

Extract from 'Our Findings'

Relevant body: St. Nicholas & Bonvilston Community Council

Report date: 02/28/2024

Subject: Integrity

Case ref number: 202104717

The Ombudsman received a complaint that a Member ("the Member") of the Vale of Glamorgan Council ("the Council") had breached the Code of Conduct.

The investigation considered whether the Member failed to comply with Paragraphs 4(b), 4(c), 6(1)(a) and 7(1)(a).

We referred our report on our investigation to the Deputy Monitoring Officer of the Council for consideration by the local Standards Committee.

This summary will be updated following the Standards Committee's decision.

Relevant body: Bridgend Town Council

Report date: 20/05/2024

Subject: Promotion of equality & respect

Case ref number: 202203440

The Ombudsman received a complaint that a Former Member (“the Former Member”) of Bridgend Town Council (“the Council”) had breached the Code of Conduct (“the Code”).

The Complainant alleged that the Former Member, whilst out campaigning for local elections, spoke to a member of the public who said that he would be voting for another Councillor (the Complainant). The Former Member was alleged to have responded by saying “Oh, the wife beater”.

The evidence gathered during the investigation suggested that the Member breached a number of provisions in the Council’s Code of Conduct for elected members.

The Ombudsman considered whether the complaint related to the Former Member’s role on the Council and whether the Code applied at all times and was satisfied that the Code was engaged in full. The member of the public confirmed that he was aware of the Former Member’s status as a member of the Council, and given that she was campaigning for the elections, she would have been engaged in political activity at the time. The Ombudsman was therefore persuaded that the Former Member was acting in her capacity as Member at the time the alleged comment was made.

The Ombudsman considered, on the balance of probabilities, that the Former Member did refer to the Complainant as a “wife beater” and that this was a serious allegation to make against somebody without evidence to support it. In a small community, making such a statement had the potential to cause significant reputational damage that can become difficult to disassociate with. In making such a statement, there would have been little regard as to the impact this could have on the Complainant and those close to him. The Ombudsman considered that, in doing so, the Former Member failed to show necessary respect and consideration towards the Complainant and was therefore of the view that this action is suggestive of a breach of paragraph 4(b) of the Code.

Case law on the application of the Code for members in Wales has established that, for a breach of the “disrepute” provision to be found, a member’s conduct must impact upon their Authority’s reputation and/or the role of elected member and go beyond affecting their personal reputation. It was felt that the Former Member’s actions reflected poorly on her personally, but the Ombudsman also considered that the comment was made to a member of the public regarding a fellow councillor and was made in the Former Member’s capacity as a Member of the Council at the time, when engaging in political activity. The Ombudsman was therefore persuaded that the behaviour would influence the reputation of the office of Member. She considered that the Former Member’s actions in this regard were suggestive of a breach of paragraph 6(1)(a) of the Code of Conduct.

The report on this investigation has therefore been referred to the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Borough Council, for consideration by the Council’s Standards Committee.

The Council's Standards Committee found that the Member had failed to comply with paragraphs 4(b) and 6(1)(a) of the Code of Conduct.

The Committee decided that the most appropriate sanction to be applied was a censure and put on record that if the Former Member was still an elected Member, they would have imposed a suspension of 4 months.

The member may appeal against this decision.

Relevant body: Chirk Town Council

Report date: 13/06/2024

Subject: Promotion of equality & respect

Case ref number: 202107304

The Ombudsman's office received a complaint that a member ("the Member") of Chirk Town Council ("the Council") had breached the Code of Conduct.

The report on the investigation was referred to the Monitoring Officer of Wrexham County Borough Council for consideration by the County Council's Standards Committee.

This summary will be updated following the Standards Committee's decision.

Relevant body: Bridgend Town Council

Report date: 17/06/2024

Subject: Promotion of equality & respect

Case ref number: 202201997

The Ombudsman received a complaint that a councillor (“the Member”) of Bridgend Town Council (“the Council”) had breached the Code of Conduct for Members of Local Authorities (“the Code”).

The report on the investigation was referred to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

This summary will be updated following the Adjudication Panel for Wales’s decision.