because I think you've seen my views on trying to influence other councillors so when I fundamentally think the minutes are wrong, what am I meant to do.

LM: Okay, we can explore that.

SB: Okay.

LM: And, and...

SB: No problem.

LM: ... we, we can explore that, alright, erm, obviously I don't intend to revisit everything you've written in here...

SB: No, of course, you've only allowed two hours.

LM: Yeah, yeah.

SB: Yeah.

LM: You know, but, erm, there are some points that it, it may help, you know, it'll help to go over.

SB: Yeah.

LM: So, alright, so you know, clearly, as a bit of background, just for the sake of, you know, what we're talking about today, I'm just going to set out what I understand the background to be which is that...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... you're obviously a member of Bridgend Town Council and you're married to Councillor, Freya Bletsoe...

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SB: Yeah.

LM: ... and she's a member of Bridgend Town Council and Councillor Freya Bletsoe there, there has been, we're looking at an addit-, er, a separate issue about something that happened in a council regeneration meeting on 14th June, alright.

SB: Mm.

LM: ... and that matter is on, that's ongoing as a separate matter.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay, erm, and I think on that complaint you're noted as the, are you...

SB: I'm the sighted advocate, yes.

LM: You're the sighted advocate for Councillor Freya Bletsoe, okay, so that, that investigation, that began at the beginning of August, so it's the 9th August 2022 and we received information, and respon-, her response about that on 6th September, okay, so this complaint, erm, is about your behaviour at a Town Council regeneration meeting on 24th October and the complaint is that you led a discussion about the acc-accuracy of, and proposed amendment to the minutes for the regeneration committee meeting on 14th June...

SB: Yes.

LM: .. which is all around the event concerning Councillor Freya Bletsoe...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... without declaring a prejudicial interest, alright. And, and I think the matter was discussed in the meeting, erm, and another member proposed amendments and a vote was taken...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... okay, and you abstained from that vote.

SB: And, and on that point I didn't propose any alterations.

LM: No, okay.

SB: I did lead the debate and I did state that the minutes were incorrect.

LM: Yeah.

SB: But I didn't propose anything.

LM: No okay, alright, and then the minutes were subsequently amended...

SB: Yeah.

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Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

LM: Alright, so, just, just to start off with, with the complaint for, for Councillor Freya Bletsoe, erm, obviously you've said you've acted as her sighted advocate on that complaint, alright? Is, is that, is your involvement in that complaint ongoing is it? Are you...?

SB: My only, my only involvement in that case has been coming into this meeting with her. She's handled all the complaint on her own, as is required of her.

LM: So when were you first aware of it?

SB: Oh I became that a complaint was made when I was out canvassing with Steve Easterbrook for the by election, but I wasn't aware of the details of it, or, or the complaint itself.

LM: No, so what, what sort of time frame was that?

SB: I'd have to go back and double check, but I think he got elected on the August, so it would have been August 2022.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Erm, I'm trying to get the timelines, I just remember it being very hot, so I'm assuming it was August.

LM: So you campaigning for Steven, er...

SB: We were out canvassing, er, delivering...

LM: Easterbrook, yes?

SB: ... leaflets for Steve Easterbrook in the Saints in Wildmill...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... er, Freya turned up at the end of the road, ashen faced, saying that she'd had a complaint in against her.

LM: Oh right, okay, so that's how you first became aware of it.

SB: That's how I first became aware of it. But, but, as is required in, in the meeting she didn't discuss the details with me...

LM: No.

SB: ... because she's not allowed to.

LM: No.

SB : I only became a sighted advocate when it became things like coming in for meetings here, and things like that. It wasn't, erm, she's had all of the information

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from you and she, she has, she has a BCBC laptop as we all do, erm, she has through BCBC two larger screens that she plugs in so she can see things in, in larger text.

LM: Mhm, so at that time when you were out counselling you saw her at the end of the road and she explained...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... verbally that there had been...

SB: A complaint about her conduct in the regeneration meeting.

LM: Okay, okay, that's fine, right okay, so let, let's look at the, the changes to the minutes then?

SB: Mhm.

LM: Alright? Erm, so I think if we go to...

SB: Are you alright?

LM: Yes, yeah, I am, yeah, no, it's alright, I just thought I'd put the files the wrong way round there, for a minute.

SB: No worries.

LM: Okay, so if we go to the minutes, for the 14th June, 2022, so we're looking at page 96, er, 96, 97, 98.

SB: Oh, sorry, oh yeah, there they are.

LM: Yeah, okay. Okay.

SB: So this is the original meeting.

LM: These are the draft minutes.

SB: Okay.

LM: Yeah, these are the draft minutes.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay, so I think we're at point 8, aren't we, we get to point 8, er... Right, and there's a discussion then that takes place, okay, so if we go down to about point 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, bullet point 6, at the start of the page okay...

SB: 1 2, 3, 4... Yeah.



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

LM: Er, so Councillor Bletsoe suggested a discussion would need to be held in confidence, er, and the Town Clerk tried to provide advice on how this would need to be dealt with, er, Councillor Bletsoe disputed the advice and stated she disagreed. When the Town Clerk raised her hand to request to speak and Councillor Bletsoe then became irate and the Town Clerk con-confirmed that the legislation was contained within the local government act and Councillor Bletsoe demanded to have the information now. Now this is the point of, this, this, these part of the, this part of the meeting, er, is what was discussed at the meeting on the 24th October, is that correct?

SB: The, the details weren't discussed.

LM: No.

SB: But the, the occurrence, the...

LM: ... the minutes?

SB: Yes.

LM: As a whole.

SB: And just, just to give you some background again...

LM: Go on then.

SB: ... look, I'm, I don't want to ask, answer questions you're not asking, however..

LM: Yes.

SB: Just to be very, very clear and I know I go into this, I was chairing this meeting from a kitchen table in Wakefield, remotely. Freya was sat on a sofa about 15 yards away from me in the same room.

LM: Are you talking about this...

SB: This meeting here.

LM: The 14th June meeting, yes?

SB: Yes. now when I saw this and this, this is what really got to me was I was hearing her online because I had my headphones on, but I could also hear her in person. The very words she used was she said, I'm sorry, I can't take this anymore I'm leaving. Now the one line that stood out to me was Councillor F Bletsoe abruptly left the meeting, without apology, but she used the words, I'm sorry.

LM: Mm.

SB: That's something I wanted to raise in this meeting.

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LM: Okay.

SB: That, that fundamentally was the key line that I felt needed to be addressed.

LM : Yeah.

SB: I also wanted to address the fact that we don't minute like this, and that's something I've put in my, my written submissions...

LM: Yes.

SB: ... but the, the key line there saying, without apology. She actually used the words I'm sorry.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Now that was something that I felt could, if the ombudsman wanted to consider it, have been important, which was why I felt I was possibly the only person who could have raised it.

LM: Okay.

SB: You know, to say that line without apology, when I knew the person said I'm sorry, was an important aspect that I wanted to be considered.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Now the conversation that I wanted to raise never went down those roads because other councillors jumped in, and they wanted to take the, the matter forward. I never got to raise that. But that, that's one of the very lines that stood out to me was the fact that I knew these minutes were wrong, because it said without apology...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... when I heard the word I'm sorry.

LM: Yeah okay, so that part of the, that part of what is recorded there was subsequently amended.

SB: Er, under the proposal of Councillor Ian Spiller...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... he wanted the words to say that a discussion had taken place, er, and, and that was that.

LM: And, but that was your, as you've just explained, it was that part of the meeting that you, you felt needed to be considered?

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SB: It, it was my opinion that if we were going to do verbatim minutes like this, which Bridgend Town Council haven't done in the seven years I was there, then they needed to be accurate.

LM: Yeah.

SB: And I didn't believe they were accurate.

LM: Okay, so let's, let's go to the...

SB: Sorry, there were two issues for me, and I know I've done this in the, in the...

LM: That's fine, it's your opportunity to speak.

SB: Of course, I get that, erm, there were two matters for me, one, this isn't how we record minutes...

LM: No.

SB: ... and I've given evidence to you, that's in this pack about how we record issues in the, in the Chamber, there's something about Councillor Alan Wathan and Councillor Chris Harding where it just says a heated debate took place...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... so either we have a standard of that's how we document things, or if we're going to do them like this, then they have to be right.

LM: Yeah.

SB: And if they're going to be documented like this and they're wrong, I can't sit back and say I can't say anything.

LM: No.

SB: Because I knew the words I'm sorry were used.

LM: Yeah.

SB: So, and this comes back to my balance of what are my interests, what am I trying to do in the best interests of the council, if I walked out of the meeting and didn't say anything, in my opinion, I'm doing the council, no, nobody else, the council a disservice by not raising it.

LM: Okay, that's fine, okay. Okay, so let's go to the minutes of the, the meeting on the 24th October then, so that's page 126...

SB: Yeah.

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

LM: Okay, so this, this is, this is the meeting where there's, there's a, you've chaired this meeting, yeah?

SB: Mhm, yeah.

LM: And there's a discussion about the minutes for the Regeneration Committee meeting on the 14th Octob-, er 14th June.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay, so before this meeting did you consider your position and your association with Councillor Freya Bletsoe...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... before discussing the minutes.

SB: I considered my role as Chair of the Regeneration Committee of Bridgend Town Council and the fact that my wife is a member of the committee, but, er, and again I come back to this, two of my best friends are in that committee as well.

LM: Mm.

SB: Do I have to make a declaration there? Erm, I, I've got friends on Coity Higher council, very, very good friends, do I have to make a declaration there. It's, it's... this is potentially, erm, this, when this comes back to me weighing everything up, the reputation of the town council came above everything for me, on this. Yes, I'm married to Freya, but we, we're husband and wife outside the Chamber, we're councillors when we're inside the Chamber, in the same way as I would treat Councillor Tim Wood and Councillor Steve Easterbrook. They're fellow councillors, they're not... two of my best friends I go to the rugby with, we go out. I probably spend more time with those two than I do with Freya, anyway...

LM: Mm.

SB: But, but this, this is where my interpretation of this, is this, is that yes, Freya is my wife, outside the chamber, because there's an accusation in one of the, erm, the, the things that I gave her preferential treatment. I never do, I'm probably harsher on her meetings than I am with anyone else. Er, I, I probably close her down more than other people.

LM: But did you, so, so from what I understand from what you're saying is you considered your, your role as a Chair of, of the committee...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... and you considered your relationship with Freya.

SB: Mhm.

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Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

LM: Is, is that right? But did you, did you think, do I need to declare an interest here?

SB: Yeah.

LM: Did, you thought about that?

SB: Yeah.

LM: Did you, and you decided that you didn't, is that what you're saying?

SB: I, I decided two things...

LM: Yes.

SB: ... one I wasn't going to make a public declaration that Freya's my wife, because everyone in Bridgend knows that anyway. It, it's, it's not a Jones, it's not a Smith, both Councillor Bletsoe, we act outside the Chamber as husband and wife, but two, whatever happened I wasn't going to vote, which is why I abstained. Whatever happened I was going to act as Chair. I put my case forward at the start, I didn't influence anybody in any way, I publicly stated I believe the minutes were wrong. Councillor Spiller then took over the conversation and I didn't encourage anyone. I certainly didn't tell Steve Easterbrook he'd voted the wrong way when he seconded a motion...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... which is another accusation against me, which never happened.

LM: Mm.

SB: Erm, and I just decided that whatever happened, I wasn't going to vote.

LM: Why, why did you decide you weren't going to vote?

SB: I didn't feel, I didn't feel it was right for me to vote?

LM: But why not, why not?

SB: Because of the public perception of it.

LM: Because, because of...

SB: Because people could assume that I, I'd, I'd used influence which was never my intention.

LM: Because of your, is this because of your relationship with, with...

SB: Because I tried to err on the side of caution, whilst finding that balance. If, if I don't need... I don't want to be sat here this morning...

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

LM: No, of course.

SB: ... you don't want me sat here this morning. I, I always act in the best, in what I perceive to be the best interests of the council.

LM: Mm,.

SB: You know, this, this isn't an easy situation.

LM: No, no, I understand, yeah.

SB: You know, is it reasonable for a wife to expect her husband to stand up in a meeting and publicly stand up for her? Did I? No. Because I was trying to be the Chair of a regeneration committee.

LM: Mhm.

SB: I was trying to be impartial.

LM: Mm.

SB: You'll notice from the recording at the outset, I ask everybody to be respectful of the ongoing situation.

LM: Mm.

SB: Because I'm trying to be fair to the two different parties who are taking part...in quite a serious and, erm, uncomfortable accusation.

LM: Mm.

SB: I could have said go for it, talk about what you want, but what I tried to do was be respectful to the Clerk and another Councillor and, and, you know, as I say is it reasonable for a wife to expect her husband to stand up for her, probably. Did I? No. Because I feel I acted impartially.

LM: Okay, alright, okay and, let's go back a little bit then..

SB: Of course.

LM: So we're talking about considering your position, erm, and, and you said you did consider your position and if you should declare an interest. Did, did you seek any advice or guidance from, from...?

SB: I didn't feel I could go to the staff on the matter.

LM: No?

SB: No.

LM: Did you think about any, anything outside of...

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Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: I can't go to One Voice Wales, only the Clerk and the Chair can. There is absolutely zero support for Community Councillors.

LM: Okay, okay.

SB: You can't go to anyone. Look, again the accusation is they're part of the same group, they all act together. We're not part of a political party. There's no hierarchy. We can't go to advice for people. I can't phone an organisation and say what do you think I should do. I have to act in like, in, in to the best of my training and my knowledge and my judgement.

LM: Did, did, would it have been an option to hand over the Chairing of the meeting to somebody else?

SB: Somebody else who knew Freya really well.

LM: But was that, was that...

SB: Eve-ev-every councillor in there, apart from Councillor Alison Felton is extremely good friends with Freya, who am I meant to pass it on to?

LM: Mm, yeah, but did you consider that? Did you...?

SB: Well yeah, because there is nobody else. I, I was the best person to Chair. I, I was democratically elected by the other councillors to Chair the committee. I was acting as the Chair of that committee. Properly in my opinion...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... because what I didn't do at any time was falsify, mislead or try and lead something anywhere. I stated facts that I knew to be true.

LM: Okay, so...

SB: And, and that's where, that's where my thing is, at what point do I have to say I know what's true, but I can't say it. The truth has to out.

LM: Mm.

SB: If the Chair of a committee, regardless of who he's related to knows a fact, at what point can you not say something?

LM: Mm.

SB: Because I can't go to Tim Wood before the meeting and say Tim, that wasn't right, could you raise it for me, because that's wrong.

LM: No, and, and I'm aware that beforehand this, this discussion about these, these minutes was raised in other meetings.

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Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: Yes.

LM: And, and it was deferred and I think that the Clerk had said to put, er, proposed amendments in writing.

SB: No, the deputy clerk had, because the Clerk apparently was there as a guest.

LM: Yeah, sorry, the deputy clerk, yeah, but that didn't happen...

SB: No.

LM: ... is there a reason why that didn't...

SB: I didn't trust them.

LM: Okay.

SB: I'm, I'm sor-, and this comes back to the very first thing you asked me about my working relationship with them. I've seen those linked WhatsApp messages...

LM: Mm.

SB: I've seen, I've seen conversations that are derogatory about me.

LM: Whe-when you say you don't trust them, what do you think was going to happen, what, what...

SB: Well I didn't think anything was going to happen, I, I just don't trust them. I can't go to them and, and confide in them anymore...

LM: No?

SB: ... because the trust has gone, because when I was, my last, my last but one meeting as Bridgair... Sorry, as Chair of Bridgend Council, there was a motion put in by the staff that we were unreasonable employers. That was my last but one meeting, because the last meeting nothing happened, in, erm, you can't talk about, I can't remember the phrasing, but we went onto pink papers and the staff discussed where the council, as a corporate body was an unreasonable employer and then I see a WhatsApp message where the labour group are discussing the fact that the Clerks, plural, have thanked them privately for the support they gave them.

LM: Mm.

SB: How, how, how am I then meant to go to somebody and trust them when I see things like that happening.

LM: So, these minutes as we have them, for the 24th October...

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: Yeah.

LM: Have they been approved yet, do you know that?

SB: I don't know. Yes, they will have been, because we've had a Regen meeting since...

LM: Yes, yeah, okay, and, and so you're happy with the content of what they say, you don't...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... dispute the content of what they're saying...

SB: No.

LM: ...okay, I'll move onto the written submission in, in a minute.

SB: I'm sorr-sorry for rambling, I really am.

LM: It's fine.

SB: ... but it's, it is something I am really passionate about...

LM: Yeah

SB: ... and I, I make reference to this, I actually believe that the integrity of the council's at stake with the complaint.

LM: Mm.

SB: And the integrity of the council is something, whatever happens to me, whether I stand again, whatever, the integrity of Bridgend Town Council is something that's so important to me, I don't take any of the remuneration. I took remuneration when I was Mayor because of all the additional things, never taken the yearly allowance, never taken the Chair's allowance. I do it because, for the good of the council, I've always done everything for the good of the council and this, this fundamentally is really, really important for me.

LM: Yeah, okay, I understand that.

SB: Mm.

LM: Erm, okay, right, I'll move on to the written submission...

SB: Oh course, yeah.

LM: ... next.

SB: But is there anything you want to say, Emily?

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

EF: Can I just ask, just, just so I can have a, an understanding, so obviously you mentioned that you were acting as the Chair and thinking in, in that kind of head...

SB: Mm.

EF: ... so what's your ordinary procedure, when you are acting as Chair and you do have an interest, or you consider yourself to have an interest, what do you normally do then in that situation, because I know you mentioned, erm, you know, you're the Chair, but you know that there's something wrong, so what point, but ordinarily what would you do then?

SB: If, if I believe that there is a, a declaration, I would make it.

EF: Even if you knew something, you know, you mentioned earlier I knew there was a fact that was wrong so I had to kind of say it.

SB: Yeah.

EF: So in a different situation then you...

SB: But I was acting as Chair, I wasn't acting as Freya's husband.

EF: But that's what I'm asking, when you are acting as Chair, and you've got a different interest, what's your ordinary response to that.

SB: Well if I use the example of my cousin and the building...

EF: But acting as a Chair in this committee...

SB: Right.

EF: On this basis. That's to do with tendering.

SB: Yeah.

EF: Because you mentioned, you know, you questioned when I'm the Chair if I know something's wrong...

SB: Yeah.

EF: ... you know, or what point can I not say it...

SB: Yeah.

EF: ... so what's your ordinary approach if you do have an interest and you were the Chair, but you know something, you believe you know something's wrong?



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SB: I'm trying to think of a for instance in that. I mean I, I'm trying to think of an example.

EF: Okay.

SB: I, I don't know if you can give me an example of, because, because I can't think of one.

EF: Okay.

SB: I mean I, I, I was in this meeting...

EF: Yeah.

SB: As Chair and, and when I went to the full council meeting and I was there to present the minutes, erm, you know, I've detailed in that, that I turned up late and everything. I, I take that role very seriously. I, I take that role very seriously, I, I genuinely can't think of an example of what you're asking.

EF: No, that's fine, thank you. I just want...

SB: Er, I, I'm not trying to be difficult but I'm...

EF: No, of course.

SB: ... but if something comes up in a meeting and I genuinely believe there's an interest that I need to make I will make it. But I don't, I don't personally feel there's an interest here...

EF: Okay.

SB: Okay, because something I haven't tried to do is form any influence over the other complaints that you're handling because verbatim minutes have never been presented to the Ombudsman from Bridgend Town Council because Bridgend Town Council don't make them. So at the time I'm doing this, I didn't know that the verbatim minutes were so important to the other complaint.

EF: Okay.

SB: They weren't, I mean it's been described in, in my complaint against me that apparently they're the cornerstone of the entire complaint. I wasn't overturning the cornerstone of any complaint when I was going through the minutes. I was acting as the Chair of a committee trying to make sure that the integrity of the council was maintained.

EF: Okay, no, that's helpful, thank you sorry.

LM: No, that's fine, that's absolutely fine.

SB: Is it okay if I just...

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

LM: Right.

SB: ... take a water, is that alright?

LM: Yeah, go ahead.

SB: Does anyone else want one, whilst I'm pouring.

EF: No thank you.

LM: I'll have one, thank you.

SB: There we are...[pause]... Sorry.

LM: That's alright, no problem, okay, so if we look at the written submission, now that's going to be in that file at the front, at the front of the file...

SB: At the front, okay.

LM: Under the first unlisted pink tab...

SB: That's right, yeah.

LM: ... that's it, yeah. Okay, alright I'm going to go through, like I say I'm not going to go through every point in here...

SB: No.

LM: ... but there's some, somethings it would be helpful to me...

SB: And I'm sorry that I repeat a few times on there, but I, I wanted to go through your folder, and answer them in that way so I know I've repeated a few times...

LM: Yes, that's absolutely fine. The first thing I would say though is, erm, obviously if you look in here, if you look on page 1...

SB: Mhm.

LM: In the, in the final paragraph there's brackets which says evidence IMG...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... and then a set of numbers, now, I'm not sure whether you, you, you know, the intention was to attach screen-...

SB: Oh, were there no attachments?

LM: No, there were no attachments in there, so...

SB: Oh, that's a bit of, I'll get those to you immediately, apologies...

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LM: If you could.

SB: ... I thought they had, I'm really sorry.

LM: That, that would be helpful.

SB: Okay, sorry.

LM: So, so none of those have come through but you, you...

SB: Right.

LM: ... have set out very clearly anyway what your issues are with all of those...

SB: Okay, alright, I'll make sure you get those, sorry.

LM: I'll be able to, if I get them, I'll be able to look at that.

SB: Yeah, yeah, I'll get those to you, er, hopefully this afternoon.

LM: No problem, okay. So...

SB: Hold on, I've got scrutiny three this afternoon so...

LM: Oh, right, yeah, don't, don't worry.

