

<b>Meeting of:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Thursday, 04 June 2026
<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee:</b>	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
<b>Urgent Decision Procedure Used (If yes, why)</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Item Type</b>	Part I
<b>Report Title:</b>	Findings of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and Adjudication Panel for Wales.
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
<b>Strategic Leadership Team:</b>	Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.

## 1.0 What is this report about?

1.1 This report provides Members of the Standards Committee with an overview of recent findings and decisions issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW), particularly those arising from Code of Conduct investigations and referrals.

1.2 It outlines the respective roles of both bodies within the ethical standards framework, highlights the Monitoring Officer's consideration of published decisions, and presents appended case summaries to enable the Committee to identify key themes, lessons learned, and any implications for promoting high standards of conduct, member awareness, and future training.

## 2.0 What are the Recommendations?

	<b>Recommendations – What and How?</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation – Why?</b>
2.1	THAT the decisions, as appended to the report, be noted, and that the Committee consider whether any relevant lessons or themes arising from those decisions should be shared with Elected and Co-opted Members or incorporated into future training and guidance.	To support the Committee in its role of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by enabling consideration of recent findings and decisions, and to inform ongoing training, advice, and best practice for Members.

### **3.0 What is the background to this report?**

- 3.1 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) have distinct but connected roles within the ethical and complaints framework for local government in Wales.
- 3.2 The PSOW is responsible for investigating complaints about maladministration and service failure by public bodies and also has a statutory role in investigating allegations that elected members of local authorities have breached their Code of Conduct. Where the Ombudsman finds evidence of a serious breach, they can refer the matter to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.
- 3.3 The APW then acts as an independent tribunal, hearing and determining these referred cases and deciding whether a breach has occurred and, if so, what sanction should be imposed (such as suspension or disqualification).
- 3.4 In this way, the PSOW undertakes the investigative function, while the APW provides the adjudicative and decision-making stage for the most serious standards cases.
- 3.5 Both the PSOW and APW promote transparency by publishing details of their work and decisions on their respective websites. Together, this publication of findings supports openness, accountability, and public confidence in the standards framework in Wales.
- 3.6 At its meeting in March 2026, the Committee resolved to combine the previously received Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – Recent Summary and Investigation Findings and Outcomes report and the Adjudication Panel for Wales – Recent Tribunal Decisions report into a single, consolidated PSOW and APW Findings report.

### **4.0 What issues are there to be considered?**

- 4.1 The Monitoring Officer has a key role in supporting and maintaining high standards of conduct within the authority, including promoting awareness and understanding of the Members' Code of Conduct. As part of this responsibility, the Monitoring Officer will review and have regard to relevant findings and decisions published by both the PSOW and APW. This includes considering the implications of those decisions for local practice, advising members and the Standards Committee accordingly, and, where appropriate, using the findings to inform training, guidance, and the ongoing development of ethical standards within the authority.
- 4.2 The hyperlinks included within this report have been collated following the Monitoring Officer's review of information published by the PSOW and APW. They draw together relevant recent findings and decisions to provide Members with an overview of current themes, emerging issues, and key lessons arising from cases across Wales.
- 4.3 The inclusion of this material is intended to support the Standards Committee in its oversight role, assist in promoting high standards of conduct, and inform ongoing training and

guidance for Members.

