

CYNGOR SIR YNYS MON / ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	22 January 2026
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	Published findings by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for all Councils in Wales
<b>PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:</b>	To advise the Committee of all Wales findings published on its website by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for the period between 1 June 2025 and 31 December 2025.
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the information published under the “Our Findings” heading on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) website for the months of June 2025 to December 2025 in relation to Code of Conduct matters only **ENCLOSURE 1**.

## 2. QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

<b>Edition</b>	<b>Dates covered</b>	<b>Link</b>
7	April – June	<a href="#">Here</a>
8	July – September	<a href="#">Here</a>

## 3. ANNUAL REPORT

The PSOW published its Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025.

The Committee’s attention is drawn to the following key points from the Annual Report.

- April 2024-March 2025 315 duly made Code of Conduct complaints were received by the PSOW – 4% less than the previous year but 36% more than in 2019-20.
- Town and community council complaints remain the largest group of our Code of Conduct complaints overall, with a 7% increase in these complaints compared to the previous year.
- The majority (56%) of complaints were about the promotion of equality and respect – almost the same proportion as the previous year.
- The PSOW investigated 49 (about 15%) of the Code of Conduct complaints that were closed in 2024/2025 – the same as the previous year.
- 15 Code of Conduct cases were referred to either the relevant Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

The Chair of the Standards Committee will lead a discussion on any matters of interest reported in **ENCLOSURE 1**.

#### **ENCLOSURES:**

1	A summary of the information published under the <u>“Our Findings”</u> heading on the <u>Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)</u> website for the months of June 2025 to the end of December 2025 in relation to Code of Conduct matters only.
2	A summary of the PSOW’ powers in relation to Code of Conduct complaints

## **ENCLOSURE 1 – SUMMARY OF POWERS**

The PSOW exercises “first sift” powers under Section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000, which requires the PSOW to consider complaints that members of local authorities in Wales may have broken their code of conduct. The PSOW’s jurisdiction includes county councils and town and community councils.

Having received a complaint, the PSOW applies its threshold test to determine whether or not the complaint should be investigated. The threshold test involves the PSOW being satisfied that:

- There is evidence to suggest that the code of conduct may have been breached; and
- That the matter is sufficiently serious for it to be in the public interest for an investigation to be opened.

When an investigation is opened, the PSOW may reach one of four findings under Section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000 which are:

- (1) That there is no evidence that there has been a breach of the authority’s code of conduct;
- (2) That no action needs to be taken in respect of the matters that were subject to the investigation;
- (3) That the matter be referred to the authority’s monitoring officer for consideration by the standards committee; or
- (4) That the matter be referred to the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales for adjudication by a tribunal (this generally happens in more serious cases).

If (3) or (4) above apply, the PSOW will then submit its report to the local standards committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW), and it is for the committee, or a case tribunal of the APW, to conduct a hearing to consider the evidence and to make the final decision on whether or not the code of conduct has been breached and, if so, whether a penalty should be imposed, and what any penalty should be.

Standards committees have statutory authority to issue a suspension against a councillor for a period not exceeding 6 months. Standards committees have no powers of disqualification and, where there are findings of breach, will try to apply a sanction that is proportionate to the offence. This will often be a censure (public rebuke) or a recommendation of training/undertaking/mediation etc.

A case tribunal has authority to suspend a councillor for up to 12 months and to disqualify for up to 5 years.

## ENCLOSURE 2

Case details	Key facts	Key findings	learning
<p>202406856</p> <p>Gwersyllt Community Council</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Promotion of equality and respect : Gwersyllt Community Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a></p> <p>Promotion of equality and respect</p>	<p>It was alleged that, during a Council meeting, the Member bullied and intimidated a Council employee and that his conduct put pressure upon the Employee to disclose personal information</p>	<p>No evidence of failure to comply with the code</p> <p>The evidence suggested:</p> <p><b>a tense and robust discussion</b> between the Member and the Employee at the meeting and that the Employee disclosed personal information.</p> <p>on balance, the Member's comments or manner were not so inflammatory, disrespectful or egregious as to amount to a breach of any aspects of the Code considered.</p>	<p>Facts specific, however it is noted that robust discussion between Members and Officers is permissible under the Code.</p>
<p>202401984</p> <p>Flintshire County Council</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Objectivity &amp; propriety : Flintshire County Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a></p>	<p>It was alleged that the Member disclosed some confidential information about the Complainant to her neighbours when he had been trying to resolve their concerns.</p>	<p>No action required</p> <p>The evidence showed:</p> <p>the Members actions were suggestive of a breach.</p> <p>the Member had given an <b>immediate and sincere apology</b>; <b>recognised</b> he should not have</p>	<p>An early and sincere apology and reflection will be considered positively by the Ombudsman.</p>