SB: And I, look I know I make reference in here to a lot of screenshots which were part of 1600 screenshots that were leaked to me by an ex-member of the Labour group. Erm, to me it puts a very different perception on, on the entire situation. You know, from the, from the, erm, the members who are present there's Councillor Alison Felton who's part of the Labour group and then you've got Labour who are not part of the group trying to tell her what happened in the meeting she was in.

LM: Mm.

SB: That's why it was so important to me about the integrity of the council.

LM: Mm.

SB: Because I know the games that go on in politics. I've seen screenshots where council members are saying to Alison Felton, was Freya shouting...

LM: Mhm.

SB: ... and the only Labour councillor who was in the meeting said no she wasn't, but they're pushing her and they're trying to create the narrative.

LM: Mm.

SB: That's why those minutes are so important...

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LM: Mm.

SB: ... that's why, I'm not naïve, I know the games. I've seen the screenshots in there and the reference they make to me, I'm not going to bore you with all 1600 of them, but the, that's why I'm acting as Chair. When I'm Chair of a committee, I'm not just not Freya's husband, I'm not a member of the Bridgend County Independence Group, I'm not any of those things. I'm Chair of a committee of one of the most important town councils in my mind, in Wales. That's, that's where I was with my actions.

LM: Mm, and I understand that and you've set that out, you, you know...

SB: Yeah, and that's why it's so important.

LM: You, you've set it out, I, I do see that, erm, right okay, so if we go to page five...

SB: Yeah.

LM: Paragraph three, er, paragraph three, down the page, okay?

SB: Mhm.

LM: Erm, so you say, er, paragraph three shows very clearly that I abstained from the vote...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... and would have always abstained from the vote as once I had made my views as the Chair of the committee known I was satisfied to allow the committee itself to decide what it felt was the best course of action through a majority.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay.

SB: Which, without knowing is kind of what said a couple of minutes ago.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Th-that, I, as a, and I know I've said this once before, I had two issues, that's not how we record minutes and if we were going to do it that way they were wrong...

LM: So...

SB: ... that's all I wanted on the record, it was then up to the committee what they decided to do.

LM: Okay.

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SB: If the committee had proposed not to change the minutes, I still would have abstained.

LM: Yeah, okay. Okay, and then you go on further to say, if I was to act as a husband I would not have even attended the meeting...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... I would have made my apologies and not attended.

SB: Mhm.

LM: So, just explain what you mean to me by that. If I was to act as a husband.

SB: It comes back to the expectation of a wife or a husband to stand up for him. I wasn't acting as Freya's husband.

LM: Do you think other people could have seen it like that?

SB: I don't believe a member of the public has made that observation at all. I think the Clerk of the court who has a separate complaint in, has made that observation but I don't believe that she's acting in a way that could ever be seen as in anyway neutral.

LM: Mm.

SB: She's complaining because in her opinion I've jeopardised her other complaint. No member of the public has made this complaint.

LM: Mm.

SB: No member of public has ever made a complaint about the fact that Freya and I sit in a Chamber together. The Clerk has muddled the waters because in her opinion I jeopardised her complaint against Freya.

LM: Mm.

SB: So, no, I don't think any of the member of the public would see that.

LM: Do you think that because a complaint has been made about Freya and it's about the incident on the 14th June meeting...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... and it's about the conduct that took place and the minutes...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... had, had referred to that conduct that by discussing the, those minutes...

SB: Mhm.

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LM: ... and changes to them or that they were not accurate or your feeling was about them not being accurate that you could also be affecting that, the evidence on that complaint?

SB: But she's not neutral.

LM: Sor-sorry, who's not?

SB: The Clerk, the person who's made the complaint against me isn't neutral. Er, and I go back to, where, where does the Clerk draw the line.

LM: Er, er...

SB: Myself, Freya, Tim Woods, Steve Easterbrook and Ian Williams were in the rugby on Saturday having a really good time, having a couple of drinks. Two of those people are on this committee, could they Chair the meeting and say they weren't right because they're friendly with Freya? Is, is it not me...

LM: Well could, could...

SB: ... is, is her complaint not that I've been in there, but that the notes that she took, because we can't get away from that. The minutes were generated from notes that she took, which apparently have been shredded now, were made by her.

LM: Well I appreciate you say the Clerk's not neutral, but are you neutral?

SB: I believe I've acted neutrally, yeah. I, I believe I do, because as I say if I was acting as Freya's husband, I wouldn't have even gone to the meeting because I would have stood up there and I would have spoken completely differently to the way I acted as Chair, but I didn't.

LM: Was it an option not to go to the meeting and get someone else to Chair?

SB: Always an option, totally...

LM: Or even get the, the, you know, the discussion deferred. If you were there on the day and thought...

SB: Defer-deferred to when?

LM: Hm?

SB: Deferred to when?

LM: I don't know.

SB: After the complaint? But then you're working draft minutes and you're working on minutes that I know are wrong and they're only draft minutes, written by the person who's made the complaint. This, this comes back to the core of the issue, the Clerk has put in, and I'm personally desperately trying to separate the

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two complaints, because they're two separate complaints. But the complaint is that I changed, tried to change minutes or Leanne's version of this is that I've tried to change minutes that she believes are right. That fit her complaint against another councillor...

LM: I think, I think the, you know, the complaint, what we're considering is about declaring interests, that's what we, we're considering you know, whether you should have declared an interest and whether you've led a discussion...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... that's what we're considering. Erm, so, yeah, I mean I think it's important not to get too hung up in, in the changes, it's about what you did in terms of whether you should have declared...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... an interest.

SB: But should have any of the other councillors, if I asked them to Chair it. So, so two things on that. Everyone apart from Alison Felton is a very good friend of Freya's, so could they have chaired it? And two, am I just meant to sit back, knowing that the minutes are wrong and potentially allow them to go through. In my opinion truth must out. If I know those minutes are wrong I'm duty bound to say they're wrong.

EF: That goes back to my question earlier. I'm trying to understand whether you're saying, whether you have an interest or not...

SB: Mhm.

EF: ... whether the truth in your opinion trumps that? If that makes sense.

SB: Can I be honest with you...

EF: Yes.

SB: ... if I make sure the truth is known and I'm charged with not declaring an interest, I'd rather the truth be known.

EF: Okay.

SB: Because to me, and I would certainly hope that the Ombudsman office would, not you personally, not you guys sorry, but the Ombudsman as an institution would accept that the truth is more important. Because I understand that the world that we exist in, is a very strange world and a very complex world, but the truth fundamentally is most important to me and I mean that very honestly.

LM: Okay, excuse me, sorry...

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SB: I, I, I am that person, so, er, a stupid example, unrelated, this morning there's a discussion on a local social media hub whether the Bridgend bus station is closing or not. Somebody says the bus station isn't closing, it's just a rumour. Now I know that's not true, so there's an instinct in me that gets my fingers twitchy which means I have to respond and say they aren't rumours, they are true, because that's the truth. Now that doesn't do me any favours because it brings me into conflict with a resident of mine who thinks I've just being difficult. The truth is there is a proposal to stop, to close the bus station. So those twitchy thumbs of mine make me type on my phone to tell the person that they're not right. The truth is that those minutes were not right. I was the Chair of that committee. It was incumbent on me to state the minutes were not right and I can go into the layers of the minutes are written from notes that the Clerk and the complainant has made herself. To me that, that's not the important hook in this. The minutes as proposed were wrong, and again I can go onto the fact that, you know, when I turned up late to the full council meeting where minutes are normally ratified and then the Labour member said to the Mayor can we go back to the thing which wasn't proper protocol and then there were comments in the thing about blah, blah, blah. I can prove this is politically motivated, but fundamentally when we're back to why did I go into that meeting and Chair it, because I was acting as Chair of the Regeneration Committee. I knew the minutes were wrong, I knew that's not how we do minutes.

LM: Okay.

SB: And I don't want to answer every question like that but that, that's, that's the premise here.

LM: I understand, yeah, okay, so if we look at page seven...

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay, so it's page seven and it's paragraph two, alright, and it's about half way down and you say, er, there is a statement that I've done this for my and my wife's benefit...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... which is again inaccurate.

SB: Mhm.

LM: There is no benefit to my wife, as it did not, and could not jeopardise the complaint that had been made against her.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay. So with the minutes, we're talking about, you know, initially the draft minutes set out an incident concerning your wife, which is the subject of another complaint.

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SB: Mhm.

LM: The minutes were then, there was, they were dis-discussed at this meeting on 24th October which you chaired and led the discussion and the minutes were then changed and those bullet points, 3 to 10, were taken out.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay, so it didn't reflect that discussion.

SB: Mhm.

LM: So would those amendments then reflect Councillor Freya Bletsoe in a better light?

SB: No.

LM: And specifically in the light of the complaint...

SB: No. How, how would they?

LM: Because they don't refer to the, the specific conduct that's been subject to a complaint.

SB: But, but, alright, using your evidence folder again, let's say that Councillor Chris Harding had made a complaint against Councillor Alan Wathan and you needed to refer to those minutes. All that you would have known is that a heated debate took place. Councillor Ian Spiller's proposal was that as, a heated debate, er, I can't remember the exact wording, it'll be in here somewhere that a, a disagreement or whatever took place. You still have that to rely on, and you'd have all of your abilities to interview w-witnesses and all those kind of things. I didn't try and take that away from anyone but, and again I come back to another point that I make in there. If the minutes are going to be relied on so heavily, then they should be recorded, as we're recording this now. I've supported a motion to record minutes. I believe in the, the true and accurate record of minutes, but I can't see how, I mean according to this, that there's one person sat there with a notebook trying to write all this down whilst two people are going back at each other, in any way. You know, if, if we were talking now, and you were there writing all of this, you wouldn't get everything down and that's what they're saying happened. I want minutes recorded so that, you know, if somebody says such and such did this, the town council could provide you with the recording of it and you could hear it, and you could hear context and you could see things. But you can't, I mean honestly, as an Ombudsman you couldn't take minutes by one person as being a very true and accurate record of every word that was spoken in there. You're going to do your investigation, you're going to interview your witnesses and this is why I don't accept that I've tried to confer Freya a, an advantage even on top of everything else. The fact that I've not confer-, have I in some way tried to influence you in not taking the investigation forward. No, because that's the proper process. But you wouldn't take the minutes from a meeting, whether people believe they're right or

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wrong as the absolute. You're going to do your interviews. So I, I don't understand that charge. I mean if there was recording and I tried to wipe it off, then maybe. But, you know, saying that the democratic services officer wrote every single word of what everyone said and got it absolutely right, whilst she was on an Owl system, I don't think so.

LM: I think, I mean what you're saying is, you know, that's your, that's your view and, and that's, but I don't, you know, I think we have to keep focussed on the fact that this is about whether you should have declared an interest at that meeting.

SB: Which, which I still go back to.

LM: Yeah.

SB: I was acting as Chair of the committee.

LM: Okay, okay. So, right...

SB: But very genuinely, I don't understand how by allowing Councillor Ian Spiller to put his proposal forward in a meeting that I chaired, would diminish your ability to carry out that investigation, the other investigation, not this one. That's the accusation here, that I used my position to try and influence that complaint, but I haven't because you wouldn't rely on the minutes for your sole investigation, you'd carry out your interviews, so I don't understand how I've influenced that investigation, have I? All I've don-, all, all Councillor Spiller did was summarise rather than have verbatim, which was open to dispute.

LM: Er, yeah...

SB: Because Councillors in the meeting whether it's me or somebody else didn't agree with them.

LM: Yeah, but like, like I say I think we need to get, you know, keep focused on whether it should have been...

SB: Of course.

LM: ... you know, whether...

SB: I'm just answering that part.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Because I haven't tried to get an advantage or, or tried to negate the other complaint because that process is separate.

LM: Yeah.

SB: You handle that, not the council.

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LM: Okay, okay. Alright then, so if we turn to page 11, and we're on paragraph two.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay, so I'll read part of this paragraph, it says, so we're talking about effectively the other, the other issue with your wife...

SB: Yeah.

LM: Er, which it looks like it had been subject to, er, personnel meeting.

SB: Yes, this was at the start of the meeting where I asked people to be respectful of the ongoing complaint and the fact that it was discussed in a personnel committee on pink papers.

LM: That's, that's right.

SB: Yeah.

LM: So that's, so you say, I was aware that it was a delicate matter, one that was with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and that nothing in the meeting should ever risk due process that had to be carried out.

SB: Mhm.

LM: The com-complaint was being taken forward and that was proper process, you're talking about the complaint against...

SB: This process.

LM: ... Yes, and the complaint against Freya Bletsoe, it should be allowed to continue unfettered without any person on the Regeneration Committee putting any jeopardy towards it.

SB: Mhm.

LM: I believe that there were mistakes in the minutes, that the way they had been recorded was wrong, but I didn't want any discussion that would risk the complaint that the Clerk had submitted and to allow the PSOW to complete their investigation...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... especially in a public meeting when Personnel Committee had met in closed session.

SB: Mhm.

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LM: Okay. So, there, there's a couple of things here, you've referred to, obviously a personnel matter and pink, pink papers, okay and I appreciate you're saying that you felt you needed to make people aware of it, but not everybody in that meeting would have known about that personnel matter, would they?

SB: Yeah, because it would have been on council papers ratified before this meeting.

LM: But they wouldn't have known what exactly it was...

SB: Yeah.

LM: It was, you think they would have known exactly...

SB: Well they get the pink papers in full because then we go into closed session in the full council to ratify the minutes of the pink papers...

LM: Okay.

SB: ... and they always do it at the end of the meeting so we're not putting members of the public out, and bringing them back in...

LM: Yeah.

SB: ... all personnel minutes are the last, after everything, the last agenda item on every council meeting. So every council member would have seen the pink papers.

LM: And I think, I think you've referred as well, erm, to, you know, that people may be asked to provide witness statements...

SB: Yeah.

LM: Yeah. Do you, do you, do you think that people could have seen that, and I appreciate you say you were trying to bring awareness of a delicate situation...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... but that people could have felt, could have interpreted that slightly differently?

SB: I certainly hope not.

LM: And, and feel, feel sort of threatened by that...

SB: I would...

LM: ... by the reference to witnesses and witness statements?



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SB: If anybody felt threatened by what I said, I would a) be amazed but extremely disappointed. That was, that entire part of the meeting was done out of respect of the ongoing process between the Clerk and the other councillor. In no way, hand on heart, was I ever meant to influence or intimidate anybody, ever.

LM: Do you think anyone could have seen it like that?

SB: Nobody had told me that they did and, again, you know, I, I hadn't even thought about that until you just said that. Erm, abs-, no, no, I, no I don't believe anyone could because it was said in a very respectful way. It wasn't, it was said very calmly, very respectfully and apparently it was recorded. So you've got the, you've got the, erm, I don't know if you've got the audio of it, but if you listen to it, er, you hear it was said in a very respectful way.

LM: Mm.

SB: I'd never say anything like that to try and influence or, or, erm, what's the word... Intimidate somebody, ever.

LM: Mm, okay. So going back to where you say the complaint was being taken forward, and that was proper process, it should be allowed to continue unfettered without any person on the Regeneration Committee putting any jeopardy towards it.

SB: Mhm, what I didn't want was people to have an open discussion about their recollection that would jeopardise the complaint. I wanted people to allow the process of the Clerk taking their complaint forward against the councillor, in the proper way.

LM: But do you think the whole issue of discussing those minutes could be, you've used the word unfettered...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... and jeopardy.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Do you think that changing those minutes could fetter that process and could jeopardise it?

SB: But allowing them to go through incorrectly would have done exactly the same... Wouldn't it? If I knew those minutes were wrong and I said nothing, then that jeopardises it because it, it wasn't the truth. I, I know what you're asking, I know where you're coming from, but all I ask is to put yourself in my position, as Chair, nothing else...

LM: Of course.

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SB: ... as Chair of a committee. You know, I, I, I... I'm trying not to read too much into the question...

LM: Mm.

SB: .. but the question is should I allow the minutes to go through as they were? Wrong.

LM: I think, the, the question really is, should you have been involved in the process?

SB: Could, should anyone have been involved in the process?

LM: Yeah, but we're talking about you.

SB: Yeah, totally, but...

LM: Yeah, I mean it's for you to...

SB: But the answer back is, if I can't, who can. If a person who is in the meeting knows the minutes are wrong...

LM: Yeah, I think, you know, if we come back to the, it's about, we're talking about interests aren't we?

SB: Yeah.

LM: You know, and close personal association.

SB: Mhm.

LM: You know, the person concerned is your wife.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Not I -, obviously not everybody else is in that position.

SB: Mhm.

LM: That's your position.

SB: So, so the other option is I go to another councillor, I say those minutes weren't right, and I'm breaking that, that last point about trying to gain influence before the meeting. What, what am I meant to do?

LM: Well you, you clearly abstained from the vote...

SB: I did abstain from the vote because I'd made my point at the outset, that I believed two parts of the minutes were wrong and I didn't believe in the way they were recorded. That was my involvement .

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LM: But, but there were other people obviously at that, at that Regeneration Committee meeting...

SB: Totally...

LM: ... who could have spoken.

SB: They could have, but I didn't speak to them before the meeting to find out if they were going to raise it, because that's wrong. I didn't go to Tim and Steve and said that's not how I remember it, is it how you remember it?

LM: I appreciate you, I, I appreciate you...

SB: So if I'm not having a conversation before the meeting with them, because I don't believe in that, do I think well, do I trust them to do it, so that I, my, my recollection comes forward or do I actually be a councillor and state what I know is true because there's, you know, the alternative to me trying to make sure that I knew those minutes were wrong is worse than what I did.

LM: Mm.

SB: If I go to Tim, Steve, Ian Spiller or whomever and I say, look mate, I don't think these minutes are right but I'm married to Freya, could you do this for me? That's worse, surely, because everything I did was in a public meeting, where the public can scrutinise what I did and what I said. Anything that I did in the alternative way is underhand and I think is a very, very dangerous precedent for councillors to go forward.

LM: Mm. I think, yeah. If we look at...

SB: And I hope you know where I'm coming from with this. I, I really do, because I'm not trying to be slimy or sneaky or anything else... I'm wearing my heart on my sleeve and I'm telling you...

LM: Oh, no, I appreciate you...

SB: ... exactly where my rationale is, because of the, the passion I have. You know, I, I've already explained. I've got a full time job. I'm a BCBC councillor. I do two community councils. I'm looking to be coopted onto a third one because they risk not going quorate. I believe in local democracy. I don't take any remuneration from Bridgend Town or Bridgend, or Coity Higher and I won't on this third one I'm going on. I give my time because I'm passionate about local democracy. I don't do this for anything else.

LM: Do you think, obviously, you know, in that meeting on the 24th October, Councillor Alison Felton said that she thought that the minutes should not be changed.

SB: Mhm.

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LM: Yeah, and I think she referred to, I think it's down in the minutes, er, a power imbalance...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... okay? And I think by that, you know, that's because the Clerk is not there to speak and the other...

SB: The Clerk always speaks.

LM: Yeah, well, the, the other members, you know, had a view. Do you think there was a power imbalance?

SB: No, and I also believe that if councillors can't start questioning minutes that the Clerk's right, then there is a power imbalance because, you know,... I'm not saying this is what you're saying...

LM: No.

SB: ... but what I'm reading here is if the Clerk put forward minutes and I know they're wrong, I can't say anything, is a power imbalance. It's about finding that balance and I believe that my actions on this night were with a view to finding that balance.

LM: Okay.

SB: Because not once, once I'd, once I'd stopped introducing the matter and my beliefs, I didn't say a word. All I did was introduce it and I stated what I, what I, what I knew...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... which there were elements of it that were wrong and the style of it was not in keeping with what the town council does.

LM: Mm.

SB: That's all I said. Once Councillor Ian Spiller took over, he was remote at the meeting, take over, as in he took over the conversation, not took over the meeting, I didn't say another word.

LM: Okay.

SB: A-apart from bringing people in, I'm not saying I didn't speak another word, but I brought other councillors but I didn't add to the debate.

LM: Okay, I've got a little bit more to go through on here...

SB: Course, yeah.

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LM: ... but is there anything you want to say at the moment, Emily?

EF: Erm, I don't think so, I might come back to something later. Yeah.

SB: And I apologies, look I, I am really passionate about this because I do fundamentally believe in the whole thing and there are elements of my written statement to you I wish I didn't have to make.

LM: Mm.

SB: But I felt I had to make them. I don't know if that's what you're coming onto now...

LM: Mm. No, that's fine, okay, so if we turn to page 12 then, paragraph two, er, about a third of the way down, and this is just for clarity for me, really. So you're talking about someone who has put the notes together, erm, you've said...

SB: Yes.

LM: ... so you say...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... yeah, the, that...

SB: The, the deputy Clerk is the Clerk's best friend and when I say best friend I mean going on family holidays together, so the irony of the fact that I'm not allowed to sit in a meeting and say that I believe minutes are wrong when it's my wife, when the only evidence is put forward by the Clerk's absolute best friend...

LM: But...

SB: ... and what I'm saying in here is if the Deputy Clerk is allowed to make representations for her best friend, then it's a really weird accusation that I'm not allowed to make representation in a meeting that includes my wife.

LM: Yeah, the point I wanted to clarify is, er, the person who put together the minutes, wrote, both myself and Councillor Freya Blet-Bletsoe, so who are you referring to there?

SB: Which bit is this bit, sorry?

LM: Er, so it's about... It's sort of around here... Expressing her view that she would not be happy with the minutes.

SB: Oh, that's the Democratic Services Officer.

LM: And, and who is that?

SB: Julie Brown.

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LM: Julie Brown, okay.

SB: When I was Mayor she was my right hand person. Er, she would tell me where to go, she'd tell me what time I had to be there, she'd tell me what minutes, what, what speeches I have to say, erm, and because Freya was my consort she spoke to both of us.

LM: Yeah.

