

<b>CYNGOR SIR YNYS MON / ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL</b>	
<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>12 June 2025</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>Adjudication Panel for Wales Decisions</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:</b>	<b>To provide information about the matters considered by the Adjudication Panel for Wales and published between 1 January 2025 and 31 May 2025</b>
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) was established by the Local Government Act 2000. It has two statutory functions:

1. To form case tribunals, or interim case tribunals, to consider reports from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) following investigations by the PSOW into allegations that a member has failed to comply with their authority's code of conduct; and
2. To consider appeals from members against the decisions of their own authority's standards committee that they have breached the code of conduct (as well as deciding if permission will be given to appeal in the first instance).

This report includes decisions published by the APW during the period 1 January 2025 until 31 May 2025. It is intended as a factual summary of the matters decided by the APW. The reported cases for the relevant period are currently available on the APW website.

## 2. SUMMARY OF THE RELEVANT CASES

A summary of the relevant cases is detailed in **ENCLOSURE 1**.

Decisions made:

- APW/001/2024-025/CT: Former Councillor Freya Bletsoe | The Adjudication Panel for Wales
- APW/003/2024-025/AT: Former Councillor Gareth Baines | The Adjudication Panel for Wales
- APW/008/2023-024/AT: Councillor Steven Bletsoe | The Adjudication Panel for Wales

## 3. RECOMMENDATION

To note the content of the case summaries.

### **ENCLOSURE:**

1.	A summary of the cases published on the <u>Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) website</u> for the period from 1 January 2025 – 31 May 2025.
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ENCLOSURE 1

Summary of Cases before the Adjudication Panel for Wales: January 2025 – May 2025

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
<b>References from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</b>						
<a href="#">APW/001/2024-025/CT: Former Councillor Freya Bletsoe   The Adjudication Panel for Wales</a>	Councillor Freya Bletsoe	Bridgend Town Council	<p><b>Breaches of paragraphs 4(b) and 4(c) of the Code of Conduct:</b> <i>“You must... (b) show respect and consideration for others; (c) not use bullying behaviour or harass any person”.</i></p> <p><b>Breaches of paragraphs 6(1)(a) and 6(1)(d) of the Code of Conduct:</b> <i>“You must: (a) not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute...</i></p>	Report dated 6 February 2025	Disqualification for 21 months	<p>The Tribunal considered six incidents of reported behaviour that was alleged to have breached the Council’s Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The Tribunal concluded that in relation to Incidents 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 - together in the context of the broader history and relationship between the Respondent and the Clerk - there was sufficient evidence of a pattern of behaviour towards the Clerk to justify a finding under paragraph 4 (c) in relation to those incidents together, in addition to finding in respect of Incident 4.</p> <p>Therefore, a finding that the Respondent had breached the requirement not to use bullying</p>

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
			<p><i>(d) not make vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints against other members or anyone who works for, or on behalf of, your authority."</i></p>			<p>behaviour or harass any person was reported.</p> <p>It was also highlighted by the Tribunal that the Respondent persistently failed to engage constructively with the process, noting that she <i>"ignored deadlines, provided inconsistent medical evidence, and continued serving as a Bridgend County Borough Councillor despite claiming incapacity,"</i> which the Panel described as <i>"disingenuous."</i></p> <p>When determining the appropriate sanctions, the Tribunal noted that it could not take "no action" in relation to the breaches. The breaches were too numerous (10) and, whilst not <i>"the worst that the Tribunal had seen, they were certainly not technical"</i>. The Tribunal concluded that the Respondent had behaved either intentionally or recklessly and the Clerk had been caused significant upset. As defined within paragraph 36</p>

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
						<p>of the Sanctions Guidance, there had been “<i>systematic harassment</i>”.</p> <p>Various mitigating and aggravating factors were considered by the Tribunal – these are reported in paragraphs 5.2.4 and 5.2.2 of the decision report.</p> <p>As the Respondent was no longer a member of the Town Council, no purpose was served by a suspension. The Tribunal therefore considered that the appropriate sanction to apply was that of disqualification.</p> <p><u>However</u>, whilst the councillor was disqualified from her role as a Town Councillor, the Tribunal did not consider it appropriate to apply the disqualification to the Respondent’s role as a councillor within Bridgend County Borough Council in the absence of any evidence to suggest</p>

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
						that she was not fulfilling that role appropriately and professionally.
<b>Appeals against Standards Committee decisions</b>						
<a href="#"><u>APW/003/2024-025/AT: Former Councillor Gareth Baines   The Adjudication Panel for Wales</u></a>	Former Cllr Gareth Baines	Wrexham County Borough Council and Chirk Town Council	Breach of paragraph 7(a) of the Code of Conduct. <b>[Appeal refused – out of time – no details reported]</b>	Report dated 3 January 2025	Appeal Refused	<p>The Standards Committee of Wrexham County Borough Council reached a finding that the Appellant breached the Code of Conduct of the Chirk Town Council on 13 November 2024, and the Notice of Decision emailed and posted to the Appellant on 18 November 2024.</p> <p>The Appellant made an application for permission to appeal, but this was received by the APW after the 21 day appeal window provided for in the legislation<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>The decision notice issued by the APW records that the decision notice was dated 18 November 2024 and marked as sent by email and post. A copy of the decision letter was</p>