### The Adjudication Panel for Wales

- 4.4 The Adjudication Panel for Wales considered a referral from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales concerning allegations that Councillor Devauden had breached the Code of Conduct. The allegations related primarily to his conduct towards the Town Clerk, fellow councillors and the Ombudsman during 2023-2024.
- 4.5 The Tribunal found that Councillor Devauden had engaged in a pattern of repeated inappropriate behaviour, including the use of offensive, abusive and disrespectful language, making unsubstantiated allegations of wrongdoing against colleagues, and behaving in a manner that constituted bullying and harassment. His conduct towards the Clerk included aggressive and intimidating behaviour, repeated demands for documents, and disparaging and insulting communications. His conduct towards other councillors involved making serious allegations without evidence and sending threatening or abusive correspondence. He also failed to cooperate appropriately with the Ombudsman's investigation and continued to contact individuals despite being instructed not to do so.
- 4.6 The Tribunal concluded that these actions amounted to multiple breaches of the Code of Conduct, including failure to show respect and consideration for others; bullying and harassment; bringing the office of councillor into disrepute; and failure to comply with requests made by the Ombudsman.
- 4.7 In considering sanction, the Tribunal determined that the conduct was serious, sustained and deliberate, noting a lack of insight, limited cooperation, and an ongoing pattern of behaviour even during the investigation process. While there were limited mitigating factors (including no previous findings and relatively short service), these were outweighed by significant aggravating features, including the repeated nature of the conduct and its impact on others, particularly the Clerk.
- 4.8 The Tribunal concluded that suspension would be insufficient and instead imposed a sanction of disqualification for a period of four years from being or becoming a member of the authority or any other relevant authority.
- 4.9 No further recommendations were made to the authority given the seriousness of the sanction imposed.
- 4.10 The Adjudication Panel for Wales considered several complaints about former Councillor Rothero's conduct, mainly relating to his behaviour towards the Town Clerk and other councillors, and statements he made in public meetings and to the press.
- 4.11 The Tribunal found that Mr Rothero made serious and unfounded allegations against other councillors and the former Clerk, including claims of fraud, illegality and racism, often in public meetings where the press were present.

- 4.12 He published a public statement as Mayor suggesting there were police and other investigations underway when this was not true, contributing to damaging media coverage and reputational harm to the Council.
- 4.13 His emails and dealings with the Clerk were bullying and harassing, including repeated criticism, asserting he was her “superior”, and linking her appraisal to perceived failings.
- 4.14 He showed ongoing disrespect towards other councillors, including through emails and public comments.
- 4.15 Overall, the Tribunal concluded that his conduct was: bullying and harassing, disrespectful, vexatious and malicious in parts and brought both his office and the Council into disrepute.
- 4.16 Many allegations were unsupported by evidence and made recklessly or deliberately.
- 4.17 His actions caused distress to the Clerk and other councillors.
- 4.18 His public statements significantly damaged the reputation of the Council, particularly due to press reporting.
- 4.19 He showed limited insight or acceptance of wrongdoing and continued to blame others.
- 4.20 The Tribunal considered the breaches to be serious and sustained, particularly: repeated bullying of the Clerk; public attacks on colleagues; misuse of his position as Mayor.
- 4.21 As a result, the Tribunal imposed a sanction of: Disqualification for 3 years from being or becoming a member of a relevant authority.

#### Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

- 4.22 **Flintshire County Council** Report Date: 02/03/2026 - Disclosure and registration of interest. Outcome: No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.23 **Harlech Community Council** 10/12/2025 – Disclosure and registration of interests - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.24 **Conwy County Borough Council** 02/12/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect – Discontinued [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.25 **Clydach Community Council** 08/12/2025 - Duty to uphold the law - Discontinued [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.26 **Broughton Community Council** - 04/11/2025 - Objectivity and propriety - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]

- 4.27 **St Nicholas & Bonvilston Community Council** 03/11/2025 - Accountability and openness - Discontinued [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.28 **Bridgend Town Council** 07/11/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.29 **Gwersyllt Community Council** 10/11/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect - No evidence of breach [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.30 **Tywyn Town Council** 26/09/2025 - Disclosure and registration of interests - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.31 **Gwaun Cae Gurwen Community Council** 26/09/2025 - Duty to uphold the law – No evidence of breach [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.32 **Abergavenny Town Council** 26/09/2025 - Duty to uphold the law - Discontinued [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.33 **Brymbo Community Council/Wrexham CBC** 30/09/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect – Discontinued [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.34 **Broughton Community Council/Wrexham CBC** 30/09/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect - Discontinued [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.35 **Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC** 15/09/2025 - Disclosure & registration of interest - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.36 **Flintshire County Council** 04/08/2025 - Objectivity & propriety - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.37 **Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council** 05/08/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.38 **Powys County Council and Welshpool Town Council** 05/08/2025 Promotion of equality and respect - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.39 **Pentir Community Council** 26/08/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect - No evidence of breach [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.40 **Cardiff Council** 25/07/2025 - Integrity - No evidence of breach [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.41 **Denbighshire County Council** 25/07/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]

