



Subject: Decision of the Standards Committee Panel Hearing

Meeting: Standards Committee

Date: 16th December 2024

Divisions/Wards Affected: All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the Standards Committee of the outcome of the Panel hearing held on 28th August 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members note the decision of the Panel attached at Appendix 1.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 At its meeting on 10th June 2024, the Standards Committee established a panel of independent members to consider a referral from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“the PSOW”) following an investigation into whether Councillor Geoffrey Cowan of Llantilio Pertholey Community Council had breached its statutory Code of Conduct. The details of the complaint are set out in the report presented to the Committee at its in June.
- 3.2 In accordance with the Committee’s procedure for dealing with referrals from the Ombudsman (“the Procedure”), the Panel made an initial determination that there was evidence to suggest a potential breach of the Community Council’s Code of Conduct.
- 3.3 Both the Ombudsman and Cllr Cowan was contacted in accordance with the Procedure. Cllr Cowan subsequently indicated that he did not wish to attend the hearing, would not be calling any witnesses and would instead be submitting written representations. The Ombudsman indicated that they also did not wish to call any witnesses and would be represented by Counsel at the hearing.
- 3.4 The Panel held the hearing on 28th August 2024, deciding to combine stages 1 and 2 of the hearing in accordance with its Procedure. The Panel considered the written submissions from the PSOW and Cllr Cowan, and also the oral submissions by Counsel for the PSOW.
- 3.5 The Panel retired to reach a decision. The Panel found that the following facts were proven on the balance of probabilities:

- (a) Cllr Cowan made a threat of physical violence towards Cllr Skinner at a meeting of the Council held on 20th July 2022;
 - (b) Cllr Skinner did not wave his walking stick at Cllr Cowan during that same meeting; and
 - (c) the minutes of that meeting are an accurate record of what took place.
- 3.6 Further, the Panel found that Cllr Cowan's conduct amounted to a breach of paragraphs 4(b) and 6(1)(a) of the Community Council's Code of Conduct.
- 3.7 The Panel held that the member should be sanctioned and decided that the member should be censured. The Panel also imposed a requirement that the member undergo training on the code of conduct. A copy of the Panel's written decision is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.8 In accordance with the sanction and the Procedure, the written decision was published on the Council's website and in a local newspaper.
- 3.9 The Monitoring Officer wrote to the Clerk of Llantilio Pertholey Community Council to inform him of the outcome and to make arrangements for the member to undergo Code of Conduct training.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 N/a

6. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

- 6.1 No implications.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Panel Decision Notice

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