SB: When we were away in the car she phoned up Freya and told her she'd had to put the minutes together and Freya wouldn't be happy. She was on speakerphone and I heard the conversation.

LM: Okay.

SB: She was the only other person in the meeting with the Clerk to take the minutes and that's why I know that the minutes were made from notes that the Clerk had made.

LM: Okay. So, on page 13 then...

SB: And, and I tried to be respectful in this, because I don't want to be naming people in public documents...

LM: No.

SB: ... but...

LM: Well I just, I needed to know who you were referring to.

SB: Okay I get it.

LM: Okay, so point 16, so the Deputy Chair, Councillor Fran Sullivan was not in attendance at the meeting...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... I could not have handed over to her.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay which...

SB: because there was, my, my thing there would have been something that Debs would have said in her statement, which was that I should have got the Deputy Chair...

LM: If, if she had been there, would you have handed over to her?

SB: No, but I was answering the question that was put forward.

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LM: Okay, and, and could you have handed over to the Mayor, I think the Mayor was there.

SB: The Mayor was there, no, I didn't feel it was right, because he's one of Freya's best friends.

LM: Okay.

SB: Do, do you see where I'm going with that. I, I, I... There's no guidance as to where the line is.

LM: No.

SB: Because some people are closer to their best friends than their wives, so where's the line. Where's the line on where you have to not take part in the meeting. Tim and Freya go out all the time, they're good friends.

LM: Mm.

SB: So am I meant to, you know, where's the judgement because we, we're asked to make it with no guidance.

LM: I mean we don't need to revisit it, but I think the difference obviously here is you are Freya's husband, you know...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... Tim is her friend, that would have been for him to decide, this is...

SB: So he risks sitting in here, in exactly the same circumstances.

LM: No, no, and this is for you to decide, and that's why we're here today.

SB: Yeah, totally.

LM: because it's for you to give your, your answers, okay. Right, okay, right, just bear with me a second, because...

SB: No worries.

LM: ... a lot of this I think we've already covered.

SB: As I say, I know I've repeated myself a lot, so I do apologise for that.

LM: That's alright.

EF: Can I ask a quick question?

LM: Go ahead, go ahead, yeah.

EF: You mentioned, erm, the Deputy Clerk and the Clerk being friends...

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: Yeah.

EF: ... erm, and you know the irony of the, the complaint against you, but do you accept, obviously you're an elected member so your obligations and responsibilities are different?

SB: They're proper officers, they have duties as well.

EF: But I'm asking you, in your role as a member...

SB: Mhm.

EF: ... are you saying that direct comparison to what the Clerk does is akin, because you've got the Code of Conduct to abide by which obviously the Clerk doesn't.

SB: No.

EF: So I'm asking do you, do you accept there is a difference in, in what's required of you as an elective member?

SB: I think if you were to say is there a legal nuance difference, yes. Is there a difference in the roles and responsibilities towards the council then there's very little difference between the roles of an elected member and the proper officer who was there to make sure that the, the council act-, operates properly.

EF: But do you think, however they act removes your responsibilities and obligations as an elected member?

SB: I, I think, I think you've misunderstood the point I'm trying to make in the fact that I'm making point that it's ironic...

EF: Mm.

SB: ... that I can't sit in a meeting because I'm married to Freya, yet Leanne's best friend can be her one and only witness.

EF: But what I'm saying is...

SB: But, but, but the point is...

EF: ... you have to consider your interests, so that's...

SB: Totally.

EF: ... sort of irrelevant isn't it?

SB: It is irrelevant.

EF: In terms of whether you have an interest.

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: It's a point, the point I'm making on that is that the irony around it...

EF: Okay.

SB: ... rather than the intricacy of it. The irony in that, that I, and the point I make in my written, er, statement is that I can accept that Debs has acted as the Deputy Clerk. That's my point.

EF: Okay.

SB: I've not made a complaint about Debs, because I've accepted that she's acted as the Deputy Clerk because I respect her. But she can't respect that I've acted as a councillor, she's assuming I'm Freya's husband one and all, at all times.

EF: Mm, and...

SB: And that, that's the offsetting of the balance of power, is councillors can accept that officers act properly, regardless of the relationship but the accusation is that councillors can't.

EF: Mm, and, and you said you, you know, you were acting as Chair and not as Councillor Freya Blet-Bletsoe's husband...

SB: Yeah.

EF: But do you accept that a member of the public knowing the facts would not necessarily be able to distinguish that and no...

SB: But no member of the public has, the Clerk has. No member of the public has made this complaint, the Clerk has, who has an interest.

EF: But I'm asking do, do you accept that it could be perceived...

SB: No.

EF: So you don't, the, the fact that you're acting as Chair doesn't remove the fact that you are also Councillor Freya Bletsoe's husband.

SB: Correct.

EF: So you don't think that can have a perception that you were acting in her interests?

SB: I can, I can only act on the fact that no member of the public has made a complaint about this.

EF: Okay.

SB: I can only work on the fact that the Clerk, who is not neutral has made a complaint about this...

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

EF: Okay.

SB: ... who is not a member of the public, she's a proper officer of the council. No member of the public has raised this with you?

EF: Well we're talking about interest and...

SB: Totally.

EF: ... and when you get to prejudicial interest you consider...

SB: Totally.

EF: ... the [unclear 01:14:27] which is...

SB: But I'd even dispute that this is a prejudicial interest.

EF: Okay.

SB: This is, at the very worst a loose personal interest, in my opinion.

EF: Okay.

SB: But, but I stand by the fact and, and interests are in the basis of the public perception.

EF: Mm.

SB: No member of the public has made this complaint.

EF: So you think that means that there's...

SB: That's there's no...

EF: ... no perception. It, it could never be perceived that you were acting [unclear 01:14:50]...

SB: I, I don't...

EF: ... just because we haven't had a complaint from the member of the public is that what you're saying?

SB: I can't say never.

EF: Okay.

SB: But what I can say is hasn't, no member of the public has perceived that I've had a personal interest here.

EF: But a member of public wouldn't necessarily make a complaint about it...

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: But why wouldn't they?

EF: I'm asking if, if you think there's a perception. There's a difference isn't there...

SB: I tell you why...

EF: ...to, to thinking that, that would, erm, amount to an interest...

SB: Mhm.

EF: ... and making a complaint, they're very distinct things..

SB: They are.

EF: ... so when you're looking at any interests, and prejudicial interest is, is a member of the public, knowing the facts, would that be perceived as an interest and making a complaint, that, the, the fact you're not making a complaint doesn't mean that... I, I'm asking whether you consider, obviously you're saying you're acting as the Chair...

SB: Mhm.

EF: ... and not as a husband, but the fact you're her husband remains, so could there be a perception that you are acting in that capacity.

SB: I didn't go through that thought process at the time.

EF: Okay.

SB: My, my thought process was question myself in what capacity I was acting in...

EF: Okay.

SB: ... and in my mind I was acting as the Chair of the Regeneration Committee.

EF: Yes.

SB: I reference to that point...

EF: Mm.

SB: ... is that despite this being widely discussed in a Labour WhatsApp group...

EF: Mm.



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: ... which they would have dissemin-, look I've had a complaint into this office about me because I put forward Freya as Chair of Scrutiny 3, from a member for Pencoed Town Council because it was discussed in WhatsApp groups.

EF: Okay.

SB: Okay. That, that's the reality of where we are here. You know, if we want cards on the table, you have complaints about me because the Labour group try and engineer them against me. I've got evidence of that, I've got the WhatsApp messages the Office as a whole has been sent all 1600 WhatsApp messages. You have a complaint in about me because I nominated Freya to be Chair of Scrutiny 2, it was thrown out.

EF: Okay.

SB: No member of the public who isn't the Clerk, who is not neutral, has complained about my conduct in this meeting.

EF: Okay, thank you.

SB: Even though the contents of the meeting are widely known.

EF: Okay, thank you.

SB: So I'm not, I'm not judging, I'm stating facts.

EF: Okay.

LM: Okay, right, okay... Alright I'm going to move on shortly I think to the, the statements that have obviously been made.

SB: Yeah.

LM: But I just want to clarify something with you in here, then, you, you...

EF: I'm done, it's alright.

LM: Sorry.

EF: It's fine, it's fine.

SB: Look, I'm sorry if I'm coming across forcefully.

EF: No, not at all.

LM: No it's great, you're just having to, you know...

SB: Of course, and, and if you feel I am, I'm sorry.

EF: Not at all, honestly.

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Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: I, I'm defending myself and my, my thought pattern.

EF: Obviously, this is what today's about to obviously hear your, and that's why we're asking the questions.

SB: And that, that's, that's what I want to use it as an opportunity for...

LM: yeah.

SB: ... because I don't, I don't want to be pedantic, I don't want to be all of those things, but when you say would a member of the public consider this, well I have to say, no they haven't, because they haven't complained.

LM: Okay.

SB: Because there's no rule that says only one person can make a complaint.

LM: Mm.

SB: If people had known of this, and they know of it and they figured I, I'd made a wrong judgement they would have complained. But they didn't, the Clerk complained and there's reference to it in my statement that the, the Labour group said she needs to take advice on that.

LM: I, I don't think, I mean I appreciate what you're saying, but I don't think we can always know what other people might, you know, thought they should or shouldn't do. You, you know, erm...

SB: Trust me, if there's an opportunity to complain about me to this office, they'll take it.

LM: Okay, right.

SB: I have evidence of that. I don't know how many files you have on me, but I make a joke about the fact that I have a car park space here...

LM: Okay.

SB: .. but none of them have ever, this is only the second one that's ever got to this stage, because they're all thrown out. I had a complaint about me, because I worked for Neil McEvoy and I didn't declare it. That's the level that people will complain to you about me.

LM: Yeah, yeah, well, you know...

SB: But that's the reality.

LM: Mm.



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

SB: I, I'm, I'm a very prominent local politician in Bridgend, an opportunity to complain to your office about me is taken.

LM: Okay, alright, okay, let's, alright, let's, let's, if you're happy, let's move on, I wanted to check something with you. So, okay, we're talking about the minutes of the 24th October, which we've discussed...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... and you said you're happy with these minutes, okay?

SB: Okay.

LM: Erm and so, it's page 126, at the top, at the start of the meeting.

SB: Okay.

LM: Erm, and it says the Chair made the meeting, oh, the Chair apol-apologised to the Deputy Town Clerk that his proposed amendments, amendment reference the minutes were not forwarded in writing and I think you've explained why you didn't do that.

SB: Mhm.

LM: The Chair made the meeting aware that he was not commending the minutes for sign off as he felt that one or two references should not have been included and that the purpose of the minutes was not to record conflict, just resolutions.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay. so that, that, that there, so you're saying, you're not going to commend the minutes for sign off.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Erm, you don't think they're accurate.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Do you think in the context of what we're talking about that that could be seen as trying to influence other members?

SB: No. It's my role as Chair, it's my job to commend the minutes for ratification...

LM: Okay.

SB: ... I didn't believe they were right so I didn't do that.

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LM: Okay.

SB: Then its up to the committee to decide what they want to do, but I, on the basis that I hadn't spoken to a single member of the committee beforehand and I had no idea where that conversation was going to go from that point.

LM: Okay, but, but, I mean, yes, I mean you're saying from the outset you're not commending them...

SB: Yeah.

LM: That's it.

SB: Totally.

LM: And you think they're not accurate.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Yeah, okay.

SB: As, as one of six people in the room.

LM: Okay.

SB: Who could have been outvoted five to one.

LM: Okay, right, so if we go to the statements then, so let's look at, erm, I think it's Leanne Edwards' statement.

SB: No worries.

LM: Which appendices is it in? Yeah, page 155. Okay, erm, I think you've made it very clear what your feeling-feelings are about what, what the Clerk has had to say.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Okay, generally. Is there anything you want to add to this, comment about it?

SB: I think, I think I've made reference to this in my written statement, erm, but I'm extremely disappointed because up until this point I had a very good working relationship with Leanne, that was based on, whilst I was Mayor, her being able to come to me with problems that she'd had in confidence, and we could discuss openly and honestly. Erm, I believe she's been influenced by other people outside the Chamber, erm, and I find that really disappointing. Er, anecdotal evidence, which I won't provide to support that statement because it's anecdotal. Erm, but I don't think that it helps the council because... I'll leave it at that. I, I...

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LM: Okay.

SB: ... I just, I, I'm disappointed by it, I know in my heart what's going on, I can't prove it.

LM: Okay. so if we look at the final paragraph, okay? And she says, I feel in a very difficult position because of the impact of the complaint on my relationships with both members.

SB: Mhm.

LM: I was unsure about whether to make a complaint about this initially but I've been through a situation in 2018/2019 with both members which was very unpleasant and I was concerned it might start again. This is my work place and if it could happen to me it could happen to other staff and it just doesn't feel right. Okay, so wha-what is she talking about there?

SB: No clue.

LM: You don't know what she's talking about?

SB: Unless she's talking about the situation where she reported me for the allotment, I have absolutely no idea.

LM: Okay, what was that? What was that about?

SB: Erm, I had an allotment on the site that's behind Asda. It was full of Mare's Tail, erm, we were given it for, for free, before we were councillors actually and it kind of, it continued after we became councillors and my mother, my aunty, my father-in-law, Freya's father, erm, my cousin and my other aunty all died within a short period of time. We didn't maintain it. Erm, so it, it was taken off us and, erm, we were given the warning letter to say it would be taken off us if we didn't maintain it. We weren't in a place to maintain it. So we wrongly assumed we'd lost it. I made a declaration of interest in a, er, a meeting discussing allotments that I was former allotment holder, erm, I carried on with the discussion because I was a former allotment holder. After I left the room, er, Councillor Matthew Voisey went up to the declarations of interest, saw that I'd written Councillor, er, saw that I'd written former, former allotment holder, went and asked Debs who told me that we hadn't had the final letter, so legally and, er, everything else we were current...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... allotment holders, erm, not former. So I had a technical breach of the Code of Conduct because although I believed I was a former allotment holder, I technically had written down the wrong thing. That's as far as I'm aware. After 2018/19 I was the Mayor of the town. I worked very closely with her so it's really disappointing to read that.

LM: Mm.

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SB: But the other thing I'd say is that's a two-way street. It's not a one-way street, the balance of power thing.

LM: Mm.

SB: It's, it's incumbent for staff to work with councillors as well...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... not to be having conversations with Labour members, thanking them for being supportive, when they're accusing me of being an unreasonable employer. You know, I've had meetings with Leanne where she's raised... I won't name names, she had a, er, she had a concern over a Bridgend town councillor, erm, that she didn't want to make formal. She met with myself and the Chair of, er, the Personnel Committee during Covid, in the room downstairs in Carnegie House. She laid out her concerns about him, I say him, that doesn't narrow it down much and, er, she asked Alan and I to sort it out. We went away and we sorted it out.

LM: Well I think, yeah, I mean obviously I don't want to get into issues about other, other members, but about your relationship with her...

SB: Mm.

LM: You know, she, she clearly feels it was difficult.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Do you, do you, as a member, you know, thinking about your roles in the council and how, how what you do is reflected and how staff feel. Do, do you have any empathy with what she's said there at all?

SB: I have empathy for people, despite what people think, I care about what people feel.

LM: Mm.

SB: As I say, I don't do this for any other reason than for the good of the town. I'm, I'm one of those, I've run company-, I've run my own company for 20 years. I'm a person, a manager that took people with me on a journey. I'm not that manager who sits down barking at people and we all know that they exist. I lead by example, I do stuff. I mean what's really disappointing is this is written on the 3rd, if I've got the numbers right, the 3rd November, last year. Just before that we had the, erm, sorry, not would be just after this, I got my timings wrong, I was thinking of Remembrance Day. Christmas, Bridgend Town Council ran a fantastically successful Christmas light switch on, which had Elf Headquarters and all that. Now after everything had finished and all the other councillors had gone home there were two or three councillors that hung behind and helped Leanne and the staff lift tables. Myself, Freya and Ian Williams. Didn't, we weren't asked to, everyone else had gone home, all of the lights and everything had been done and

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all the public gaze had gone away, but there were a couple of councillors who hung around to make sure that she could go and see her daughter in a, erm, concert in Porthcawl Grand Pavilion. Myself, Ian Williams and Freya, not because we were asked to...

LM: No, that's fine. Sure.

SB: It was the right thing to do and I didn't do it, so I could sit here and tell you about it later.

LM: No.

SB: I'm only bringing it up because of that last paragraph. So even knowing that this was hanging over me, even knowing that all that, this was going on, I was one of the three who hung around to help the staff. That's me, knowing there was a complaint in about me. I didn't take my toys home and have a huff because the Clerk had made a complaint about me. I put all that to one side for the good of the staff and helped them when other councillors didn't.

LM: Okay, and what, if we move onto, erm, the next statement.

SB: Yeah.

LM: Do you have any comments about that one?

SB: Is this from, the one from Debs, is it?

LM: Yes, it is.

SB: I mean... Is it on, is it...?

LM: Page 1-, I can't see because of my glasses, 181.

SB: Can I just say, no worries, on the evidence that's been provided by the Clerk, sorry to go back, I'm really disappointed in this, page 176 onwards...

LM: You mean the transcript.

SB: The transcript.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Because I seconded a motion in Bridgend Town Council to protect the staff by transcribing meetings. Leanne objected to it. Leanne sits at home and is transcribing me without my knowledge...

LM: No, no, no... What, what, for clarity here, what was provided was, it was, erm, er, a recording and this is our transcript of the recording.

SB: That's fine, because it's the recording I take exception to.

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LM: But that, that's, that's a separate matter, that's for you to deal with as you...

SB: It is a separate matter but it's indicative of this balance of power that you refer to.

LM: I, I understand what you're saying, but also in all fairness to you, if there is such a thing, we're talking about what was said.

SB: Mhm.

LM: And that is an accurate record...

SB: Totally.

LM: .. of what was said.

SB: Totally.

LM: So, you know, that's why that's there because...

SB: But this is the trust thing, and this is the balance of power thing. So let me turn this around to your question, let's say a councillor had done this and recorded a Clerk.

LM: I don't want to get into the why's and...

SB: Yeah, but, but it's important.

LM: I, I understand what you're saying.

SB: It, it is important,

LM: ...but accuracy is important and it...

SB: Totally.

LM: And it would be if we were in that context in an investigation, it would be dealt with just the same. Okay.

SB: Yeah, but this comes back to the trust...

LM: So let's talk about...

SB: ... thing and the balance of power and everything else you've asked about is to read that you have on a recording that I didn't, erm, say could happen, because I was part of it, you know, I can't think of the word, the word is...

LM: I think, I think, I think you, you know, I mean we talk about balance of power don't we, when there's a power imbalance, but we have to see both sides, we have to consider...

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SB: Totally.

LM: ... both sides, okay.

SB: And that's what I'm asking you to do.

LM: Yeah, oh and, erm, that's why we're here and why we're talking about it, so...

SB: Yeah.

LM: Do you have any comments about Deborah Jone's statement?

SB: Just the, the ironic nature of it from the outset, there are some inaccuracies in here and there's an accusation that I, er, that this had all been pre-arranged, er, and again just going back to, because it's just reminded me there's reference in the Clerk's that we're all part of the same group. That doesn't mean anything at all. We don't talk about stuff before meetings. Erm, we, we don't meet before meetings, we don't decide tactics before meetings. The entire narrative is trying to be created in that one is, is false. Erm, there are a couple of inaccuracies in here. It states that it's obvious that it had been arranged beforehand. It, it's only not obvious, it never happened and I can categorically tell you that it never happened, because it never happens plural. We don't meet before meetings, perfect example and again I can show you this as evidence if you want it. There's a co-option tonight on Bridgend Town Council. As a group we do have a WhatsApp chat and we talk about rubbish most of the time. When the packs came out, with details of three applicants for tonight the very first things I did in the WhatsApp chat, you've received the papers for next Monday's meeting, there are three co-option details, you are not allowed to discuss them before the meeting.

LM: Mm, and that's...

SB: That's important because the narrative has been portrayed out in here is that I've spoken to Ian Spiller before the meeting and pre-arranged what he's going to say. I don't know if you've interviewed Ian Spiller he will tell you exactly the same as I'm going to tell you. Not only did we not meet to discuss this, we've never met before any Bridgend Town Council meeting to discuss anything.

LM: And that, that's fine and that's your, you know, that's why we're here, you can put that forward, okay.

SB: Mhm, but that's the picture that's being painted to you.

LM: Mm.

SB: It was obvious that this happened, it's not obvious because it didn't happen and it never happens.

LM: Mm, okay, okay. Okay, so alright...

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SB: ... and in relation to the, is this the one where they mention Councillor Easterbrook and, and in, in seconding two different motions. I don't know which one it's in, it's in one of the two, erm, it's one of the two evidence packs that Councillor Easterbrook seconded Councillor Felton's, erm, motion to maintain them and then also seconded...

LM: I think it's in the minutes, there.

SB: It's in one of them.

LM: Yeah.

SB: Er, but the accusation is that while Steve had done something wrong and Steven Bletsoe turned round and... There was only one person in the meeting who told Steve he'd done it wrong and that was me because he seconded Councillor Felton's proposal of the minutes remaining as they were, which was his right to do, and then when Councillor Spiller put his amendment forward he also seconded that. I then turned to Councillor Easterbrook who is on my left hand side, and I told him he couldn't do that because he already seconded the first motion to which he said, oh have I? I thought I was doing, I thought it was to say they were wrong and I said, no, no, you've seconded Councillor Felton's motion. You then can't second Councillor Spiller's motion and he went, oh, I didn't mean to do that. I had no influence over that. That was Councillor Easterbrook and again with Councillor Spiller, I'd never spoken to Councillor Easterbrook before the meeting because I don't speak to Councillor Easterbrook before meetings.

LM: Mm.

SB: He did what he thought he was doing right, which he made a mistake, but to say that I had any influence over that is inaccurate.

LM: Okay, that's fine, that's fine. Okay. Okay, I think you mentioned when we were talking about Leanne's statement a previous complaint.