- 4.42 **Cyngor Gwynedd** 01/08/2025 - Integrity - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.43 **Wrexham County Borough Council** 18/07/2025 - Duty to uphold the law - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.44 **Magor with Undy Town Council** 04/09/2025 - Promotion of equality and respect - No evidence of breach [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]
- 4.45 **Ogmore Valley Community Council** 04/09/2025 - Accountability and openness - No action necessary [[Code of Co...for Wales](#)]

## **5.0 How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?**

- 5.1 The report has been informed by a review of recent published findings and decision notices from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Adjudication Panel for Wales. These sources provide an evidence base of real cases, highlighting recurring themes, types of breaches, and the application of the Members' Code of Conduct in practice.
- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer has considered these findings in the context of the Council's local procedures, previous Standards Committee discussions, and known areas of risk or learning for Members. This ensures that the report reflects both national trends and local relevance.
- 5.3 The collation of appendices provides Members with direct access to source material, supporting transparency and enabling independent consideration of the evidence presented.

## **6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?**

- 6.1 Relevant learning points and key themes identified by the Committee will be incorporated into future Member training and briefing sessions, particularly in relation to the Code of Conduct and ethical decision-making.
- 6.2 Where appropriate, targeted guidance notes or reminders will be circulated to Elected and Co-opted Members highlighting specific issues arising from recent cases.
- 6.3 The Monitoring Officer will continue to review and report on PSOW and APW findings on a regular basis, ensuring that the Committee remains informed of emerging trends and risks.

## **7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?**

- 7.1 The report supports the Council's commitment to strong governance, transparency, and accountability, which are key enablers of delivering the Vale 2030 priorities.
- 7.2 By promoting high standards of conduct and ethical behaviour, the report contributes to maintaining public trust and confidence in the Council, supporting effective community

leadership.

7.3 The proactive use of learning from external findings helps strengthen organisational resilience and continuous improvement, aligning with the principles of the Council's Reshaping agenda.

7.4 Ensuring that Members are informed, supported, and equipped to meet their obligations contributes to effective decision-making and the delivery of sustainable, high-quality services for residents.

## **8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?**

8.1 Long-term: The report supports a sustained focus on embedding high standards of conduct, helping to prevent issues and promote a strong ethical culture over time.

8.2 Prevention: By identifying lessons from complaints and decisions elsewhere, the Council can take proactive steps to reduce the likelihood of similar issues arising locally.

8.3 Integration: The findings are used to inform training, guidance, and governance arrangements, ensuring ethical standards are integrated across Council activity.

8.4 Collaboration: The report reflects learning from national bodies (PSOW and APW) and contributes to a shared understanding of standards across local government in Wales.

8.5 Involvement: The Standards Committee is actively engaged in reviewing and considering the findings, shaping how lessons are communicated and embedded among Members.

## **Resources**

### **9.0 Finance**

9.1 None as a direct result of this report.

### **10.0 Workforce**

10.1 None as a direct result of this report.

### **11.0 Legal and Equalities**

11.1 Does an Equalities Impact Assessment need to be completed? If not, why?

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed because this report relates solely to the Committee's statutory responsibilities and does not propose any changes to policy, service delivery, or operational practices that would give rise to identifiable equality impacts.

11.2 The Council has a duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation as set out in the Standards Committees Rules and Regulations 2001 and the

Standards Committee (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2006.

11.3 The statutory framework under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 (as amended) provides for the establishment of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

11.4 The ethical standards framework under Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 provides for the establishment of the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

## 12.0 **Key Contacts**

12.1 Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?

Lead Officer:  Victoria Davidson Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services <a href="mailto:vdavidson@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk">vdavidson@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</a>	Democratic Services Officer:  Amy Rudman Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer. 07784 239 277 <a href="mailto:arudman@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk">arudman@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</a>
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## **Appendix**

\*Please see hyperlinks in Section 4 of this report.

## **Background Documents**

[Findings - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#)

[Decisions | The Adjudication Panel for Wales](#)