Objectivity & propriety		<p>disclosed information and provided an <b>assurance</b> the same would not happen again.</p> <p>The Member accepted, and reflected on, his contribution to the Complainant's distress, for which he had been <b>apologetic</b>.</p>	
<p>202207114</p> <p>Abertillery &amp; Llanhilleth Community Council</p> <p><a href="#">Promotion of equality &amp; respect : Abertillery &amp; Llanhilleth Community Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</a></p> <p>Promotion of equality &amp; respect</p>	<p>It was alleged that the Member bullied and harassed officers of the Council by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making false, unfounded and malicious complaints against the officers;</li> <li>• Making false statements in Council meetings and in emails sent and documents shared, when acting in his capacity as member;</li> <li>• Misusing his position to gain access to personal information and documents.</li> </ul> <p>It was also alleged that the Member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosed confidential information to Council members and to members of the public; and</li> </ul>	<p>Historically, the Council had a poor record relating to its financial management (identified by Audit Wales)</p> <p>The <b>context did not justify</b> the way the Member chose to raise his concerns, however he was entitled to raise concerns within the wide bounds of a member's right to <b>freedom of expression</b>.</p> <p>It was determined that it <b>would not in the public interest</b> to take further action considering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ no previous history of Standards issues</li> <li>▪ the passage of time since the incidents occurred,</li> <li>▪ the Member's personal circumstances</li> </ul>	<p>Facts specific.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failed to disclose a personal and prejudicial interest in Council meetings.</li> </ul>		
202309676  Whitland Town Council  <a href="#"><u>Promotion of equality &amp; respect : Whitland Town Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a>  Promotion of equality & respect	It was alleged that the Member, in his official capacity, attended at the Complainant's place of work and caused significant distress to the Complainant and their employers	Taking into account the Complainant's wishes and the information obtained during the investigation, including the decision taken by the Police that they were unable to progress enquiries, under Section 70 of the Local Government Act 2000, the Ombudsman decided that it was not in the public interest to continue the investigation. Therefore, the investigation was discontinued.	Fact specific.
202404604  Cardiff Council  <a href="#"><u>Integrity : Cardiff Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a>  Integrity	It was alleged that the Member had included the names of her fellow ward councillors to a letter to the Council's licensing committee, objecting to an application from a local takeaway business to extend its opening hours, without asking them. The Complainant alleged that the Member acted dishonestly, in order to give the objection letter greater credibility.	<b>Contemporaneous evidence</b> was provided that showed the Member had discussed whether to object with her fellow councillors before sending the objection letter  No evidence of breach	Fact specific  Contemporaneous records were used in evidence to show the steps taken by the Member in submitting an objection.

202403830/202402823  Powys County Council & Welshpool Town Council  <a href="#"><u>Promotion of equality &amp; respect : Powys County Council &amp; Welshpool Town Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a>  Promotion of equality & respect	It was alleged that, when attending a County Council event, the Member had spoken in an insulting manner about the Complainant, who was an employee of the Town Council, referring to her as lazy and saying that she was unable to carry out her job properly.	The PSOW found it was <b>more likely than not</b> that the Member had made a comment/s that could reasonably be interpreted as critical of the Complainant.  It was not considered proportionate or in the public interest to take further action.	Facts specific.  Although no further formal action was taken in this case, the Member was reminded of the importance of maintaining a respectful relationship between members and officers, and how comments can be interpreted.
202501464  Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  <a href="#"><u>Disclosure &amp; registration of interest : Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - Public</u></a>	The Member spoke at Planning Committee in favour of a CLPUD being granted for a change of use from a pub to a shop.  The Member had previously been the Chair of a social club (in direct competition with the Pub) within the same area, but had been replaced as Chair in the month before the Planning Committee	The Member proved his <b>own interest in the Club had ended</b> .  His wife's employment at the Club was a <b>potential personal interest</b> , but not significant enough to be prejudicial.  The Member <b>should have declared</b> this personal interest; this was a <b>potential breach</b> of the Code.	Important that Members remember to consider the financial interests of others they live with, or any person with whom they have a personal association.  It is important that Members remember to keep their Register of Interests up to date.

<p><a href="#"><u>Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a></p> <p>Disclosure &amp; registration of interest</p>	<p>meeting. The Member had updated his entry in the Council's Register of Interests on 11 April to reflect that he no longer had an interest in the social club.</p> <p>The Member's wife was employed as the social club secretary.</p> <p>The Complainant felt these links constituted a personal and prejudicial interest, so the Member should have declared this and followed the Code in relation to his participation in the meeting.</p>	<p>His influence was limited as he was <b>not on the Planning Committee</b>, and his speech was within his rights.</p> <p>Given the <b>minor nature of the breach</b> and no adverse impact, the Ombudsman decided <b>no further action</b> was warranted.</p>	
<p>202310248</p> <p>Denbighshire County Council</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Promotion of equality &amp; respect : Denbighshire County Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a></p>	<p>It was alleged that the Member made discriminatory comments about Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities at a Council training session. In addition, it was alleged that the Member made comments of a discriminatory nature about the recruitment of women to the care sector, at a Council Committee meeting</p>	<p>The Member's comments were considered <b>political expression</b>, attracting enhanced protection under <b>Article 10 (freedom of expression)</b>.</p> <p>Evidence did <b>not show discriminatory intent</b> toward Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities; a breach finding would have been disproportionate.</p> <p>The Ombudsman did <b>not condone the conduct</b> and suggested the</p>	<p>No action</p>