SB: Yeah.

LM: And, yes, so we have had a previous complaint, and it was associated with an allotment issue and not declaring interest and the outcome of the complaint, I think was that you should get refresher training on the Code of Conduct. Did that happen?

SB: I can't remember. It was..

LM: No, but that was specifically on interests?

SB: I think it was, I was, when I received the email I was sat in a café in [Unclear 01:33:58] XL on my way to Arnhem, it was that long ago, as I detailed very earlier on, I lost five members of my family in that year. I, I honestly can't remember.

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LM: You don't know if you did attend or not, no?

SB: I, I genuinely can't remember.

LM: Okay.

SB: If I had, I will have signed something to say I had attended it, but I, hand on heart, I don't remember.

LM: Okay. Er, I don't have any more questions for the time being, I'm just on the final bit, do you have anything?

EF: No, thank you, no.

LM: Okay. Alright, so with reflection...

SB: And can I just be clear as well...

LM: Yes.

SB: ... on that other complaint, just because this has been recorded, it wasn't that I didn't make a declaration, it's because I used the word former instead of current. It wasn't a blatant disregard for, for declarations of interest. I wrote on a piece of paper I was a former allotment holder and apparently because I had received a letter I was a current allotment holder, so I just want to be very, very clear that that's what that complaint was about, rather...

LM: Mm.

SB: Again, I'm not being...

LM: So was, was that about declaring your interest as an allotment holder or did it concern...

SB: Yeah.

LM: ... Councillor Freya as well?

SB: It was because we were both allotment holders, on the allotment site.

LM: Okay

SB: And we had the warning letter, the time period detailed in the warning letter had passed. I assumed, albeit incorrectly I was a former allotment holder, that was never in the interests and, and guess what I never went back to that allotment.

LM: Okay.

SB: They sent me the final letter and I walked away.

LM: Okay.

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SB: But it wasn't about a blatant failure to declare, it was one word on a piece of paper which read former and should have read current.

LM: Okay.

SB: Which was never done maliciously, or to mislead anybody.

LM: Okay. Alright, okay, I'm nearly at the end of all my questions...

SB: Yeah, no worries.

LM: Alright, on reflection, okay everything we've talked about today...

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... we've talked about personal prejudicial interest, close personal associations.

SB: Mhm.

LM: Okay. Is there anything you would have done differently?

SB: No.

LM: No.

SB: Because fundamental and core to my values the truth was more important than anything else...

LM: Okay.

SB: ... and the truth was that the minutes were not right. I did not, I would not speak to a councillor before the meeting to tell them that I thought it wasn't right, it was incumbent on me to do that in a public forum that was open to public scrutiny.

LM: Okay so do you consider that your conduct could have brought the council or your office into disrepute?

SB: No, in fact I believe that my actions were in, were with a view to maintaining that it didn't bring itself into disrepute.

LM: Okay, and do you think it could have created an advantage or disadvantage for others?

SB: Absolutely not because the Public Service Ombudsman's process would have carried on separately from the, the recording of what was proposed by Councillor Ian Spiller...

LM: And...

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SB: ... you, you would not have stopped your investigation to the other complaint on the basis of Councillor Spiller's proposal.

LM: Okay, and do you think you failed to disclose personal and prejudicial interest?

SB: No.

LM: Okay, is there anything else you want to add to what you've said today?

SB: Erm, only that I'll send you those WhatsApp messages...

LM: Mm.

SB: ... that, that were in the evidence. I think you, you said that I've kind of covered it off, because I make reference to what's said in there, erm, but I, I will restate as, as an answer to the question that you asked about, about the public, I think if, if this hadn't been the Clerk that had made the complaint, and I don't believe any member of, I don't believe any member of the public would have made this complaint because I don't believe a member of the public would have seen that I was trying to confer an advantage for my wife, and I use that word because that's the accusation, not because it's my belief of where we are. Erm, nobody has and I don't believe anyone would have done. I believe the Clerk has made it because of the other ongoing investigation.

LM: You don't think she, so you feel that she had a right to make a complaint if she felt there was an issue?

SB: She, she always has the right, but it should be judged through the prism of what her complaint is, her complaint is that my actions have interfered with her other complaint. She's not stating, and, and it was actually quite nice to hear, er, or read, sorry, in Deb's, erm, evidence I'm a good councillor. I believe I am a good councillor. I'm a passionate councillor.

LM: Mm.

SB: Who always puts the integrity of the council above everything that I do. Always.

LM: Mm.

SB: Erm, I believe Leanne has allowed two things to happen here and we're very blunt on this, one, she's allowed her situation with Freya to cloud her complaint against me and two, she's influenced by somebody outside the Chamber who had a vendetta against me.

LM: Okay, have you got any other questions, Em?

EF: No, thank you, no.

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LM: Okay, right. I don't have any other further questions for you, erm, but if there's anything else you do want to say, er, that you've not already covered, erm, now's your time to...

SB: Just, just to reiterate that probably that final point, is I take my role a) as a councillor and then any subsequent position I'm elected to after that extremely seriously and everything I did on that night was as Chair of the Regeneration Committee with the reputation of the council at the centre of everything that I did.

LM: Okay, and are you content you've had a fair opportunity to say everything you want to say?

SB: I think so.

LM: Okay.

SB: Only because I'll think of something later on, oh I wish I said that, but there's nothing at the moment.

LM: Okay. Er, okay, if that's the case that concludes the interview. Erm, what will happen now is we'll need to send the discs away to be transcribed and once we've got those back, erm, we can send a copy of the transcript, er, and CD if you want one.

SB: No worries.

LM: Er, yes, and what we need to do is decide whether that completes the investigation or whether there's any further evidence that we need to get...

SB: On all, am I allowed to say anything about that point?

LM: Yes.

SB: All I'd say on that point is I would, if you do decide to take forward and ask for further evidence I would sincerely like you to ask the other councillors who were attending, erm, to evidence the fact that I have never tried to influence them because that's the one thing in the complaint that I took as very damning against me.

LM: Okay.

SB: Because I don't want you to just take my word on that.

LM: Okay, and once we're satisfied the investigation is completed, it'll be considered in detail and a finding made. Erm, if we do conclude there's evidence of a breach, the Ombudsman has the option to determine that no action is required or to make a referral to the Standard's Committee of the local authority or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales. If a referral is considered appropriate, a draft report will usually be shared with you, and you'll be given an opportunity to comment on the analysis with the evidence and finding proposed. Er, if it concludes that there's

Case Reference:



Councillor's Name: Steven Bletsoe

no evidence that a breach of the code has occurred then the report will bring an end to it. Okay? So I'd like to take the opportunity to remind you that the Ombudsman's investigations are conducted in private and I'd therefore ask you not to discuss the evidence received or that you've shared today with anyone other than a legal representative, er, or legal advisors. This extends to the transcript and any draft report which might be issued. It's particularly important you don't discuss matters relating to the complaint in your investigation with anyone who maybe a witness..

SB: Mhm.

LM: ... or involved in the matter and you should be aware that any such disclosure or interference may amount to a breach of the code. Okay, so before we switch off there's some admin tasks and paperwork we need to complete, erm, and then we'll be asking you to choose one of the two discs to be sealed up as the master copy and the other one will be a working copy for me to use and once that's all done, erm, we'll ask you to sign the seal and give you some paperwork.

SB: Of course, not a problem at all. Can I just say I don't care which one you use, honestly, just send whatever one you want.

LM: Once the recording machine is switched off, we're unable to have any further discussion.

SB: That's fine.

LM: Okay. Erm, if that's everything and there's nothing else you want to add we can turn off the machine and conclude the recording, what's the time.

SB: We can talk about stuff not related to it, yeah?

EF: The time is 12:03, yeah.

EF: 12:03, so I'll turn off the recording. Thank you Councillor Bletsoe, and stop...

Appendix 13

2.30 Your Council needs to decide whether to disclose information or whether it may be covered by an exemption under the Freedom of Information Act. Even if you believe that information you hold is exempt, you must provide it to the person dealing with the information request to allow the Council to reach a decision. As well as being a breach of the Code, it is a criminal offence if information is destroyed after a Freedom of Information Act request has been received.

Example 17

The Leader of a County Council refused to give the Council's Information Officer a letter he had written to the then Wales Audit Office, on behalf of the Council's Executive. As a result, the Council could not respond appropriately to a Freedom of Information Act request which resulted in a complaint being made to the Information Commissioner's Office. The member continued to refuse to disclose the letter despite having received clear and unequivocal advice from the Information Officer. His refusal led to an adverse finding from the Information Commissioner's Office. The Adjudication Panel found that the member had breached paragraphs 5(b) and 6(1)(a) (disrepute) in respect of this matter and other related matters.

Disrepute
See paragraph 6(1)(a)

Any conduct unbecoming of a member can constitute disrepute

2.31 **You must not behave in a way which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute at any time.** As a member, your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than those of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions in both your public and private life might have an adverse impact on the public perception of your office as a member, or your Council as a whole.

2.32 When considering whether a member's conduct is indicative of bringing their office or their authority into disrepute, I will consider their actions from the viewpoint of a reasonable member of the public. It is likely that the actions of those members in more senior positions, such as the Chair of a Council, will attract higher public expectations and greater scrutiny than ordinary members. It is more likely, therefore, that inappropriate behaviour

by such members will damage public confidence and be seen as bringing both their office and their Council into disrepute. This does not mean that inappropriate behaviour by ordinary members can never bring their council into disrepute.

2.33 Dishonest and deceitful behaviour will bring your Council into disrepute, as may conduct which results in a criminal conviction, especially if it involves dishonest, threatening or violent behaviour, even if the behaviour happens in your private life.

2.34 Whilst you have the right to freedom of expression, making unfair or inaccurate criticism of your Council in a public arena might be regarded as bringing your Council into disrepute. Similarly, inappropriate emails to constituents or careless or irresponsible use of social media might bring the office of member into disrepute, bearing in mind the community leadership role of members. Cases considered by the Adjudication Panel have shown that such behaviour will often be viewed as a serious breach of the Code.

Example 18

A Community Councillor attempted to obtain a discount on a private purchase from a shop by saying it was being bought on behalf of the Community Council. When his request for a discount was refused, he was abusive to the proprietor and two members of her staff and made threats against the business. The Adjudication Panel found that the member attempted to gain an improper advantage for himself, by misrepresenting the purchase as being on behalf of the Council, and his abusive behaviour towards the staff had brought the office of member into disrepute.

Example 19

A member of a County Borough Council who regularly wrote an article for a local monthly publication referred in his article to a recent road traffic accident in which a 10 year-old boy was injured. The complainant was the mother of the boy who was with the injured child. After the article was published, she telephoned the Councillor who she said was abusive towards her during the call. In a subsequent email exchange, the Councillor told her that she had “[failed] to take ANY responsibility for

Gifts and hospitality

See paragraph 9(b)



2.68 It is important that you do not accept any gifts or hospitality for yourself, or on behalf of others, which would place you under obligation or appear to do so. Accepting such gifts or hospitality could be regarded as compromising your objectivity when you make decisions or carry out the work of your Council. This is also true of any services or gifts in kind. This does not prevent you from attending official events such as a civic reception or working lunch where these are authorised by your Council. (See also the section of this guidance on registering gifts and hospitality under paragraph 17 of the Code).

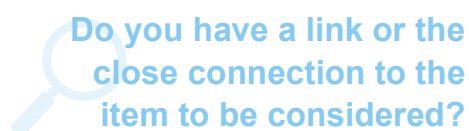
3 Personal and prejudicial interests

- 3.1 The elements of the Code which cover personal and prejudicial interests give rise to many questions from members. They are designed to safeguard the principles of selflessness and objectivity. They are intended to give members of the public confidence that decisions are being taken in their best interests, and not in the best interests of members of authorities or their close personal associates.
- 3.2 Personal interests relate to issues where you or a close personal associate may have some link to a matter under discussion. These interests become prejudicial where an informed independent observer could reasonably conclude that the interest is likely to influence your vote, or your decision.
- 3.3 In my experience, it is the distinction between personal and prejudicial interests, and what action a member should take depending on the nature of their interest, that causes the most difficulty for members. The paragraphs below are designed to offer guidance in this area. I would strongly recommend that if you are in any doubt about whether you have a personal or prejudicial interest, and, if so, what you need to do, you should consult your Clerk, who may be able to offer advice. The principal council's Monitoring Officer may be able to assist with more complex matters. However, their resources are limited and advice should be

sought in good time prior to a meeting at which the related business is to be considered. Ultimately, however, the decision on what course of action should be taken remains with you.

- 3.4 To provide some further assistance, I have attached a flowchart to this guidance at Appendix 2, based on a document prepared by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, which is designed to take you through the questions that you should ask when deciding whether you have an interest. It is for illustration purposes only and is not definitive.
- 3.5 Guidance on registering interests is at Section 4.

Personal Interests See paragraph 10



- 3.6 **While you are carrying out your duties, you must consider whether you have a personal interest and, if so, whether you need to disclose it.** Most members know that you need to disclose personal interests at meetings, but as you will read below, there are other occasions, such as when speaking to the Clerk about the matter concerned, when you may also need to do so.
- 3.7 Listed below are some questions that you should ask yourself when deciding if you have an interest:

Do I have a personal interest?

- 3.8 You have a personal interest in any business of your Council, including when making a decision, where it relates to or is likely to affect:
1. your job or your business
 2. your employer, or any firm in which you are a partner or paid director
 3. any person who has paid towards the cost of your election or your expenses as a member

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4. any company in which you hold shares with a nominal value of more than £25,000 or where your holding is more than 1% of the total issued share capital, which has premises or land in your Council's area
5. any contract that your Council makes with a firm in which you are a partner, paid director or hold shares in (as described in 4, above)
6. any land in which you have an interest and which is in your Council's area (this is especially important in all planning matters including strategic plans)
7. any land let by your Council to a firm in which you're a partner, paid director or a body (as set out in 4, above)
8. any body to which you've been elected, appointed or nominated by your Council
9. any of the following in which you have membership or hold a position of general control or management:
 - public authority or body exercising functions of a public nature
 - company, industrial and provident society, charity or body directed to charitable purposes
 - body whose main role is influencing public opinion or policy
 - trade union or professional association
 - private club, society or association operating in your Council's area
10. any land in your Council's area which you have a license to occupy for at least 28 days
11. Any person with whom you have a close personal association.

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- 3.9 It is always safer to declare an interest. However, if in doubt, consult your Clerk or the Monitoring Officer of the principal council for the area, who may be able to offer advice subject to resource constraints.

Matters affecting your well-being or financial position



Will your well-being or that of a close associate be effected?

- 3.10 If a decision might be seen as affecting your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of any person who lives with you or with whom you have a **close personal association** to a greater extent than other people in your ward, or the Council's area if it does not have multiple wards, you have a personal interest.
- 3.11 Examples of decisions of this kind include obvious issues like contracts being awarded to your partner's company, but also issues about the location of developments, where it might make a big difference to where you or your close personal associates live. Examples have included the location of playgrounds, where elected members have opposed them near their houses because of issues about noise.

What is “a body exercising functions of a public nature”?



Does the body carry out a public service?

- 3.12 The phrase “a body exercising functions of a public nature” has been subject to broad interpretation by the courts for a variety of different purposes. Although it is not possible to produce a definitive list of such bodies, here are some of the criteria to consider when deciding whether or not a body meets that definition:
- Does that body carry out a public service?
 - Is the function exercised under legislation or according to some statutory power?
 - Can the body be judicially reviewed?

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- 3.13 When conducting community or town council business, it is likely that you will be acting on a body which is exercising functions of a public nature. You may also be doing this if you have been appointed to act on behalf of the Council on a community project or interest group.

What does “affecting well-being or financial position” mean?

Is your quality of life affected?

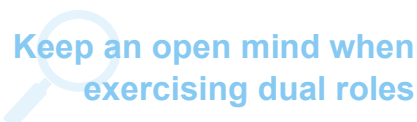
- 3.14 The term ‘well-being’ can be described as a condition of contentedness and happiness. Anything that could affect your quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect your well-being. A personal interest can affect you or your close personal associates positively and negatively. So, if you or they have the potential to gain or lose from a matter under consideration, you need to declare a personal interest in both situations.

Who is a close personal associate?

Close personal associates include friends, relatives, business associates and those with whom you have been in dispute

- 3.15 Close personal associates include people such as close friends, colleagues with whom you have particularly strong connections, business associates and close relatives. It does not include casual acquaintances, distant relatives or people you simply come in contact with through your role as a member or your work in the local community. It also does not include a person, such as a close relative, with whom you have become estranged and it would be unreasonable for you to have knowledge of their business or other interests, or the potential impact on their well-being of a matter considered by your authority.
- 3.16 Close personal associates can also include someone with whom you have been in dispute, or whom you may be regarded as having an interest in disadvantaging. For example, being a member of the same golf club as another person would not of itself constitute a close personal association, but having that person as a weekly golf partner might well do. If you are in doubt, you should ask your Clerk or the Monitoring Officer of the principal council.

“Twin hatted” members



- 3.17 If you are a member of both a community or town council and a county or county borough council, you are not prevented from discussing the same matters at both. You may, for example, take part in a discussion about a planning application about which your Community or Town Council has been consulted and still go on to participate in a decision about the application if you sit on the Planning Committee of your County Council.
- 3.18 If you do so, you would be well advised to state at the Community or Town Council meeting that you would be looking at the matter afresh when you consider it at the Planning Committee meeting, and that you would take into account all of the information and advice provided to you. At the Planning Committee, you should make it clear that you are not bound by the views of the Community or Town Council. The advice about objective decision making in respect of paragraph 8 of the Code is also relevant here.
- 3.19 Obviously, if the planning application was one submitted by the Community or Town Council, then you would have both a personal and a prejudicial interest, and you would be required to declare it and withdraw in line with the guidance on “what to do if you have a prejudicial interest” below.

Example 28

A member of a Community Council was found in breach of the Code for failing to declare a personal and prejudicial interest at a meeting which considered the Clerk’s remuneration package. The member and the Clerk were in a relationship and engaged to be married at the time. The Adjudication Panel found that the member should have declared a personal interest in the item of business by virtue of his close personal association with the Clerk. It considered also that the nature of the member’s relationship with the Clerk was one that gave rise to a prejudicial interest, as it concerned a significant benefit for the future spouse. The Adjudication Panel considered that the interest was one that would affect public perception of the members’ ability to make a decision in the public interest. The Adjudication Panel reiterated that the test was not whether the member took the decision without prejudice, but whether he would have been seen as doing so.

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What if I am not aware of my personal interest?

Disclose what you know

3.20 Your obligation to disclose a personal interest to a meeting only applies when you are aware of **or reasonably ought to be aware** of the existence of the personal interest. Clearly, you cannot be expected to declare something of which you are unaware. It would be impractical to expect you to research into the employment, business interests and other activities of all your close associates and relatives. However, you should not ignore the existence of interests which, from the point of view of a reasonable and objective observer, you should have been aware.

What to do when you have a personal interest

See paragraph 11

Once disclosed you can stay and participate if your interest is not prejudicial

- 3.21 When you have a personal interest in any business of your Council, you **must** disclose the existence and nature of the interest before participating (unless it is also a prejudicial interest) in any business to which it relates. How you do this will depend on the circumstances in which the business is being transacted.
- 3.22 If you are attending a **meeting**,¹¹ you must disclose the interest orally to that meeting before or at the commencement of the consideration of the relevant business at the meeting, or at the point the interest becomes apparent. If this is the first time you have disclosed the interest during your current term of office, you must confirm it in writing before or immediately after the close of the meeting, in accordance with arrangements set out by your Council's Clerk. As a minimum, you need to say in writing what the interest is, what business considered by the meeting it relates to and you need to sign it.
- 3.23 If you are making **written representations** (including by email, text etc) to a member or officer of your Council regarding any matter in which you have a personal interest, you should include details of the interest in that correspondence.

¹¹ The definition of 'meeting' in paragraph 1(1) of the Code is very broad and includes any meeting where members or officers are present, not just formal meetings of the council. For example, it can include an informal meeting of a member and officer.

- 3.24 Similarly, if you are making **oral representations** (whether in person, by telephone or video-conference etc) you should disclose the interest at the commencement of those representations, or when the interest becomes apparent. I would generally expect officers to make a record of any conversation in which a member has disclosed an interest and attach it to the appropriate file. However, it remains your responsibility under the Code (paragraph 11(2)(b)) to confirm the oral representations and details of the personal interest disclosed by you in writing within 14 days.
- 3.25 **Key point:** You must disclose the existence and nature of a personal interest in the way set out above on every occasion before you participate in the business to which it relates, regardless of whether you have previously registered the interest. This ensures that everyone present, including members of the public or other observers are aware of your interest.
- 3.26 If the Monitoring Officer of the principal council for the area has agreed that the information about your personal interest is **sensitive information**, then you should disclose the existence of a personal interest (but not its nature), and confirm that the Monitoring Officer has agreed that the information about it is sensitive. More information about this is included in the separate section on paragraph 16 of the Code below.
- 3.27 If you declare a personal interest, you can remain in the meeting, speak and vote on the matter, **unless your personal interest is also a prejudicial interest**. What constitutes a prejudicial interest is outlined in the following section.

Example 29

I investigated a complaint that a member of a Town Council attempted to use his position to derail a 'Community Hub' project because, within the Hub, there would be a social club serving food and drink and this would affect the member's business – a nearby pub/restaurant. The member had also previously been in a business relationship with one of the parties to the Community Hub project, which had ended acrimoniously. Historic minutes of the Council's meetings showed that the member had disclosed a personal interest in the project and had not attended meetings due this being a prejudicial interest. However, at a later meeting of the Council the

member did not disclose the existence and nature of his interest and did not withdraw from consideration of the project when it was discussed. This was despite the Clerk's advice that it was likely he had an interest in the matter under discussion. A Standards Committee found that the member had failed to disclose the existence and nature of a personal interest, in breach of paragraph 11(1) of the Code. The Committee further found that the interest was a prejudicial interest and, as the member had failed to withdraw from the meeting, he had also breached paragraph 14(1).