<sup>1</sup> Regulation 10 of the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
						<p>provided by the Appellant and he did not deny receiving the decision letter on that date.</p> <p>The decision notice issued confirmed that the application was out of time. There were no provisions within the legislation to grant an extension to the time period of an appeal to be made, and, in any event, no grounds upon which exceptional circumstances could be identified as the cause of the delay in making the application for permission to appeal.</p> <p>No Appeal Tribunal to be convened to consider the Appellants' appeal. Appeal refused.</p>
<a href="#">APW/008/2023-024/AT: Councillor Steven Bletsoe   The Adjudication Panel for Wales</a>	Cllr Steven Bletsoe	Bridgend Town Council	Breach of paragraphs 6(1)(a), 7(a), 11(1), 14(1)(a), 14(1)(c) & 14(1)(e) of the Code of Conduct – <b>Appeal in</b>	Report dated 3 January 2025	To refer the matter back to the Bridgend County Borough Council Standards Committee with a	An Appeal Tribunal was convened by the President of the APW to consider an appeal by the Appellant against the decision of the Standards Committee of Bridgend County and

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
			relation to sanctions only.		recommendation that the Appellant should be suspended for 10 weeks.	<p>Borough Council which had been convened on 9 of May 2024.</p> <p>The Standards Committee had found that the Appellant had breached paragraphs 6(1)(a), 7(a), 11(1), 14(1)(a), 14(1)(c) and 14(1)(e) of the Code of Conduct and should receive a sanction of six months' suspension.</p> <p>The Appeal Tribunal reported that as part of the submissions made, the Appellant accepted that there had been a Code breach but could not accept the level of sanction, which he felt to be egregious. This was the focus of the appeal and the <u>APW issued a direction that the appeal would proceed in relation to sanctions only</u>. The APW decided that the appeal in relation to the breach of the Code of Conduct element had no reasonable prospect of success.</p> <p>The Appeal Tribunal had regard to the submissions made by the parties,</p>

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
						<p>the APW Sanctions Guidance, and to the PSOW Guidance. It also had regard to the purpose of sanctions which is to provide a disciplinary response to breaches of the Code, and to place the sanction on public record, deter future misconduct, promote a culture of compliance and to foster public confidence in local democracy.</p> <p>Firstly, the Appeal Tribunal assessed the seriousness of the Appellant's breaches of the Code with particular regard to the nature, extent, and number of breaches. It did <u>not</u> consider that the breaches comprised of the most serious type of breach typically referred to Standards Committees in Wales.</p> <p>The Appeal Tribunal also noted that the Standards Committee found the Appellant to have been in breach of six paragraphs of the Code. However, these were all in relation to the same</p>

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
						<p>events concerning the minutes of one particular meeting. The Appeal Tribunal did however consider that there had been a pattern of behaviour in terms of there being a repeated failure to declare personal and prejudicial interests.</p> <p>The Tribunal considered that the breaches had been unintentional and had been due to a misguided view of the Code rather than a deliberate breach.</p> <p>The Appeal Tribunal considered the consequences of the breaches for individuals, the wider public and the Council as a whole; as well as the evidence of previous cases supplied by the Appellant, both in the wider political context in Wales and in relation to recent cases which had been before the Council's Standards Committee and where breaches had been more serious, and yet the</p>

Link to case	Name	Relevant Authority	Nature of allegation	Date	Tribunal decision	Points of interest arising:
						<p>sanction imposed had been less harsh than that imposed in this case.</p> <p>The Appeal Tribunal considered the Sanctions Guidance and concluded that a time-limited form of disciplinary response was appropriate to deter such future action, and to temporarily remove the Appellant from the Relevant Authority to safeguard the standards set by the Code and to reassure the public that standards were being upheld. It noted from Paragraph 39.5 of the Standards Guidance that a suspension of less than a month was unlikely to meet the objectives of the sanctions' regime.</p> <p>Mitigating and aggravating factors were considered, as were other reports cases and Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights.</p> <p>In conclusion, the Appeal Tribunal concluded that a period of</p>

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						<p>suspension of six months was excessive, as this was the maximum sanction which could be imposed by the Standards Committee, and it considered that the breaches in this case were not of the most egregious in nature.</p> <p>The Appeal Tribunal decided to refer the matter back to the Council's Standards Committee with a recommendation that the Appellant should be suspended for <u>10 weeks</u>.</p>