<p>Promotion of equality &amp; respect</p>		<p>Member follow through on an offer to apologise.</p> <p>For the second incident, comments were acknowledged as <b>inappropriate and potentially discriminatory</b>, with media coverage risking personal disrepute.</p> <p>The Member was <b>challenged immediately</b>, expressed remorse, apologised, and committed not to repeat such behaviour.</p> <p><b>No further action</b> was deemed proportionate or in the public interest, but a <b>formal, recorded apology</b> was recommended.</p>	
<p>202404346</p> <p>Ogmore Valley Community Council</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Accountability &amp; openness : Ogmore Valley Community Council - Public</u></a></p>	<p>It was alleged that the Member had acted on behalf of the Council without its approval or consent, when advancing an application for grant funding.</p>	<p>No financial loss occurred; grant monies were <b>not released</b>, and the Council was <b>not committed</b> to any agreement.</p> <p>The Member was <b>inexperienced</b>, had <b>not received Code training</b>, and had <b>mitigating personal circumstances</b>.</p>	<p>It is important that members understand the Standing Orders and governance arrangements. Members should seek advice if in doubt about the extent of their powers.</p>

<p><a href="#"><u>Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a></p> <p>Accountability &amp; openness</p>		<p>No evidence suggested the Member <b>gained personally</b> or sought personal advantage.</p> <p>After weighing public interest factors, the Ombudsman decided <b>no further action</b> was proportionate.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Member should <b>familiarise himself with Standing Orders and governance arrangements.</b></p> <p>Undertake <b>Code of Conduct training.</b></p>	
<p>202401052</p> <p>Pentir Community Council</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Promotion of equality &amp; respect : Pentir Community Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a></p>	<p>It was alleged that the Member was reluctant to allow the Complainant (who is also a member of the Community Council) to engage with an external Web Design Company and stated it was “because [the Complainant was] not Welsh.”</p>	<p>Welsh is the official language of the Council and its administration; decisions were made in line with its Welsh Language Policy.</p> <p>The Member admitted saying “because you’re not Welsh” but clarified she meant “because you’re not Welsh speaking.”</p>	<p>Facts specific.</p>

Promotion of equality & respect		<p>Context showed this was a <b>clumsy slip of the tongue</b>, not with other intent.</p> <p>Investigation concluded there was <b>no evidence of a breach</b> of the Code.</p>	
202205610  Cyngor Gwynedd  <a href="#"><u>Integrity : Cyngor Gwynedd - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a>  Integrity	<p>It was alleged that the Member had breached the Code of Conduct when making comments in relation to the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum.</p> <p>It was alleged that comments were directed to cause shock and outrage, rather than to honestly inform the public, that they failed to show respect and consideration and that the Member failed to respect the Monitoring Officer's guidance.</p>	<p>Most of the Member's comments were within the limits of <b>freedom of expression</b> under Article 10.</p> <p>One comment was <b>unacceptable</b>, and the Member admitted it lacked supporting evidence.</p> <p>Timely intervention by the Chair and Monitoring Officer likely prevented a more serious breach.</p> <p>The Member reflected on the matter; Ombudsman decided <b>no further action</b> was necessary.</p>	<p>Intervention by the Chair potentially prevented a more significant breach.</p> <p>It is important that Members understand the balance in the Code of Conduct and Article 10.</p>
202305850 202305851 202305852  Wrexham County Borough Council	The Complainant, who held a governance role within Wrexham County Council ("the Council"), alleged that 3 Council members ("the 3 Members"), all highly experienced and leaders of their	The Council's Constitution did <b>not grant Members authority to commence litigation</b> ; this power was delegated to the Monitoring Officer. Acting outside constitutional arrangements could	Unusual case

<p><a href="#"><u>Duty to uphold the law : Wrexham County Borough Council - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</u></a></p> <p>Duty to uphold the law</p>	<p>respective Political Groups, had breached the Code of Conduct (“the Code”), by jointly initiating legal proceedings in the Council’s name (known as “JR2”). JR2 sought to challenge the Court’s decision that the Council was obliged to adopt its draft Local Development Plan (“LDP”). It was also alleged that 1 of the 3 Members had used his Council email for an unofficial purpose. The investigations considered whether paragraphs 6(1)(a) (disrepute), 7(a) (using or attempting to use their position improperly) or 7(b) (misuse of the Council’s resources) of the Code had been breached.</p>	<p>be seen as bringing the Council or office into disrepute.</p> <p>Issuing JR2 did <b>not result in personal gain</b> or misuse of resources; motive was to uphold democratic decisions.</p> <p>One Member <b>unintentionally used Council email</b> for a private/political purpose.</p> <p>Later Court of Appeal ruling clarified legal position, changing public interest factors.</p> <p>Members acted on <b>legal advice</b> and sought to uphold the democratic view of the members of the council; the situation was <b>highly unusual and unprecedented</b>.</p> <p>Ombudsman concluded <b>no further action</b> was proportionate or in the public interest; email issue was minor and unintentional.</p>	
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