Prejudicial Interests

See paragraph 12

Do I have a prejudicial interest?

Do not be swayed by what you think – consider what a reasonable member of the public would think

3.28 Your personal interest will also be a prejudicial interest in a matter if a member of the public, who knows the relevant facts, would reasonably think your personal interest is so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest. There are exemptions to this which are contained in paragraph 12(2) of the Code, although many of them are unlikely to apply to business undertaken by a community or town council.

What is so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement?

Would a reasonable member of the public consider you impartial?

3.29 If a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the relevant facts would think that your judgement of the public interest might be prejudiced, then you have a prejudicial interest. This is **an objective test**. You must decide not whether you would take the decision without prejudice, but whether you would be seen as doing so.

3.30 You must ask yourself whether **a member of the public**, if he or she knew all the relevant facts, would think that your personal interest was so significant that it would be likely to prejudice your judgement. In other words, the interest must be perceived as likely to harm or impair your ability to judge the public interest.

3.31 The mere existence of local knowledge, or connections within the local community, will not normally be sufficient to meet the test. There must be some factor that might positively harm your ability to judge the public interest objectively. The nature of the matter is also important, including whether a large number of people are equally affected by it or whether you or a smaller group are particularly affected.

3.32 Some general principles must be remembered when applying this test. You should clearly act in the public interest and not in the interests of any close personal associates. You are a custodian of the public purse and the public interest and your behaviour and decisions should reflect this responsibility.

3.33 You would have a prejudicial interest in the consideration and decision on whether to support a planning application proposal if a close personal associate of yours (for example your son or a good friend) lives next to the proposed site. This is because your close personal associate would be likely to be affected by the application to a greater extent than the majority of the inhabitants of your ward or Council area (if your Council does not have wards) and this gives you a personal interest in the issue. The close personal association means a reasonable member of the public might think that it would prejudice your view of the public interest when considering the planning application. **It does not matter whether it actually would or not.**

3.34 In other cases, where there has been a dispute between you and an individual who could be disadvantaged by a decision, an informed reasonable member of the public might conclude that you would be influenced by this when voting, whether this is the case or not.

3.35 **Community councillors do not have a prejudicial interest in decisions made by their Council in respect of grants, loans or other financial assistance to community groups or voluntary organisations where the value does not exceed £500.** Furthermore, community councillors who have been appointed to the community group or voluntary organisation concerned by their Community Council, for example, to the board of a community hall, will not have a prejudicial interest in decisions made by their Council in respect of any grants, loans or other financial

assistance in relation to that body. If, on the other hand, you are on such a board in another capacity and have not been appointed by your Council, then you will have a prejudicial interest.

What to do when you have a prejudicial interest See paragraph 14

 You must declare your interest and withdraw from the room

- 3.36 If you have a prejudicial interest in any aspect your Council's business you must not take part in the consideration of that business, or make representations about it, except in the circumstances described below.
- 3.37 Nevertheless, even where you have a prejudicial interest, the Code supports your role as a community advocate and enables you in certain circumstances to represent your community and to speak on issues important to them and to you.
- 3.38 **Key point:** If you have a **prejudicial interest** in a matter being discussed at a meeting, you must, having declared your personal interest in the matter, leave the room, chamber or place where the meeting is being held (including, for example, the location of a site meeting).
- 3.39 **This is unless you have obtained a dispensation from the relevant standards committee, or when members of the public are allowed to make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter**, by statutory right or otherwise. If that the latter is the case, you can also attend the meeting for that purpose, or you may submit written representations to the public meeting in accordance with any procedure adopted by your Council for this purpose. However, where you attend a meeting you must immediately leave the room or chamber once the period for considering representations has finished, and before any discussion on the item begins, even if members of the public are allowed to remain. You cannot, for example, remain in the public gallery to observe the discussion or vote on the matter as your very presence could influence the decision, or be perceived by a reasonable member of the public as doing so.

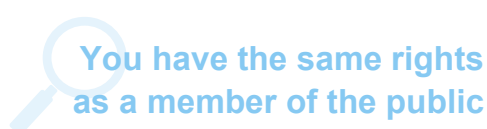
3.40 In addition, **you must not seek to influence a decision in which you have a prejudicial interest.** This rule is similar to your general obligation not to use your position as a member improperly to your or someone else's advantage or disadvantage. This means that, as well as leaving meetings where the item is discussed, you must also not write or make any oral representations about the matter, except in the circumstances above relating to representations by the public.

Example 30

A member of a Community Council who owned a property next to a caravan and camping park attended a meeting of the Council when a planning application by the owner of the park was considered. The member had previously raised concerns with the relevant planning authority about a number of alleged breaches of planning permission by the owner of the park over a number of years. The member declared a personal interest and spoke at the Community Council meeting, setting out the background to the application, details of alleged previous breaches and commenting on the application itself; and voted against the application.

The Adjudication Panel found that the member's interest in the planning application was also a prejudicial interest and she should have withdrawn from the meeting. The close proximity of the member's home to the caravan and camping park, combined with the numerous concerns raised by the member regarding alleged breaches of planning controls, were facts that a member of the public could reasonably regard as so significant that they were likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest. The Adjudication Panel found the member had sought to influence a decision regarding a matter in which she had a prejudicial interest in breach of paragraphs 14(1)(a), (c) and (e).

Do I have a statutory right to speak to the meeting?



3.41 The Code does not provide you with a general right to speak to a meeting where you have a prejudicial interest. The Code aims to provide members with the same rights as ordinary members of the public to speak on certain

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matters in meetings, despite having a prejudicial interest. These rights are usually governed by your Council's constitution, procedure rules or standing orders, and may be subject to conditions including time limits or the fact that representations can only be made in writing.

- 3.42 If an ordinary member of the public would be allowed to speak to a meeting about an item, you should be provided with the same opportunity. You will be able to make representations, answer questions or give evidence, even if you have a prejudicial interest in the item. The Code also provides the right to submit written representations to the public meeting in these circumstances. You may not, however, take part in the discussion or observe the vote.

When must I leave the place where the meeting is held?

 You must withdraw at the earliest opportunity, unless permitted to make representations

- 3.43 You must withdraw from a meeting before, or as soon as it becomes apparent that, business in which you have a prejudicial interest is being considered.
- 3.44 If you are attending a meeting to make representations in the same way as an ordinary member of the public, you must leave immediately after the time for making representations, giving evidence or answering questions is finished, and before any debate starts.

What does influencing a decision mean?

 You may influence other members simply by being present

- 3.45 You must not make any representations or have any involvement with decisions in which you have a prejudicial interest, except where you are entitled to speak as described above. Your presence itself could be perceived to be capable of influencing the decision-making process. You should also take the advice of your Clerk before asking another member to speak about a matter for which you have a prejudicial interest. Dependent upon the circumstances, this could be viewed as seeking inappropriately to influence a decision in breach of the Code.

Example 31

A member of a County Borough Council made representations on behalf of, and sought preferential treatment for, a close personal associate who was being threatened with removal as a local authority governor on a school governing body due to improper conduct. In so doing, the member did not avail himself of the normal complaints process, but undertook a course of conduct which involved making allegations against officers of the Council, disclosing confidential information and making a series of representations on behalf of his associate. In addition to breaches of other paragraphs of the Code, the Adjudication Panel found that the member had sought to influence decisions on a matter in which he had a prejudicial interest when he made written and oral representations to officers of the Council, in breach of paragraphs 14(1)(c) and (d).

Example 32

A Standards Committee found that a member of a Town Council with a personal and prejudicial interest sought to influence a decision about a project being considered by the Council, when he participated in a discussion at a Council meeting, in breach of paragraphs 14(1)(a) and (c) of the Code. It also found that the member's participation in the discussion constituted oral representations in breach of paragraph 14(1)(d); and he had made written representations to the Clerk and the Welsh Government in an attempt to derail the project, in breach of paragraph 14(1)(e).

What if the public are not allowed to speak to the meeting on the matter?

You can only make representations if the public can do so

- 3.46 If an ordinary member of the public is not allowed to speak on the matter, you cannot do so or submit written representations if you have a prejudicial interest. You must leave the place where the debate is being held and not seek to influence the debate in any way.
- 3.47 This may be the case, for example, where your Council is discussing a confidential matter in closed session or does not have procedure rules or standing orders in place that allow members of the public to speak at a

meeting of your Council. Like the public, you are not allowed to participate if you have a prejudicial interest. However, whereas the public may be allowed to sit in the public gallery to observe the meeting, **you must leave the room during the debate and vote.**

Example 33

A member of a Community Council was found in breach of the Code for failing to declare a personal and prejudicial interest at a meeting which considered a planning application for a wind farm on land adjacent to a farm owned by her. The member had entered into a Lease of Rights agreement over her land to facilitate access to the proposed development. The member initially relied on the fact that this agreement contained a confidentiality clause to explain her actions. Nonetheless, the member participated in a secret ballot held in order to decide whether the Community Council would support or oppose the application.

Immediately prior to the hearing before the Adjudication Panel the member accepted that she had a personal interest in the item and later that it was prejudicial in nature. The Adjudication Panel found that the member had failed to comply with paragraphs 11(1) (disclosure of interest) and 14(1) (participation in relation to a disclosed interest) of the Code. It considered that she had allowed her personal interests to prevail and to keep those private conflicted with her duties and responsibilities as an elected member.

Dispensations

If I have a prejudicial interest, can I obtain a dispensation to allow me to take part in the meeting?

You could be granted a dispensation to speak and / or vote on a matter

3.48 Standards committees have powers under regulations¹² made by the National Assembly for Wales (as it was known at the time) to grant dispensations to members with prejudicial interests, enabling them to speak and / or vote on a matter, in certain circumstances.

¹² Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001, SI 2001 No. 2279 (W.169)

3.49 You can apply in writing to the principal council's Standards Committee for a dispensation on one or more of the following grounds:

- at least 50 per cent of the Council or Committee members would be prevented from taking a full part in a meeting because of prejudicial interests
- the nature of your interest is such that your participation would not harm public confidence
- your interest is common to a significant proportion of the general public
- you have a particular role or expertise which would justify your participation
- the business relates to the finances or property of a voluntary organisation and you sit on its board or committee in your own right and you do not have any other interest, although in this instance, any dispensation will not let you vote on the matter
- the Committee believes that your participation would be in the interests of the people in your Council's area
- the Committee considers it otherwise appropriate in all the circumstances. When introducing this last category in 2016, the Welsh Government suggested, for example, that where it was not otherwise possible to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a person's disability, a dispensation under this category may enable the member to remain present in a meeting without participating in the business. This does not though limit the scope of this category of dispensation.

3.50 You can apply for a dispensation individually and, in certain circumstances, you can make joint applications where a number of members want to obtain a dispensation to speak or vote on the same matter. If the Standards Committee approves your application, it must grant the dispensation in writing and before the meeting is held. If you need a dispensation, you should apply for one as soon as is reasonably possible.

3.51 Only the Standards Committee can grant the dispensation and will do so at its discretion. The Standards Committee will need to balance the public interest in preventing members with prejudicial interests from taking part in decisions, against the public interest in decisions being taken by a reasonably representative group of members of the Council. If failure to grant a dispensation will result in a council or committee not achieving a quorum, this may well constitute grounds for granting a dispensation.

3.52 Where you hold a dispensation, you can also make written representations but you must provide details of the dispensation in any correspondence. If you make oral representations, whether in person or by phone, you must refer to the dispensation and confirm this in writing within 14 days.

4 Registration of Personal Interests

See paragraph 15

Key points

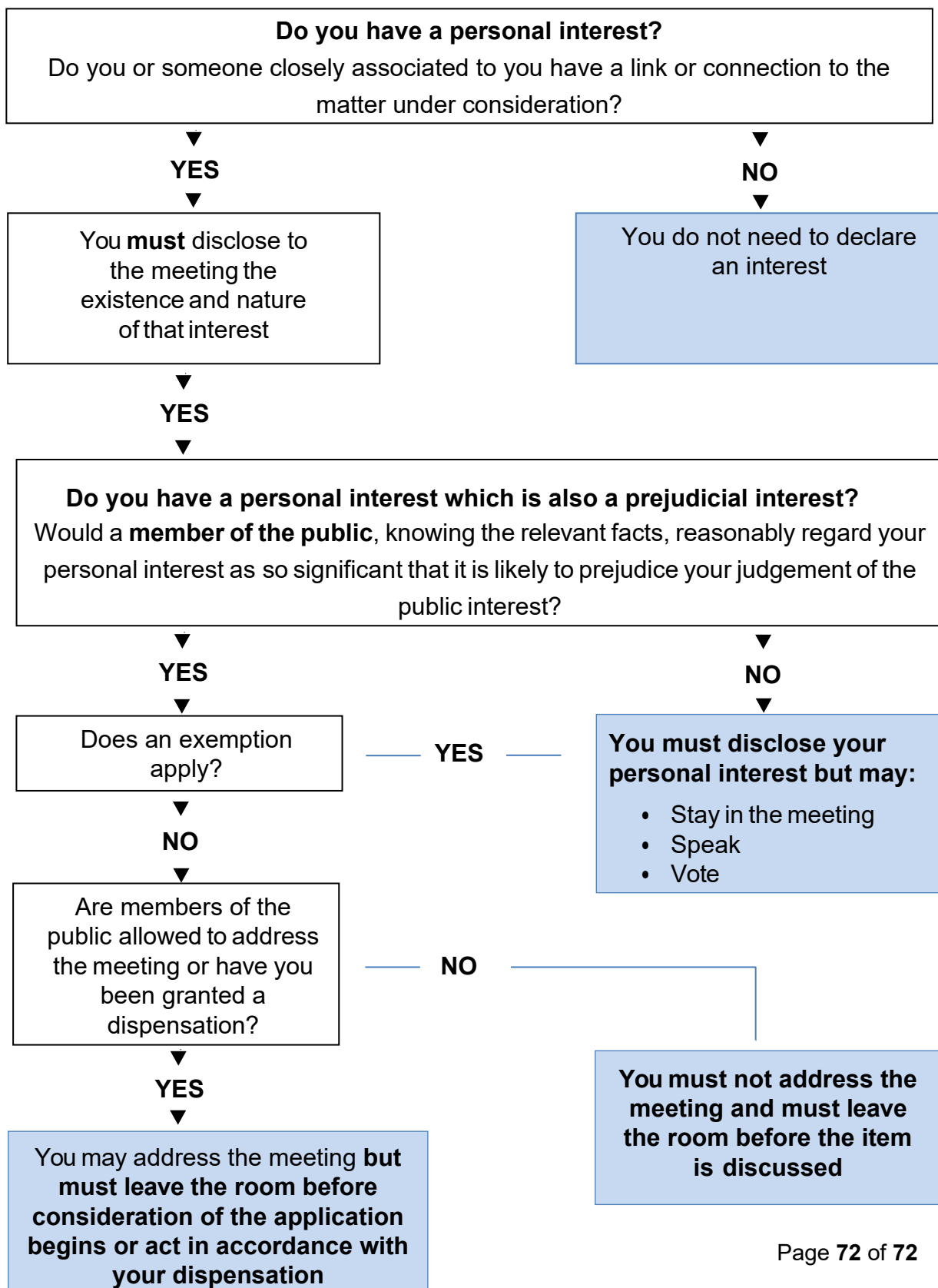
You must register a personal interest that you disclose for the first time at a meeting or when making representations

- 4.1 Community and town councils are required to maintain and publish electronically a record of its members' interests in a public register of interests. It must also be available for public inspection at reasonable hours. This record is maintained by the 'Proper Officer', usually your Clerk.
- 4.2 Unlike members of principal councils and other relevant authorities, as a community councillor you do not need to register pecuniary and other interests set out in paragraph 10(2)(a) of the Code upon taking up office. However, you may find that your Council has adopted this requirement as a matter of good practice.
- 4.3 You must, however, register any personal interest which you disclose for the first time under paragraph 11 of the Code, for example at a meeting or in written or oral representations, by giving written notice to your Council's Clerk. As indicated in the guidance on paragraph 11 of the Code, your Clerk will have arrangements in place for this. **Even when you have registered a personal interest, you must still disclose the existence and nature of the interest each and every time before you participate in any business to which it relates.**

Appendix 2

Declaration of personal and prejudicial interests

Questions to ask yourself. If in doubt you should ask your Clerk or your Monitoring Officer.



Appendix 14

Final response to Ombudsman Report

This will be my final response to the ombudsman report into the complaint against me, which I received on 23rd February 2024. I will reply here to the technical inaccuracies and assumptions that have been made in the final report and the substantive overall finding, which I am also prepared to do in front of the Standards Committee in a public meeting where I intend to defend my position fully.

Before I do so, I will state that I am dumbfounded by the finding contained in the report and genuinely fear for the future of democracy and the accuracy of minutes of meetings of Town and Community Councils that are not electronically recorded if the findings are confirmed. This will form an extremely dangerous precedence. For the avoidance of doubt, I have been advised that the draft report, if accepted as a full report, is open to legal challenge, not just on the inaccuracies that I will be detailing in this reply, but the precedent that draft minutes of Council meetings being treated as “accurate” on the basis of probability in spite of elected members statements to the contrary, because the complainant is the person who has helped prepare the draft minutes of the meeting through their notes.

There is no explicit guidance in the code that I am aware of, nor has it been a part of any training that I have attended, whereby it states the fact that I can be involved in the discussion if it is an extremely close and long standing friend but not a spouse. This is left for the interpretation of the member and as I stated many times in my interview with you, I was acting as the Chair of the Committee in that meeting in question at all times and was looking at the integrity of the Council and nothing else. I am passionate about democracy and how it serves its residents. The history and standing of Bridgend Town Council is something that I hold dear and I was acting as the Chair of a Committee of the Council. I did not look to gain any advantage for any member at any time. I knew that the minutes were incorrect and not in the adopted format of the Council and that this needed to be corrected as a matter of public accuracy.

As a Councillor (across three Councils) I am required to adhere to the Nolan Principles, which are:-

1.1 Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

1.2 Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

1.3 Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

1.4 Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

1.5 Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

1.6 Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

1.7 Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

I would propose that my actions in the case brought against me align with my adherence to the Nolan Principles as follows:-

- 1.1 It is in the public interest that the minutes of the committee meeting are accurate, I knew that they were not accurate.
- 1.2 Shows that there is no differentiation between family of friends in the eyes of the principles and I state that there was no “material benefit” to any family member as the proposals to change what I knew to be incorrect would not material to the separate investigation that had already been commenced.
- 1.3 I was using the “best evidence” as I was the Chair of the meeting and knew that there were mistakes in the minutes from the minute takers who were remote from the Councillor and there was no discrimination or bias, only what is assumed by the investigator in their draft report
- 1.4 As stated previously, I “could” have approached other Councillors to raise my concerns in private meetings and hide away from public scrutiny, I did not, I didn’t speak to a single other Councillor about my concerns over the minutes but addressed them in a public meeting, open to full scrutiny, as laid out in the principles
- 1.5 As above, I acted with full transparency and did not hide anything away, unlawfully, making my thoughts known in a full public meeting, as laid out in the principles
- 1.6 I was truthful at all times, and have remained so to you throughout your investigation, I have stated that the truth is the most important thing to me about my public life and I stand by it. Something that seems to be used against my in the draft report. I knew the minutes were wrong, I was truthful, as is laid out in the principles.
- 1.7 I have maintained this throughout my seven years, in fact I have sent evidence into you about the actions of elected Councillors in relation to “leaked WhatsApp” messages that have shown an attempt to manipulate the evidence provided to you. I act in accordance with the principles.

As I have laid out, my actions in this situation are in line with the principles laid out to me in my role as a publicly elected official. No bullet point is more important than the other, they are principles that I hold and adhere to. I have made specific reference to each one in this case.

Your draft report

Page 5 Point 7 “A transcript of the interview is available at Appendix 12.” **I was told at the interview that I would be sent a transcript for me to sign, this has not happened.**

Page 5 Point 11 “My Guidance includes reference to a case example (28) where a member was found in breach of the Code for failing to declare a personal and prejudicial interest at a meeting which

considered the Clerk's remuneration package. The member and the Clerk were engaged to be married at the time. The Adjudication Panel found that the member should have declared a personal interest in the item of business by virtue of his close personal association with the Clerk. There are other Adjudication Panel cases of relevance, and these authorities are cited in the footnotes below". I do not accept the premise of this being a valid reference as that relates to a situation where there was a direct financial benefit to both the Clerk and the Member who voted. As I have stated, my intervention into the correction of minutes had no direct benefit to a family member as there was a separate investigation that would carry out its own interviews of those who attended the meeting. My intervention, as the Chair, did not have any material benefit to myself or any family member. The two items are not equal. All councillors and staff members are aware that I am married to Cllr Freya Bletsoe and so I am not required to declare any interest to this effect in the general business of the council as family members are permitted to be members of the same Town Council in the same way that friends, neighbours or members of the same political group/party are able to. Whilst rare, a council could be made up of an entire family if it was the will of the electorate.

Page 6 Point 12 "On 14 June 2022, the Regeneration Committee of the Council met. The Member and his wife, Councillor Freya Bletsoe, were in attendance. The Member was Chair of the Committee." There is no reference to the fact that all Councillors other than Cllr Tim Wood were attending in a remote capacity, including Councillor Freya Bletsoe who was attending in a remote capacity and that I was the only person who was in the same location and that the minute takers were only able to hear her through the Owl System in the Chamber.

