

Meeting of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	11 JULY 2024
Report Title:	STATUS REPORT ON COMPLAINTS MADE UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT
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 provide an update on recent complaints regarding alleged breaches of the Member Code of Conduct that have been referred to the Committee for consideration in accordance with Section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on recent reports referred to the Monitoring Officer by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) under Section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000 for consideration by the Standards Committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000 all allegations and breaches of the Member Code of Conduct are submitted to the PSOW for investigation in the first instance. The PSOW may determine a matter be referred to the Authority's Monitoring Officer for investigation or may as in these cases undertake the investigation and refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer for consideration by the Standards Committee.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The PSOW has recently investigated complaints against Cllr Steven Bletsoe, Former Member Angela Morelli of Bridgend Town Council and Cllr Brian Jones of Porthcawl Town Council. The PSOW determined that the Members may have breached the Code of Conduct and subsequently referred the reports to the

Monitoring Officer for consideration by the Standards Committee.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The Standards Committee determined on 7 May 2024 that Former Member Angela Morelli of Bridgend Town Council had failed to comply with the following paragraphs of the Code:

4(b) –Members must show respect and consideration for others.

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

The Committee resolved that the Former Member should be censured in relation to the above breaches of the Code which was the maximum sanction available to the Committee, as the Member was no longer an Elected Member. This is in accordance with their powers under s 9(1)(c) of the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001. The Former Member and the PSOW were notified of the Committee's decision by Notice of Determination and the Former Member has not appealed the decision.

- 3.2 The Standards Committee determined on 9 May 2024 that Cllr Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend Town Council had failed 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, 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.

The Committee resolved that Cllr Bletsoe should receive a sanction of 6 months suspension. This is in accordance with their powers under the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001. At the time of this report, the Member has been granted

permission to appeal the decision of the Standards Committee to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

- 3.3 The Standards Committee determined on 21 June 2024 that Cllr Brian Jones of Porthcawl Town Council had failed to comply with the following paragraphs of the Code:

4(b) – show respect and consideration to others

4(c) – not use bullying behaviour or harass any person

6 (1)(a) – not conduct yourself in a matter which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office into disrepute

6(2) – 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.

The Committee resolved that Cllr Jones should receive a sanction of 2 months suspension. This is in accordance with their powers under the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001. At the time of this report, the Member is still within the timeframe to seek permission to appeal the decision of the Standards Committee to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

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 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 note the report.

Background documents:

None