Page 5 Point 14 "Councillor Freya Bletsoe disagreed with both pieces of advice the Clerk provided, and the discussion escalated to such an extent that the Clerk told the Committee members that she felt bullied and intimidated by Councillor Freya Bletsoe's behaviour towards her." There is no reference to the fact that Councillor Freya Bletsoe was stating that her position was based on the request of the need for confidentiality by the Lord Lieutenant, the then Queen's representative. Or that the Councillor also felt undermined by the Clerk

Page 5 Point 15 "On 14 and 15 June 2022, Councillor Freya Bletsoe raised a formal complaint with the Clerk's line manager about events that occurred in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022." This has zero material relevance to this complaint, but it reinforces my concerns over the handling of the complaint.

Page 6 Point 16 "On 24 June 2022, the Clerk submitted a formal complaint to the Council about Councillor Freya Bletsoe. This included concerns about Councillor Freya Bletsoe's behaviour towards her in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022." This also has zero material relevance to the complaint against me.

Page 6 Point 17 "On 27 June 2022, the Clerk submitted a formal complaint to my Office about Councillor Freya Bletsoe. This included concerns about her behaviour towards the Clerk in the Regeneration Committee meeting of 14 June 2022. We decided to investigate these concerns and Councillor Freya Bletsoe was informed of our decision in July 2022." This has zero relevance to the complaint against me and trying to tie it to the complaint is part of my concerns around trying to write a narrative that is not a true reflection of the circumstances. The complaint against me was received after the complaint about Councillor Freya Bletsoe and the report makes it clear that you are reliant on the outcome of my complaint in order to uphold the complaint about Cllr Freya Bletsoe. They should be dealt with as two separate complaints and investigated fully on their own merits and not by means of working backwards to prove the allegations made against either of us.

Page 7 Point 18. On 26 September 2022, at a full Council meeting, which the Member attended, there was an agenda item to “receive draft minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 14th June 2022”. The draft minutes included details about the contentious discussion that had taken place between the Clerk and the Member’s wife. The draft minutes referred, among other things, to Councillor Freya Bletsoe having:

- Disputed the advice given by the Clerk.
- Asked the Committee to obtain “proper advice” and having said that the advice “undermined” the Committee’s delegated authority.
- Become “irate” and “angry”.
- Announced to the Chair that she did not wish the Clerk to interrupt her.
- Asked the Clerk to specify where her advice came from.
- Suggested she was annoyed at the Clerk “throwing curve balls”.
- Abruptly left the meeting without apology.

And Point 19. The Member did not declare a personal or prejudicial interest in the agenda item and remained in the meeting to discuss it. The Member stated he had questions regarding inaccuracies in the minutes and proposed that they be deferred to the next meeting, which was agreed. This in **no way** is reflective of the truth of the facts that have been presented to the Ombudsman’s office either in written or verbal evidence. I have stated on numerous occasions that I arrived late to this meeting, from a Scrutiny Meeting being held in BCBC offices and that the presentation of the minutes of the meeting had been bypassed and that a previous Councillor, Cllr Angela Morelli had requested the Mayor return to the matter, on instruction from a WhatsApp chat. At that point, I made a public statement that as Chair of the Committee I did not agree with the accuracy of the minutes. At this point a “Guest” made derogatory remarks in the chat facility. There is clear evidence of the political manipulation that was being undertaken around the matter, which has been completely ignored and again, is being ignored to create a false narrative around the matter.

Page 8 Point 21 “Although not stated in the minutes, a recording of the meeting showed that the Member also said “my original proposal for the minutes...was to state for the public record that there had been a disagreement between a councillor and the Clerk and the Clerk...[stated] she has felt bullied and intimidated...My concern is that we can’t openly discuss this because there are people who are in attendance, both officers and councillors who maybe asked for witness statements so we can’t discuss it, around our recollection of this because we may be asked individually...to give witness statements”. No reference is made here as to how the Ombudsman came into receipt of this recording and whether it is admissible. For the record, this was, it seems, a covert recording, taken without my knowledge, or that of the Council, but by the complainant who was acting in a potentially unlawful way, which is a matter that I am taking further advice on. Under GDPR I would like a copy of this recording and not simply a transcript.

Page 8 Point 22 “The minutes of the meeting then record that Councillor Spiller said that, although he was not present at the meeting in question, he believed the minutes were too detailed and not a summary. He said he was happy that the minutes had been taken accurately, but was not comfortable with page 3, bullet points 3 to 10 and proposed that bullet points 3 to 10 be removed and replaced with “Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk, a discussion took place after which Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30pm”. The Committee resolved to summarise the meeting as Councillor Spiller had proposed.” This is factually incorrect, Councillor Spiller did **not** state that he

was “happy that the minutes had been taken accurately”, he stated that he was not disputing that they had been as he was not in the meeting. There is a very large difference and your statement that he was happy is misleading and again trying to write a narrative that is not correct. How can Councillor Spiller possibly say that he was happy with the accuracy of minutes for a meeting he did not attend. I notice that there is no evidence of Councillor Spiller being interviewed in this investigation, if he is interviewed, I am sure that he would clarify this point. But I state it is physically impossible that he would have said that he was happy with the accuracy of minutes for a meeting he did not attend and again, this narrative being written by your draft report is skewed against me without basis. If you wish to rely on an assumption in relation to another member of the council then any impartial investigation **must** include interviewing those referred to and all those who were present. To not do so renders this investigation flawed and incomplete.

Page 9 Point 25 “At this stage, the minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2022 show that Councillor Felton stated that the previous amendment to the minutes of 14 June 2022 was problematic and impacted “tone and intent”. She also expressed concern that changes to the minutes of 14 June 2022 could be construed as interfering with the minutes.” I have provided evidence to why Councillor Felton stated this, it was by political pressure and interference from Party Colleagues. Councillor Felton clearly states in the messages supplied to you that her recollection of the meeting was different to the minutes and there is clear manipulation of her statements in that meeting. There is a screenshot stating “we cannot have false minutes can we (smiley face)” and there is zero reference to this in your draft report. There is again a clear narrative that is being written that simply isn’t true and those who you are referring to yet again do not appear to have been interviewed or challenged about the evidence that I supplied.

Page 9 Point 26 “The minutes of the meeting 12 December 2022 go on to show that the Mayor was asked if he could recall whether the Member had previously referred to his wife having said she was leaving. The Mayor could not recall what was said. The Member said he was happy for his comments to be recorded in the minutes of “this full Council meeting” of 12 December 2022. Council then resolved “to receive and note the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting held on 24th October 2022”. There is no reference here to the fact that the Mayor was in the Chamber in the Regeneration meeting and not in the same place as the Member who the comment is attributed to. I also do not recall the fact that the Mayor was asked this in the December meeting at all. I was not asked about this in my evidence and I am actually not sure of the context of it’s relevance to the complaint against me. I believe that this is included, for no reason, to continue the narrative that is attempted to be written.

Page 9 Point 27 “She watched the Council meeting of September 2022 online as a guest. The Member queried the minutes of the Regeneration Committee meeting and said there was some inaccuracies. It was agreed that a discussion about the minutes would be deferred.” There was only one guest in the meeting, the guest who made the derogatory comments about me in the chat box, which have been provided to the Ombudsman as evidence, which shows her motivation in this case against me, showing clear prejudice and the reason behind what is now evidence of a malicious complaint. There is no reference to this evidence in the draft report.

“She recorded some of the meeting on her phone as she was concerned the Member wanted to amend the minutes which formed part of her complaint to the Ombudsman.” There is no reference to the fact that this is a covert recording, by a Member of Bridgend Town Council staff, in direct contradiction to the Standing Orders of the Council, after representation by the staff member herself that meetings should **not** be audio or visually recorded. The staff member, who is the complainant has breached BTC adopted standing orders and taken part in a covert recording of me in a pre-

planned attempt to provide “evidence”. She has also shown that her complaint against me is motivated in its entirety to secure a separate complaint. It also states that she wanted the minutes of the meeting to support her separate complaint, through a false narrative that she was writing (as the note taker from the minutes) rather than her covertly recording to ensure that they were **correct**. At no time in her evidence does she state that she recorded this meeting to ensure that the minutes were correct, just that they reflected her singular recollection of them to support her separate complaint. This is an extremely important aspect that has been missed by your draft report. My singular motivation has been the full accuracy and truth of the minutes, the complainant’s motivation is that the minutes are to her recollection and to support a separate complaint against another member. This is an extremely important part of your draft report, possibly the single most important part. My motivation at all times was openness, honesty, transparency and integrity of the Council, through the recording of true and accurate minutes. The complainant’s motivation is that I was going to amend minutes, that she was the note taker for, that would jeopardize a separate complaint about a member and use minutes to stack up that complaint. It is worth noting at this point, that there has never, ever been any contradiction that the change that I proposed as being incorrect were actually correct and therefore there has to be an acceptance that my proposal that they were incorrect was true. I reiterate what I have said above. There is no evidence that you have carried out a thorough investigation and interviewed all of the town councillors who were present. The complaint is against me because I believe in truth, openness and honesty as is requested in the Nolan principles and because the complainant believes that it is more important to have untrue minutes that she has been a note taker for as being accepted so that it supports a separate complaint against another member of the Council.

“She said that the evidence she had provided to the Ombudsman, in its ongoing investigation of her concern, was being tampered with and the references to Councillor Freya Bletsoe regarding the incident were being redacted.” I was not tampering with evidence, I was at all times acting to preserve the integrity of the Council by recording the true and accurate record of what was said. To state that I was tampering with evidence opens a very large “can of worms” for democracy and I am not aware of the guidance of what Councillors are meant to do when they know the minutes are wrong but a staff member (who wrote them) is relying on them as evidence in a complaint. It is unethical to expect Councillors to approve minutes written by staff, that they are relying on as evidence when they know that they are wrong, regardless of any relationship or not to any other member mentioned. It is extremely damaging to Councils, who in essence would therefore be unable to challenge the accuracy of staff reports of minutes when the staff decide that they are reliant on them as evidence, when Councillors know that they are incorrect. I ask you as the Ombudsman to consider that staff of Councils could write whatever they wished in minutes attributed to or about Councillors and then state that Councillors could not challenge them as being incorrect due to them being relied on by the staff for any reason. This is an extremely dangerous precedent to set, to state that Councillors cannot challenge inaccurate minutes because staff write them and then rely on them. In addition, you are accepting in your report that it is permissible to accept other officers who report to the complainant and are close friends with them and that there is no prejudicial interest even when the code itself does not differentiate between friend or spouse.

“If something happened in a meeting, the minutes were the only evidence and because they had now been redacted, evidence had been removed.” This is incorrect. As I have stated, the ombudsman investigation would continue, and contradictory. Here, the complainant clearly shows that she requires her version of the minutes to be accepted as correct, to support her own separate complaint against another member. Her complaint is that I have stated that these minutes are incorrect and my desire for them to be a true and accurate recollection should be supported if they

are to be provided as evidence. In essence, she is stating that unless it is her version of the minutes, produced by her staff and taken from her notes then she does not accept them. This is not how Councils work.

“She said the Member instigated this, and she felt it was wrong because he was Councillor Freya Bletsoe’s husband and he therefore had an interest. She felt he influenced others in his position as Chair.” This is incorrect, and the investigation has made no attempt to find out if the accusation is in any way substantiated. No Councillor who was in the meeting was interviewed to ask if I had influenced them in any way. It is an unsubstantiated claim that has not been investigated. I didn’t, I never have in my 7 years of being a Councillor, I wouldn’t in the future and any investigation where this accusation is levelled should have interviewed the other Councillors in the meeting to find out if I had influenced them. The fact that they have not been interviewed again shows the incorrect narrative that is trying to be written about me here.

There is no reference in this part of the draft report to the fact that the Clerk of the Council and the complainant has destroyed the contemporaneous notes that she and the DSO took of the meeting so that they cannot be checked to see who wrote what and in what way when they were taking notes to produce the minutes. It is stated here that the Clerk and complainant believed the importance of the minutes in relation to her complaint against another member, yet choose to destroy the only notes that led to their production so that they could be checked as part of the investigation into me. At the meeting in question, they could have been referred to when I checked the accuracy, but they were destroyed. There is no reference to this in the draft report, and there needs to be as it is of material interest to the case. If the Clerk wanted to prove that I was wrong when stating that the minutes were incorrect they should have kept the notes to prove that my motivation was based on seeking a material benefit for a family member. They knew that I was correct in my assertion that the minutes were wrong and the notes were not retained. My motivation for the truth is clear, the non-keeping of the notes from the meeting calls the complainants motivation into question.

Page 11 Point 28 “In the meeting of 24 October 2022, the Member reminded fellow members that items relating to personnel matters could not be discussed and the Deputy Clerk did not understand why the Member said this.” This was said as the Chair of the Committee that was having respect for an ongoing investigation of the Personnel Committee, that had been undertaken on “pink papers” and that Councillors would have seen when they were presented to Full Council in “closed session”. I was attempting to show respect to that situation and for Councillors to not openly discuss this in an “open session” of the committee and put themselves in a difficult position. Again, that narrative that is being attempted to be written about me here is that it was for nefarious reasons. It wasn’t, it was for the integrity of the Council, respect for the staff and the protection of Councillors to not discuss something in “open session” that was deemed as confidential.

“The Deputy Clerk’s impression was that Councillor Spiller and the Member had discussed the matter beforehand and were ready to say what was said in the meeting.” This is a wildly inaccurate statement that is insulting and has not been investigated in any way. I have stated in my evidence that it has not happened, it would not happen and the investigation has not sought to interview any of the other Councillors in attendance to seek their confirmation on it happening. It is again trying to write a narrative, without any evidence, about me and how I acted that is not true. It shows the attempt to discredit me, which by interview would be instantly rebuked.

“She found it strange that the Member had not given his proposed changes in writing, which she said would have been a lot more helpful.” The Deputy Clerk made no written request to me to supply the information, given that she was acting as the Proper Officer in the meeting and states that she would

have found it “a lot more helpful”, it would appear that the Deputy Clerk put the full onus on me here despite it being her opinion as Proper Officer that it would be helpful to her.

“She felt a “game was being played” to make sure the minutes were framed with a particular narrative, as she knows members are aware of how important minutes are when there is an Ombudsman investigation.” No games were being played at any times by me, just that true and accurate records needed to be approved in line with Bridgend Town Councils adopted practice of being recorded. I have been on the public record many times that BTC should be visually and audio recording their minutes so that they can be kept and even provided to the ombudsman as being a full and accurate record. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk have both objected to this and prefer to work from notes that they take. Although it seems there is no objection to covert recording of meetings without councillors knowledge. I don’t “play games” and I find this allegation deeply offensive.

“She thought that the Democratic Services Officer’s (“the DSO”) confidence was affected, because she was the staff member who minuted the meeting and drafted the minutes. She had told the DSO that this was not something she should take personally.” This is a laughable statement and something that I have raised in my evidence, given that during my term as Mayor that the DSO confided in me that her confidence was being undermined by her line managers. I have always had a strong and productive relationship with the DSO, over her entire time with the Council, one based on honesty. To say that I had undermined her is insulting.

There is no reference throughout the draft report to the fact that the Clerk being the complainant and the Deputy Clerk being the witness are best friends, they worked together in previous jobs, they holiday together, they do everything together. It is not reflected in the draft report, or in my statements which I made. This has a material impact on the evidence gathered given that the charge is about “interests” of who we know or are related to. The two witnesses against me are long term best friends and this needs to be documented, it isn’t and again conforms to the narrative of the report.

Throughout the report there is no reference to the fact that I stated that not a single member of the public, who was not the complainant, or the complainant in the separate complaint about the other member had made a complaint to the ombudsman about this matter. I was extremely clear on this point and it has not been included in the draft report. This is important as it is deemed to be in the public’s perception and interest and yet, only the person who has made the separate complaint, who has a “vested interest” in propping up a separate complaint on incorrect minutes has made the complaint against me. I was clear that I am regularly complained about with spurious complaints, that are regularly dismissed on having no grounds, and yet, no member of the public not linked to the accuracy or not the minutes chose to complain.

Page 17 Point 44. “The Member considered that he did not have a personal interest in the matter or, if he did, it was “at the very worst a loose personal interest”. I **did not** seek to gain anyone any advantage **at any time**, my drive and motivation as at all times to ensure true and accurate recording of official minutes, which I knew to be incorrect, regardless of who they were about. That has been my motivation in seven years of being a Councillor. I stand by the principles of the Nolan Principles, I was acting under the guidance to ensure that the minutes were a true and accurate record, as I have done in the past, as I will continue to do. There have been numerous occasions when minutes have proven to have been incorrect, both before and since the alleged event. This could all be stopped if staff at Bridgend Town Council enacted the will of the Council to visually and audio record the meetings.

Page 17 Point 46 "A decision as to whether the draft minutes, which documented his wife's behaviour, should be ratified could reasonably be regarded as affecting the wellbeing of his wife (a person with whom he lived). I consider the Member therefore had a personal interest in the matter pursuant to 10(2)(c)(i) of the Code." I believe that this is an extremely dangerous finding, and points towards a Councillor such as myself sitting back and allowing minutes that I knew to be inaccurate to be approved because it included incorrect statements attributed to a relative, in the absence of contemporaneous notes, taken by the complainant in both cases, to support one of the complaints, regardless of their accuracy. The only option, if this finding is upheld, is that in knowing that the minutes are wrong, they I covertly approach other Councillors and seek to ask them to carry out my work in a public meeting, or allow staff to write minutes as they see fit. I ask the Ombudsman to consider the ramifications of such a finding on this magnitude. It would be removing Councillors ability to question minutes that they know to be wrong and set a precedent. Any Clerk across a community Council could write minutes attributed to a Councillor or collection of Councillors in meetings and then not allow those Councillors to contest those minutes as they would have the accusation that they have an interest to object to their accuracy, stating that it would be affecting their wellbeing if they were to dispute that something had been said. I remind you that there are no notes available to check in this case.

Page 18 Point 50 "While the Member considered most Committee members had similar difficulties in making representations because they were friends with his wife, I am not persuaded that friendship, unless deemed to be a close personal associate, would have put them in the same position as the Member; one Committee member made a proposal as to how the meeting should be minuted, which was seconded by another member. The Member's relationship with Councillor Freya Bletsoe as her spouse is entirely different." This is simply not true as highlighted above. Whilst I accept that a close personal friendship is not as physically intimate as that of a wife, the code of conduct does not differentiate between the two.

Page 19 Point 52 "More generally, the Member told the meeting that he considered minutes should record resolutions not conflict, and that he considered the minutes should refer to a dispute between a member and the clerk and no more." We have been told this many times by the staff themselves over my seven years of being a Councillor, primarily in relation to staff capacity and the fact that in some Council meetings there are 3 or 4 minute takers (when technology is available to assist) and it is also guidance from OVW. I was restating the points made by staff. It is also needed to be stated, as it is not covered anywhere else, that the Clerk **did not** state in the original Regeneration meeting that full verbatim meetings would be recorded in order to back up her complaint against the other member, this did not happen, despite it being stated as evidence.

Page 19 Point 53 "Even after the Regeneration Committee of October 2022, when members had resolved to simply state in the minutes of 14 June 2022 that "Cllr F Bletsoe disputed the advice given by the Clerk, a discussion took place after which Cllr F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30pm", the Member again raised in a subsequent meeting that his wife had apologised and said she was leaving." This is incorrect. That is not what the minutes stated. The minutes stated that Councillor Freya Bletsoe left the meeting without apologies. This entire paragraph is not true, and there is no information where it is claimed as to which meeting that I claimed she had said she was leaving. The statement of what the minutes showed and the alleged future meeting where I claimed these are incorrect and again, show that an incorrect narrative is trying to be written here.

Page 20 Point 55 "While the Member said he did not consider the amendments could be favourable to his wife, because my Office would conduct its own investigation through witness statements, by his own admission, he considered the point about his wife having apologised before leaving a

significant one, which he thought my Office may find important.” This is a complete misrepresentation of what I said and the context in what I was saying. I stated that this was one example of why the minutes were wrong and why they could not be relied on as evidence in the separate investigation. It was why the interviews of that investigation were so important. Fundamentally, this is why me not receiving a copy of my transcript to sign off for accuracy is such an important mismanagement of the entire process, so that I could be given the opportunity to be clear on what I was saying and in what context. This entire part of my interview process has been turned around to try to fit the narrative of finding me guilty of something, when I was purely using this as a “for instance” in why relying on the minutes alone was so dangerous. If I have been given the opportunity to be clear and confirm this point by reading and confirming my interview transcript then I could have addressed this.

Page 20 Point 56 “The Member also said he was content to leave the Committee to decide the issue of the minutes once he had made his points. However, when the Committee decided to record that “Councillor F Bletsoe left the meeting at 7.30”, he raised the issue again, in a subsequent meeting, that his wife had apologised and said she was leaving. It was clear, therefore, that the Member was attempting to influence matters and was determined to make sure his recollection of events was recorded.” Again, trying to create a narrative that simple is not true. My sole and only attempt was to ensure that the minutes were true and accurate. The draft minutes showed that Councillor Freya Bletsoe left the meeting **without apologies**, I heard Councillor Bletsoe say “I am sorry”, the draft minutes were incorrect. Again, the statement that I attempted to influence other Councillors is a false narrative, I was purely talking about the accuracy of minutes that I knew to be incorrect.

Page 20 Point 57. “The Member also told Committee members that the issue could not be openly discussed, and in his interview, the Member told us that he felt members should not discuss their recollection about what happened on 14 June as this could jeopardise the complaint. It therefore appeared that the Member was seeking to influence the Committee to record matters in the way he felt appropriate, and for there to be no detailed discussion between members, as that would not be appropriate, in the Member’s view.” I am sorry, but this is a frankly ridiculous comment and has no basis in truth. In my interview and in this response I have detailed why I said this. The complaint by the Clerk against Councillor Freya Bletsoe had been discussed in the Personnel Committee meeting on Pink Papers, in closed session. This Regeneration Meeting was not on pinks and was in open session. Councillors in the Regeneration meeting could have broken the code themselves if they had mentioned something in an open meeting that they were aware of from those minutes of the Personnel Committee, if they discussed them. My advice as Chair of the committee was designed to protect them and that of the Clerk, whose personal information I was seeking to protect. The accusation that I was seeking in any way to stop open debate or detailed discussion is frankly absurd and insulting. If Councillors had wished to have had detailed debate, then I would have immediately moved the committee into closed session and removed any non Councillor or Proper Officer. I am sorry, but this paragraph alone shows the narrative that is attempted to be written in this draft report. I had no intention of influencing or restricting debate, I was at all times trying to protect the integrity of the Council, the Councillors in attendance and the Clerk herself. I find this single paragraph perhaps the most insulting words ever written about me. The narrative written here is completely false.

Page 20 Point 58 “The Member said the Council would not usually record details of disputes, and he referred to minutes of a particular meeting as an example. I note the example did not simply record that a dispute occurred with no further details, as suggested. Rather the minutes went on to record the nature of the dispute and summarised what some members had said. I am not of the view there is evidence to suggest the Council protocol was clear that only resolutions, and never disputes,

would be recorded in minutes. In any event, whether matters were minuted in a manner that was usual for the Council is not relevant to the issue of concern which was whether the Member should have involved himself in the discussions that related to his wife.” As I have stated previously, this is an adopted style of recording minutes of Bridgend Town Council meetings. There is evidence of this available. I provided one piece of evidence to support this in my interview as it was available within the bundle pack, but that aside, it is an adopted policy of the Council and in line with advice from One Voice Wales, of which BTC is a member. The policy is clear to a Town Councillor who has attended meetings for over seven years, where this policy has been referred to. I am at a loss as why the ombudsman has been unable to find evidence of this policy of reporting minutes. In fact I could submit seven years of Full Council and Committee meetings where “non-verbatim” minutes have been recorded. It is not the policy of BTC to record verbatim minutes, there are 7 years worth of minutes that will evidence this and I am at a loss as to how the Ombudsman cannot find evidence of this policy.

Page 20 Point 59 “I consider, on balance, the evidence is suggestive of the Member trying to influence the outcome of what should be recorded in the minutes of the contentious meeting in question, for the advantage of his wife, to portray her alleged comments and actions at the meeting in the best possible way. He felt my Office would consider the matter of his wife leaving the meeting with an apology to be an important factor.” I **did not** try to influence other Councillors, and as I have maintained, you have not interviewed any of those councillors to ask them if it was true. They, like me, are bound by the code of conduct and therefore must answer truthfully.

Page 21 Point 60 “One of the Clerk’s concerns was that the Member used his contacts to influence others (not just in the meeting but outside the chamber). The Clerk was concerned that Councillor Spiller’s proposal that the minutes were too detailed and should be summarised to say only that a dispute occurred (which the Member had himself suggested a little earlier in the same meeting), may have been discussed with the Member before the meeting. While I can understand the Clerk’s concerns, particularly given that Councillor Spiller was not, in fact, in the original meeting, the Member stated that no such conversation took place. While I note the Deputy Clerk had the impression in the meeting that Councillor Spiller and the Member knew what they were going to say in advance, I do not consider there is sufficient evidence to suggest a discussion took place before the meeting. While Councillor Spiller was not at the original meeting, the principle about what generally should be recorded in meetings was one Councillor Spiller was entitled to have an opinion about. As mentioned above, however, given the Member made this point first in the meeting, I consider this an attempt to influence” This is a frankly bizarre statement and whilst accepting that Councillor Spiller was in a position to arrive at his point of amendment, stating that there is no evidence that I had attempted to influence him in a meeting prior to the event, because no such meeting occurred, it is stated that I have tried to influence him in a public meeting to do something that he did. Again any impartial investigation would have included a statement from Councillor Spiller, and this report suggests that this has not been asked for.

Conclusions

I disagree with the conclusions overall, as I believe that the process to come to is fundamentally flawed as I have taken time to point out above. However, I make special reference to the following:-

Page 22 Point 65 “I also consider the Member used his position improperly, in an attempt to gain an advantage, when he suggested the minutes should not include the detail of the dispute nor details about his wife’s alleged behaviour, and by stating that he had heard his wife apologise and say she was leaving the meeting. I am not persuaded by the Member’s argument that there was no

advantage to his wife, because my Office would seek its own evidence, regardless of what the minutes said. While my Office would of course investigate impartially and independently, minutes are an important evidential document, and his suggestion to remove any details about the dispute, including what was alleged to have been said and by whom (including references which showed his wife may not have treated others with respect and consideration), can only have been advantageous to his wife and disadvantageous to the Clerk, contrary to paragraph 7(a) of the Code.” I find it beyond comprehension that the Ombudsman is stating that they would rely on minutes, that have been prepared in draft, from notes of the complainant in this and a separate complaint, where the contemporaneous notes have been disposed of. When a Councillor who was in attendance knows that they are wrong and cannot state that they are wrong to ensure that minutes are a **true and accurate record** is even being proposed in a draft finding. Under the Nolan Principles (and as I have already listed) I am required to act in the seven prescribed ways, equally. It is beyond belief that the ombudsman believes that I should not have corrected the public record so that it was true and accurate. In addition, that all other councillors in attendance were not contacted and interviewed, suggests that there was no appetite to fully investigate this complaint. It is flawed by confirmation bias.

Page 23 Point 67 “I say flagrant because the Member, in his interview, said he would prefer to have been found to have breached the rules than to fail to set out the truth. He also said he would not have done anything differently with hindsight. This, therefore, is indicative of a member who will only follow the statutory ethical rules in place when he considers them a good idea, in any given circumstances. This is a concern. While there will be situations when members may be frustrated by the rules, public confidence in councillors and their authorities is severely undermined if the ethical rules of good governance and democracy are not adhered to, even in difficult situations.” I am told to adhere to the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life. If the Ombudsman is suggesting that I do not, then I request that the guidance to adhere to them is changed. To repeat, the 7 guiding principles are:-

1.1 Selflessness

1.2 Integrity

1.3 Objectivity

1.4 Accountability

1.5 Openness

1.6 Honesty

1.7 Leadership

None of these above are to be taken one above the other, however, they can all be bound together by one characteristic, telling the truth at all times. I tell the truth and I reinforce my statement in my interview, I am bound by the Nolan Principles to tell the truth at all times. Regardless that this is now trying to be used against me by the draft report and somehow suggest that I should not tell the truth and “become frustrated by the rules”. It states that the public must retain confidence in me as a Councillor, well I would state that the public would be more confidence in me if they know that I will hold the principle of the truth and tell the truth at all times rather than “sticking to the rules”. The principle that I must not tell the truth is in contradiction to the Nolan Principles, and more than just one of them. I will always, in my public life as an elected member, tell the truth, even if the ombudsman believes that I am “flagrant” for doing so. In addition, for the Ombudsman to even

suggest this without carrying out a fully and impartial investigation, this whole statement is extremely disturbing and something that I will be taking further.

Page 23 Point 68 “I have also said the breach was serious because this was a very sensitive situation. The Member’s wife was being investigated by my office for serious concerns of alleged bullying. This will naturally have been a source of great distress to both the Member’s wife and the Clerk. Suggesting the removal from minutes of any details about the dispute, as the Member did, could have concerned the Clerk and other members of staff who were involved in minuting the meeting. The Member should have recognised the message his involvement in such a contentious issue will have sent to Council staff and to the public too, being involved, as he was, when he had such an apparent conflict.” This is in direct contradiction of point 57 where I told Councillors to be respectful of the fact that the matter was on the Personnel Committee on Pink Papers and as I stated there was with a view to respect the Clerk and Staff involved. You cannot accuse me of trying to be respectful and them of not respecting the sensitive nature of situation.

Page 23 Point 69 “That is not to say that it would be inappropriate for anybody else to have challenged the draft minutes in such circumstances. Certainly, I would expect committee members to be concerned if the minutes were substantively inaccurate or completely out with the usual manner in which minutes were recorded. However, the Member could not make representations on the matter, given his prejudicial interest. I do not agree that most other members, being friends with the Member’s wife, placed them in the same position.” The minutes of Council meetings are not required to be “substantively” correct, they are required to be a “correct and accurate” recording of the proceedings. It is not for Councillors to decide what the “level” is on mistakes that can pass and those that have to be challenged, it is for Councillors who believe that minutes are not a “true and accurate” record to raise their concerns. This point is also in contradiction to the previous point 50 around the legal definition of a “close personal associate”. I reiterate that no statements from other members have been provided.

Page 23 Point 70 “While I appreciate the Member said he could not approach the Clerk or Deputy Clerk for advice, given the circumstances, he could have spoken to the Monitoring Officer at Bridgend County Borough Council and consider whether he could obtain dispensation from the Standards Committee, but he did not. In not doing so, I consider, in the circumstances, that the Member’s behaviour was also suggestive of a breach of Paragraph 6(1)(a) of the Code – members must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office as councillor or their authority into disrepute.” This is total conjecture and indicative of the narrative that is being attempted to made in this report. I do not believe that I could have gone to the Monitoring Officer of BCBC over this matter as it was a Town and Community Council matter. I have raised numerous concerns with the Monitoring Officer over the years and I have always been told that she does not get involved in Town and Community Council issues.

I turn finally to the substantive finding in this report and highlight the principles of a good investigation:

Relevant evidence must be identified, collected and efforts made to triangulate information. All relevant witnesses must be identified, thoroughly interviewed, appropriate records made and statements taken. The commonality in all good investigations is to elicit the facts in a fair and unbiased manner, be analysis focussed, with accuracy and detail and have an openness to new evidence.

Given that these findings are hinged on interpretation and one side of the story with no attempt to interview all witnesses and obtain statements, this investigation is flawed and shows bias against me.

I will therefore be taking these concerns further as I do not feel that I have been dealt with fairly and given a fair “trial”. To use terminology such as flagrant reinforces my belief that this investigation has not been undertaken to the high standards that both the public and I would expect. Inflammatory and emotive language have no place in an impartial investigation. I would like to confirm that I have already submitted a Subject Access Request to the Ombudsman Office, I am awaiting an official reply.

Sanctions Guidance

Issued by the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales under Section 75(10) of the Local Government Act 2000.

Foreword by the President

I am pleased to introduce our new *Sanctions Guidance* which sets out the approach to be taken by case, appeal and interim case tribunals of the Adjudication Panel for Wales in order to reach fair, proportionate and consistent decisions on the sanctions that should be applied in relation to an individual's breach of the local Code of Conduct.

The Guidance has been developed by members of the Adjudication Panel for Wales in consultation with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Monitoring Officers and other interested parties. I would like to thank everyone for their contributions. In publishing this Guidance, I hope it will help all those with whom we share an interest in the Code - most importantly members of county and community councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities in Wales. I hope it reflects the importance we attach to the role of local members, the value of local democracy and the Adjudication Panel's commitment to promoting the highest standards in public life in Wales.

Claire Sharp
President, Adjudication Panel for Wales

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Introduction

1. This Guidance is issued by the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) using powers available to her under the Local Government Act 2000¹. Its primary purpose is to assist the APW's case, appeal and interim case tribunals when considering the appropriate sanction to impose on a member, or former member, who is found to have breached their authority's Code of Conduct.
2. This Guidance describes:
 - i. the role of the ethical framework and Code of Conduct in promoting high public standards amongst members of councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities in Wales;
 - ii. the role of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) and the purpose of the sanctions regime;
 - iii. the approach to be taken by its tribunals in determining sanction following a finding that the Code has been breached.
3. The purpose of sanctions and this Guidance are built on the values that underpin the Code of Conduct, in particular the fundamental importance of promoting the highest standards in local public life. The Guidance aims to assist tribunals in determining sanctions that are, in all cases, fair, proportionate and consistent.
4. The Guidance is not prescriptive and recognises that the sanction decided by an individual tribunal will depend on the particular facts and circumstances of the case. Any examples should be considered to be by way of illustration and not exhaustive. Tribunals have ultimate discretion when imposing sanctions and can consider in addition to this Guidance other factors that they consider necessary and appropriate. Nor does the Guidance affect the responsibility of the legal member of a tribunal to advise on questions of law, including the specific applicability of relevant sections of this Guidance.
5. In setting out the factors to be considered by a tribunal in its determination of an appropriate sanction, the Guidance offers a transparent approach for the benefit of all parties involved tribunal proceedings. It aims to ensure that everyone is aware, from the outset, of the way in which the tribunal is likely to arrive at its decision on sanction.
6. The Guidance seeks to fulfil a wider role and support all those with an interest in maintaining, promoting and adjudicating on the Code of Conduct. It aims to complement the statutory Guidance published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales², confirming the expectations on local members in

¹ Section 75(10) of the Local Government Act 2000 ("the 2000 Act") provides a power for the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales to issue guidance on how its tribunals are to reach decisions

² The Code of Conduct for members of county and county borough councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities: Guidance (August 2016) and The Code of Conduct for members of community councils:

terms of their conduct and emphasising the central importance of public confidence in local democracy. It should be of value to individual members, Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees of county and county borough councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities in Wales, and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

7. This Guidance comes into effect on 1 September 2018. It is a living document that will be updated and revised as the need arises, following consultation.

Standards in Public Life

The Code of Conduct

8. The Local Government Act 2000 introduced an ethical framework to promote high standards of conduct in public life in Wales. The framework's central mechanism is the Code of Conduct. All local authorities, community councils, fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities in Wales must have in place a Code of Conduct. All elected members and co-opted members (with voting rights) must, on taking office, sign an undertaking to abide by their authority's Code for the duration of their term of office.
9. The Welsh Government has issued a model Code of Conduct³ in order to ensure consistency across Wales and to give certainty to members and the public as to the minimum standards expected. The model Code is consistent with ten core principles of conduct⁴ prescribed by the National Assembly for Wales in 2001, which are themselves derived from the Nolan Committee's Principles for Public Life⁵:
 - i. Selflessness
 - ii. Honesty
 - iii. Integrity and Propriety
 - iv. Duty to Uphold the Law
 - v. Stewardship
 - vi. Objectivity in Decision-making
 - vii. Equality and Respect
 - viii. Openness
 - ix. Accountability
 - x. Leadership

Guidance (August 2016), issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales under Section 68 of the Local Government Act 2000

³ The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2008, as amended by the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016

www.legislation.gov.uk/ksi/2016/84/pdfs/ksi_20160084_mi.pdf and

www.legislation.gov.uk/ksi/2016/85/pdfs/ksi_20160085_mi.pdf

⁴ The Conduct of Members (Principles) (Wales) Order 2001 SI 2001 No.2276 (W.166)

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ksi/2001/2276/pdfs/ksi_20012276_mi.pdf

⁵ Nolan Report "Standards of Conduct in Local Government in England, Scotland and Wales"

Local codes must incorporate any mandatory provisions of the model Code and may incorporate any optional provisions of the model Code. At this time, all provisions of the model Code are mandatory.

Expectations on local members

10. Members of county councils, county borough councils, community councils, fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities in Wales must abide by their authority's Code:
 - whenever they are acting or present at a meeting of their authority, claiming to act or giving the impression of acting in an official capacity in the role of member to which they were elected or appointed or as a representative of their authority;
 - at any time, if they are conducting themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or authority into disrepute, or if using or attempting to use their position to gain an advantage or avoid a disadvantage for anyone or if they misuse the authority's resources.
11. Members are expected to engage in any training and access ongoing advice, as the need arises, from their local Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee. Members are also expected to be familiar with and have regard to the Public Services Ombudsman's statutory guidance on the Code⁶. It addresses each of the Code's requirements in order to help members understand their obligations in practical terms. It offers advice on the fundamental ethical principles that many members need to consider on a regular basis – for example, declarations of interest, confidentiality and whether their actions constitute bullying or harassment– in addition to those less frequently encountered.
12. Ultimately, members must use their judgment in applying the Code and the Principles to their own situation. They cannot delegate responsibility for their conduct under the Code.

Allegations of breach

13. There are non-statutory local protocols in place for low-level member-on-member complaints which do not result in case or appeal tribunals. Allegations that a member's conduct is in breach of the Code can be made to the Ombudsman, who will decide whether to investigate a complaint. If, following an investigation, the Ombudsman finds that there is evidence of a breach of the Code, he can refer his report to the relevant local Standards Committee or to the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales. The Ombudsman may also refer reports from an ongoing investigation to the President for consideration by an interim case tribunal.

⁶ The Code of Conduct for members of county and county borough councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities: Guidance (August 2016) and The Code of Conduct for members of community councils: Guidance (August 2016), issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales under Section 68 of the Local Government Act 2000

The Adjudication Panel for Wales

14. The introduction of the ethical framework included the establishment of the Adjudication Panel for Wales⁷ as an independent, judicial body with powers to form tribunals to deal with alleged breaches of the Code. The Panel's operation is subject to regulation by the Welsh Government.

Case tribunals

15. Case tribunals are appointed by the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales in order to consider a report from the Ombudsman following an investigation into an allegation of a member's misconduct. Case tribunals are responsible for deciding whether a local member has breached the Code of Conduct of their authority and, if so, for determining an appropriate sanction (if any).

Appeal tribunals

16. Appeals tribunals are appointed by the President to consider appeals from members against a decision of a local Standards Committee. Appeal tribunals are responsible for reviewing the decision that a local member has breached the Code of Conduct and any sanction imposed. They may uphold and endorse any sanction imposed or refer the matter back to the Standards Committee with a recommendation as to a different sanction or overturn the determination of the Committee that there has been a breach of the Code. An appeal tribunal cannot recommend a sanction which was not available to the Standards Committee.

Interim case tribunals

17. Interim case tribunals are appointed by the President to consider a report, and any recommendation to suspend a member, from the Ombudsman during an ongoing investigation into alleged misconduct. The tribunal is responsible for determining the need to suspend, or partially suspend, the member or co-opted member from the authority or a role within the authority. The maximum duration of the suspension or partial suspension is 6 months. Unlike case and appeal tribunals, suspension by an interim case tribunal is a neutral act, given the ongoing nature of the Ombudsman's investigation.

The sanctions regime

18. The Committee on Standards in Public Life⁸ had a key role in developing the ethical framework and identified the need for mechanisms to enforce and punish public office holders who breached the standards expected of them, if the ethical framework was to command public credibility. The purpose of the sanctions available to Adjudication Panel for Wales case and appeal tribunals are to:

⁷ Part III, Local Government Act 2000

⁸ Reference to the report on enforcement

- provide a disciplinary response to an individual member's breach of the Code;
- place the misconduct and appropriate sanction on public record;
- deter future misconduct on the part of the individual and others;
- promote a culture of compliance across the relevant authorities;
- foster public confidence in local democracy.

19. The sanctions available to a case tribunal that has found a breach of the Code are⁹:

- a. to take no action in respect of the breach;
- b. to suspend or partially suspend the member from the authority concerned for up to 12 months;
- c. to disqualify the member from being, or becoming, a member of the authority concerned or any other relevant authority to which the Code of Conduct applies for a maximum of 5 years.

The sanctions available to an appeal tribunal that has found a breach of the Code are:

- d. censure;
- e. to suspend or partially suspend the member from the authority concerned for up to 6 months.

20. The different types and scope of duration of sanction are designed to provide tribunals with the flexibility to apply sanctions of considerable difference in impact and enable a proportionate response to the particular circumstances of an individual case. This Guidance does not propose a firm tariff from which to calculate the length of suspension or disqualification that should be applied to specific breaches of the Code. Instead, it offers broad principles for consideration by all tribunals whilst respecting the details that make each and every case different.

⁹ Section 79, Local Government Act 2000

The Tribunal approach – underlying principles

21. Tribunals must always have in mind that every case is different and requires deciding on its own particular facts and circumstances. Following a finding that the Code of Conduct has been breached, tribunals must exercise their own judgment as to the relevant sanction in line with the nature and impact of the breach, and any other relevant factors. They must also ensure that the sanctions take account of the following underlying principles in order to ensure that their decisions support the overall ambitions of the ethical framework, fulfilling the purpose of the sanctions, and are in line with the tribunal's wider judicial obligations.

Fairness

22. The tribunal should take account and seek to find an appropriate balance between the various interests of the Respondent/Appellant, the Complainant, other interested parties to a case, the Ombudsman, the authority, the electorate and the wider public.

Public interest

23. Whilst seeking to ensure that the sanction imposed is appropriate, fair and proportionate to the circumstances of the case, the tribunal should consider the reputation of and public confidence in local democracy as more important than the interests of any one individual.

Proportionate

24. Tribunals will take account of the good practice identified in the Ombudsman's Guidance and Code of Conduct Casebook¹⁰ in order to assist their sense of proportionality when determining the sanction appropriate to the scale and/or nature of the breach.

Consistent

25. Tribunals will aim to achieve consistency in their sanctions in order to maintain the credibility of the ethical framework. They will take account of the good practice identified by the Ombudsman (para.24) in addition to this Guidance and its own previous decisions. Where a tribunal panel has reason to depart from the Guidance, it should clearly explain why it has done so.

Equality and impartiality

26. Fair treatment is a fundamental principle for the Adjudication Panel for Wales and is embedded within individual members' judicial oath. Tribunals must ensure that their processes and practices safeguard their capacity for objective, independent and impartial decision-making, free from prejudice and partiality, in order to uphold their judicial responsibilities.

¹⁰ <http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk/en/publications/The-Code-of-Conduct-Casebook.aspx>

Human Rights (Articles 6 and 10)

27. Tribunals must ensure that their processes and practices respect human rights. This Guidance aims to support those principles. In particular, tribunals must ensure that they consider the relevance of Articles 6 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights in their deliberations. These articles enshrine the right to a fair hearing and freedom of expression.

28. Article 10 is a key provision when considering possible breaches of the Code. It provides that:

“10(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. The right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority regardless of frontiers...”

10(2) The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.”

29. Enhanced protection of freedom of expression applies to political debate, including at local government level. Article 10(2) has the effect of permitting language and debate on questions of public interest that might, in non-political contexts, be regarded as inappropriate or unacceptable. This protection does not extend to gratuitous or offensive personal comment, nor to ‘*hate speech*’ directed at denigrating colour, race, disability, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origin, religion, or sexual orientation.

30. In their consideration of Article 10, tribunals should apply the three-stage approach established by Mr Justice Wilkie¹¹ in the case of *Sanders v Kingston (No1)* and which applies to both decision about breach and sanction, as follows:

- i. Can the Panel as a matter of fact conclude that the Respondent’s conduct amounted to a relevant breach of the Code of Conduct?
- ii. If so, was the finding of a breach and imposition of a sanction *prima facie* a breach of Article 10?
- iii. If so, is the restriction involved one which is justified by reason of the requirement of Article 10(2)?

¹¹ Wilkie J in the case of *Sanders v Kingston No (1)* [2005] EWHC 1145

Case and Appeal Tribunals – determining sanction

31. A tribunal will decide whether or not a sanction is appropriate after considering the facts of a case and finding that an individual has breached the Code of Conduct. In determining any appropriate sanction, the tribunal's approach should be sufficiently broad so as to accommodate its consideration of the various interests of those involved in the case, any specific circumstances of the individual respondent/appellant, the intended purpose of the sanctions available (in particular, the wider public interest) and the tribunal's wider judicial responsibilities.
32. Case tribunals will decide on the appropriate sanction to impose, if any, and the duration of any such sanction; appeal tribunals will consider the appropriateness of the sanction imposed by the Standards Committee.

The five-stage process

33. Case and appeal tribunals will follow a five step process in determining sanction:
 - 33.1 assess the seriousness of the breach and any consequences for individuals and/or the council (para.34 - 38)
 - 33.2 identify the broad type of sanction that the Tribunal considers most likely to be appropriate having regard to the breach; (para.39)
 - 33.3 consider any relevant mitigating or aggravating circumstances and how these might affect the level of sanction under consideration; (para.40 to 42)
 - 33.4 consider any further adjustment necessary to ensure the sanction achieves an appropriate effect in terms of fulfilling the purposes of the sanctions; (para.43)
 - 33.5 confirm the decision on sanction and include, within the written decision, an explanation of the tribunal's reasons for determining the chosen sanction in order to enable the parties and the public to understand its conclusions. (para.53)

Assessing the seriousness of the breach

34. The relative seriousness of the breach will have a direct bearing on the tribunal's decision as to the need for a sanction and, if so, whether a suspension or partial suspension (of up to 12 months) or disqualification (up to 5 years) is likely to be most appropriate. It is important to bear in mind though that appeal tribunals can only recommend a suspension (partial or full) for up to 6 months and cannot recommend disqualification due to the constraints upon its powers.
35. The tribunal will assess seriousness with particular reference to:
 - the nature and extent of the breach, and number of breaches;

- the member's culpability, their intentions in breaching the Code, and any previous breaches of the Code;
- the actual and potential consequences of the breach – for any individual(s), the wider public and/or the council as a whole;
- the extent to which the member's actions have, or are likely to have the potential to, bring his/her office or the relevant authority into disrepute.

36. Examples of the way in which tribunals might weight seriousness include:

- a breach involving deliberate deception for personal gain or discrimination is likely to be regarded as more serious than that involving the careless use of a council email address on a personal social media profile;
- a breach involving the systematic harassment or bullying of a junior officer is likely to be regarded as more serious than instances of disrespectful language in the course of a council debate;
- a breach of confidentiality that results in the disclosure of the address of a looked after child is likely to be regarded as more serious than the disclosure of a planning officer's confidential advice;
- a breach resulting in significant negative reputational damage to the office or authority is likely to be regarded as more serious than an inappropriately worded email to a member of the public.

37. Breaches involving the blatant disregard of specific, authoritative advice given as to a course of conduct and/or the Code (particularly by the relevant authority's monitoring officer), the deliberate abuse of confidential, privileged or sensitive information for personal gain or that of a close personal associate, and sexual misconduct, criminal, discriminatory, predatory, bullying and/or harassing behaviour are all likely to be regarded as very serious breaches.

38. A member who is subject to a term of imprisonment for three months or more without the option of paying a fine in the previous five years before their election or since their election is automatically subject to disqualification¹².

Choosing the potential sanction

39. Having assessed the relative seriousness of the member's breach of the Code, the tribunal will consider which of the courses of action available to it is most appropriate¹³. In line with the principles of fairness and proportionality, the tribunal should start its considerations of possible sanctions with that of least impact.

No action

39.1 The tribunal may decide that, despite the member having failed to follow the Code of Conduct, there is no need to take any further action in terms of sanction. Circumstances in which a tribunal may decide that no action is required may include:

¹² Section 80(1)(d), Local Government Act 1972

¹³ Section 79, Local Government Act 2000

- an inadvertent failure to follow the Code;
 - an isolated incident with extremely limited potential for consequential harm;
 - an acceptance that a further failure to comply with the Code on the part of the member is unlikely, nor are there any wider reasons for a deterrent sanction;
 - specific personal circumstances, including resignation or ill health, which render a sanction unnecessary and/or disproportionate.
- 39.2 A tribunal that finds a breach of the Code but decides that no action is necessary in terms of sanction, should consider whether there is a need to warn the member as to their conduct and/or seek assurances as to future behaviour. This provides an effective means of placing the member's behaviour on record, reflected in the tribunal's written decision, so that the warning and/or reassurance may be taken into account in the event of the same member being found to have breached the Code in the future. A failure to comply with any assurances given to the tribunal may be brought to the attention of the tribunal in any future hearings.

Suspension for up to 12 months

- 39.3 A case tribunal may suspend the member for up to 12 months from the authority(ies) whose Code/s has/have been breached.
- 39.4 Suspension is appropriate where the seriousness of the breach is such that a time-limited form of disciplinary response is appropriate in order to deter such future action, temporarily remove the member from the authority/a role within the authority, safeguard the standards set by the Code and to reassure the public that standards are being upheld.
- 39.5 A suspension of less than a month is unlikely to meet the objectives of the sanctions regime and risks undermining its overall ambitions. Tribunals are also reminded that the highest sanction available to local Standards Committees is 6 months' suspension. They should bear this in mind when considering an Ombudsman's referral to the Adjudication Panel, in preference to the local Standards Committee, and when considering an appeal against a local Standards Committee sanction. It is possible for appeal tribunals to recommend an increase in the sanction originally imposed by the Standards Committee.
- 39.6 Circumstances in which a tribunal may decide that a suspension is appropriate may include:
- the member's action has brought the member's office or authority into disrepute but they have not been found in breach of any other paragraph of the Code (though the most appropriate sanction will depend on the specific facts of each case);

- the breach merits a disciplinary response but, in view of the circumstances of the case, it is highly unlikely that there will be a further breach of the Code;
- the member has recognised their culpability, shown insight into their misconduct, and apologised to those involved.

Partial Suspension for up to 12 months

- 39.7 The tribunal may impose a partial suspension, preventing the member from exercising a particular function or role (such as being a member of a particular committee or subcommittee or the holder of a particular office) for up to 12 months.
- 39.8 Partial suspension is appropriate where the seriousness of the breach merits a suspension (see above) but the circumstances of the case are such that the member is permitted to continue in public office except for the role/function/activity specifically limited by the suspension.
- 39.9 In the case of a partial suspension, the tribunal will need to decide from what role/function/activity the member is to be suspended and, in the case of membership of more than one authority, the impact of the partial suspension in each relevant authority.
- 39.10 Circumstances in which a partial suspension may be appropriate include:
- the member is capable of complying with the Code in general but has difficulty understanding or accepting the restrictions placed by the Code on their behaviour in a specific area of council/authority activity;
 - the misconduct is directly relevant to and inconsistent with a specific function or area of responsibility held;
 - the member should be temporarily removed or prevented from exercising executive functions for the body to which the Code applies.

Disqualification for a maximum of 5 years

- 39.11 A case tribunal may disqualify the member from being, or becoming, a member of the authority concerned or any other relevant authority to which the Code of Conduct applies for a maximum of 5 years.
- 39.12 Disqualification is the most severe of the sanctions available to a tribunal. It is likely to be appropriate where the seriousness of the breach is such that a significant disciplinary response is appropriate in order to deter repetition, make clear the unacceptable nature of such conduct in public office, underscore the importance of the Code and to safeguard the public's confidence in local democracy. A disqualification of less than 12 months is unlikely to be meaningful (except in circumstances when the term of office of the member is due to expire during that period or is no longer a member).

39.13 Circumstances in which a tribunal may decide that a disqualification is appropriate may include:

- deliberately seeking personal gain (for her/himself, a family member or personal associate) by exploiting membership of the authority and/or the authority's resources;
- deliberately seeking to disadvantage another by exploiting membership of the authority and/or the authority's resources;
- deliberately disregarding or failing to comply with the provisions of the Code and continuing to assert the right so to do;
- repeatedly failing to comply with the provisions of the Code and demonstrating the likelihood of continuing the pattern of behaviour;
- deliberately seeking political gain by misusing public resources or power within the authority;
- a second or subsequent breach, despite a warning and/or having given an assurance as to future conduct in a previous case before an Adjudication Panel for Wales tribunal;
- conduct that calls into question the Respondent's fitness for public office;
- bringing the relevant authority into serious disrepute.

Mitigating and aggravating circumstances

40. The tribunal will go on to consider how any particular circumstances of the member may mitigate and/or aggravate the level of sanction under consideration. This stage is designed to take account of any personal circumstances affecting the member's conduct including inexperience, capacity, insight, responsibility (for the breach), remorse, reparation and any previous findings. This process is likely to have significant bearing on the duration of the sanction, varying the term down or up in line with the mitigating or aggravating factors. Such factors may at times be sufficient to persuade a tribunal that a suspension (if any) may be more appropriate than a disqualification, and vice versa.

41. Tribunals are encouraged to work through the examples set out below but are reminded that these are not exhaustive. Where any mitigating/aggravating factor relates directly to the nature or seriousness of the breach and the tribunal has already considered that factor in its choice of appropriate sanction, care should be taken as to the extent to which that factor is included in mitigation/aggravation. For example:

- if the sanction under consideration is a suspension because the conduct is regarded as a 'one off', this factor should not also be regarded as mitigating unless the 'one off' nature of the breach is so exceptional that it should have a direct bearing on the length of the suspension;

- if the breach is regarded as serious because it includes ‘bringing the authority into disrepute’, this factor should not also be regarded as aggravating unless the disrepute is so exceptional as to have a direct bearing on the length of the disqualification.

42. Tribunals should also take care to respect a member’s legitimate right to appeal and to distinguish protestations or assertions made in the course of exercising that right from those actions that might be regarded as aggravating factors designed to obstruct the processes of the Ombudsman or Adjudication Panel.

Mitigating circumstances

- i. substantiated evidence that the misconduct was affected by personal circumstances, including health and stress;
- ii. a short length of service or inexperience in a particular role;
- iii. a previous record of good service (especially if over a long period of time);
- iv. the misconduct was a one-off or isolated incident;
- v. that the member was acting in good faith, albeit in breach of the Code;
- vi. the misconduct arose from provocation or manipulation on the part of others;
- vii. the breach arose from an honestly held, albeit mistaken, view that the conduct involved did not constitute a failure to follow the Code, especially having taken appropriate advice;
- viii. the misconduct, whilst in breach of the Code, had some beneficial effect for the public interest;
- ix. political expression of an honestly held opinion, albeit intemperately expressed, or a political argument (see paragraphs 27-30 above and Aggravating factor xii below);
- x. self-reporting the breach;
- xi. recognition and regret as to the misconduct and any consequences;
- xii. an apology, especially an early apology, to any affected persons;
- xiii. co-operation in efforts to rectify the impact of the failure;
- xiv. co-operation with the investigation officer and the standards committee/APW;
- xv. acceptance of the need to modify behaviour in the future;
- xvi. preparedness to attend further training;
- xvii. commitment to seeking appropriate advice on the Code in the future;
- xviii. compliance with the Code since the events giving rise to the adjudication.

Aggravating factors

- i. long experience, seniority and/or position of responsibility;
- ii. seeking to unfairly blame others for the member's own actions;
- iii. deliberate conduct designed to achieve or resulting in personal (for her/himself, a family member or close personal associate) benefit or disadvantage for another;
- iv. deliberate exploitation of public office and/or resources for personal (for her/himself, a family member or close personal associate) or political gain;
- v. abuse or exploitation of a position of trust;
- vi. repeated and/or numerous breaches of the Code, including persisting with a pattern of behaviour that involves repeatedly failing to abide by the Code;
- vii. dishonesty and/or deception, especially in the course of the Ombudsman's investigation;
- viii. lack of understanding or acceptance of the misconduct and any consequences;
- ix. refusal and/or failure to attend available training on the Code;
- x. deliberate or reckless conduct with little or no concern for the Code;
- xi. deliberately or recklessly ignoring advice, training and/or warnings as to conduct;
- xii. the expression of views which are not worthy of respect in a democratic society, are incompatible with human dignity and conflict with the fundamental rights of others (see paragraphs 27 – 30 above);
- xiii. obstructing and/or failing to co-operate with any Ombudsman's investigation, Standards Committee, and/or the Adjudication Panel for Wales's processes;
- xiv. refusal to accept the facts despite clear evidence to the contrary;
- xv. action(s) that has/have brought the relevant authority and/or public service into disrepute;
- xvi. failure to heed previous advice and/or warnings and to adhere to any previous assurances given as to conduct relevant to the Code.
- xvii. Previous findings of failure to follow the provisions of the Code.
- xviii. Continuing to deny the facts, despite clear evidence to the contrary.

Fulfilling the purpose of the sanctions regime

43. The tribunal may need to consider further adjustments to the chosen sanction or length of sanction in order to achieve an appropriate deterrent effect, for the

individual and/or the wider council membership, or to maintain public confidence. Tribunals will also need to have regard to external factors that may exacerbate or diminish the impact of the chosen sanction.

Public interest

44. The overriding purpose of the sanctions regime is to uphold the standards of conduct in public life and maintain confidence in local democracy. Tribunals should review their chosen sanction against previous decisions of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and consider the value of its chosen sanction in terms of a deterrent effect upon councillors in general and its impact in terms of wider public credibility. If the facts giving rise to a breach of the code are such as to render the member entirely unfit for public office, then disqualification rather than suspension is likely to be the more appropriate sanction.

Eligibility for public office in other relevant authorities

45. Disqualification will automatically apply to a Respondent's current membership of all authorities to which the Local Government Act 2000 applies, irrespective of whether the other authorities' Codes have been breached. Disqualification will also prevent the Respondent from taking up public office, through election or co-option, on any other authorities to which the Act applies until the expiration of the disqualification period.
46. A suspension will preclude the member from participating as a member of the authority whose Code s/he has been found to have breached but not necessarily any other authorities of which the Respondent/Appellant is a member. Where the facts of a case call into question the member's overall suitability to public office, a disqualification may be more suitable than a suspension.

Former members

47. In circumstances where the tribunal would normally apply a suspension but the Respondent is no longer a member, a short period of disqualification may be appropriate (this can only apply in case tribunals). This will ensure that the Respondent is unable to return to public office, through co-option for example, sooner than the expiry of the period of suspension that would have been applied but for their resignation or not being re-elected. For appeal tribunals, a censure remains an option.

Financial impact

48. Tribunals should take into account the financial impact on members of a sanction: during suspension and disqualification, a member will be denied payment of their salary and allowances. The financial impact varies from an annual expenses reimbursement for community councillors to a basic salary

plus expenses for county councillors to the higher salaries paid to leaders of larger councils¹⁴.

Impact on the electorate

49. The High Court has recognised that Parliament has expressly provided case tribunals with a power to interfere with the will of the electorate and that such ‘interference’ may be necessary to maintain public trust and confidence in the local democratic process. Tribunals should be confident in their right to disqualify members whose conduct has shown them to be unequal to fulfilling the responsibilities vested in them by the electorate.
50. Suspension has the effect of temporarily depriving the electorate of local representation whereas disqualification triggers a process, either by-election or co-option, to replace the disqualified member.

Timing of local elections

51. In general, the length of a disqualification should be determined in relation to the nature of the breach and circumstances of the case, and be applied irrespective of the imminence or otherwise of local elections. There may be exceptional times when the duration of a disqualification might have a particularly disproportionate effect on the member. For example: a disqualification of 18 months, imposed in December 2020, would prevent a member from standing for local government election until May 2027, as the period of disqualification would overlap the May 2022 elections by one month. Tribunals should be willing to hear submissions as to why the length of disqualification should be varied, whilst bearing in mind the overriding public interest principle.

Automatic disqualifications

52. The law imposes an automatic disqualification for five years on any member who is subject to a term of imprisonment for three months or more (whether suspended or not). That a Court has imposed a lesser sanction does not mean that a five-year disqualification is inappropriate. If the case tribunal is of the view that the member concerned is unfit to hold public office and is unlikely to become fit over the next five years, then it may well be appropriate to impose such a disqualification.

Confirming the sanction

53. Tribunals should confirm their final determination on sanction, notifying the hearing and recording it in the decision notice. Tribunals will make sure that the reasons for their determination, including any significant mitigating and aggravating factors, are included in the full written record of proceedings in order to ensure that the parties and the public are able to understand its conclusions on sanction.

¹⁴ <http://gov.wales/irpwsb/home/?lang=en>

Recommendations

54. Case tribunals also have the power to make recommendations¹⁵ to the relevant authority whose Code it has considered about any matters relating to:

- the exercise of the authority's functions
- the authority's Code of Conduct;
- the authority's Standards Committee.

55. The authority to whom the recommendations are made is under a duty to consider them within three months and then prepare a report for the Ombudsman outlining what the action it, or its Standards Committee, has taken or proposes to take. If the Ombudsman is not satisfied with the action taken or proposed, he/she has the power to require the authority to publish a statement giving details of the recommendations made by the case tribunal and of the authority's reasons for not fully implementing them. As such, tribunals are advised to consider their use of this power with care.

Interim case tribunals – determining sanction

56. Interim case tribunals will decide, after considering a report (including any recommendation) from the Ombudsman on an ongoing investigation into alleged misconduct, whether to suspend or partially suspend, the member or co-opted member from the authority or a role within the authority.

57. Unlike case and appeal tribunals, interim case tribunals are not disciplinary. Interim case tribunals aim to:

- facilitate the Ombudsman's effective and expeditious investigation of the respondent's conduct;
- minimise any disruption to the business of the authority concerned during the investigation;
- maintain the reputation of the authority concerned;
- protect the authority concerned from legal challenge.

58. The powers available to an interim case tribunal¹⁶ are to suspend the Respondent, wholly or partially from being a member or co-opted member of the authority concerned, for not more than six months (or, if shorter, the remainder of the member's term of office). In the case of a partial suspension, the interim case tribunal will need to decide from what activity the respondent is to be suspended.

Purpose and process

59. Interim case tribunals recognise that no definitive finding has yet been made on the validity of the allegations about the Respondent and that any form of suspension can have a significant impact on a member's role, credibility and finances.

¹⁵ Section 80, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/section/80>

¹⁶ Section 78(1), Local Government Act 2000

60. Interim case tribunals will therefore seek to take the minimum action necessary to ensure the effective completion of the investigation, the proper functioning of the authority concerned and the maintenance of public confidence. The tribunal will only decide on full suspension if its aims cannot be met otherwise.

The nature of the allegation(s)

61. Interim case tribunals will start by considering the nature of the allegations against the Respondent in order to decide whether, if the allegation were substantiated, a suspension or partial suspension would be an appropriate sanction.

No action

62. If the tribunal concludes that neither suspension nor partial suspension would follow a finding of breach, it is highly unlikely to make such an order without compelling reasons as to why the Ombudsman's investigation cannot effectively proceed without such action.

63. If the tribunal concludes that a finding on breach would result in a suspension or partial suspension, it will still require a compelling argument that it is in the public interest for a suspension or partial suspension of the Respondent in advance of the Ombudsman completing his investigation and referring a final report to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

Partial Suspension

64. Partial suspension offers the possibility of safeguarding public confidence in an authority and enabling it to function effectively without depriving the member's constituents of ward representation. Interim case tribunals may wish to draw on the principles that apply to case and appeal tribunals' approach to partial suspension.

65. Partial suspension may be appropriate in circumstances where the allegations are directly relevant to and inconsistent with a specific function or area of responsibility held or the Respondent exercises executive functions for the authority whose Code s/he is alleged to have breached or – the Respondent may be excluded from their specific or executive responsibilities in order to reassure the public whilst not undermining the authority's ability to function effectively or depriving the electorate of their division/ward representation.

Suspension

66. Suspension is likely to be appropriate if there is a legitimate concern as to any of the following:

- the Respondent may interfere with evidence or with witnesses relevant to the matter under investigation;
- the business of the authority concerned cannot carry on effectively if the Respondent were to continue in office whilst the allegation against him or her

remained unresolved – the tribunal will have particular regard to any breakdown or potential breakdown in relations between the Respondent, other members and/or key staff of the authority;

- the allegations raise issues of such gravity that they jeopardise public confidence in the authority concerned if the Respondent were to continue in office whilst the allegations remained unresolved.

Annex: other documents and guidance relevant to tribunals

Adjudication Panel for Wales : Members Handbook (2017)

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales –The Code of Conduct for members of county and county borough councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities: Guidance (August 2016) and The Code of Conduct for members of community councils: Guidance (August 2016)

Equal Treatment Bench Book, Judicial College (as amended)

The Adjudications by Case Tribunals and Interim Case Tribunals (Wales Regulations 2001 No. 2288 (W.176), as amended by the Local Authorities (Case and Interim Case Tribunals and Standards Committees) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2009 2578 (W. 209)

The Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committee) (Wales) Regulations 2001 No. 2281 (W171), as amended by the Local Government (Standards Committees, Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 No. 85 (W.39)