

Reference from the Standards Committee, 11th March 2025

Complaint Nos: 202324/07 and 202324/08

Against: Councillor Iftakhar Ahmed

Censure

Councillor Ahmed, the Ward Member for Wexham Court, has been censured by the Council's Standards Committee for breaches of the Councillor Code of Conduct. The complaints against Councillor Ahmed related to a public meeting in October 2023 and were heard by the Standards Committee on 11 March 2025.

Councillor Ahmed was invited to attend the hearing but choose not to exercise that right. The Committee found that all four of the breaches of the Code were proven:

Paragraph 1 – Councillors must treat other councillors, members of the public and local authority employees with respect and must respect the role they play

Cllr Ahmed showed a clear lack of respect based on the accounts of many witnesses to both officers and Cllr Bedi. Cllr Ahmed spoke to officers in a way that would be a serious breach in an office environment, leading to serious discipline or even dismissal. Cllr Ahmed showed no respect for others. Elected members serve the public and should be working together and in unity, members can disagree and put a point across, but it must be in a respectful way.

Paragraph 2 – Councillors must not bully or harass any person

Cllr Bedi must have felt a horrendous amount of fear for her safety by Cllr Ahmed's conduct and this constituted harassment. It was clear the meeting was not going to plan and there were some very angry residents. As a strong woman, Cllr Bedi was described by Cllr Ahmed as "very sensitive" and this is an example of misogyny. Cllr Ahmed should be ashamed of this. The Committee found that it was an aggravating feature that his behaviour was particularly targeted at a female councillor.

Paragraph 3 – Councillors must not compromise or attempt to compromise the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority

Highway officers were present at the meeting. Cllr Ahmed's words to the effect of "we are members of this community and we will not be bullied" and "I was voted for by you – we will not be intimidated" were very concerning. There is significant evidence of intimidatory behaviour towards council officers. Officers are not elected representatives who have signed up to the cut and thrust of politics. Officers were subjected to intimidatory behaviour which was an attempt to compromise their impartiality.

Paragraph 5 – Councillors must not bring their role or the local authority into disrepute

The behaviour of Cllr Ahmed was a long way from the expectations of high standards for elected representatives. An aggravating feature was the fact Cllr Ahmed was a member of the Standards Committee at the time.

It is of note that Cllr Ahmed has chosen not to apologise or recognise his poor conduct. The Committee recommended that he attend training on how to improve his working relationships with female officers and councillors.

Cllr Bedi was subjected to particularly poor treatment and should have an opportunity to address Full Council on this matter if she chooses to.

Cllr Tomar, Chair of the Standards Committee, stated:

"The findings of the Standards Committee regarding Councillor Ahmed's conduct are deeply concerning. As elected representatives, we are entrusted with upholding the highest standards of behaviour, treating colleagues, officers, and residents with respect. The Committee's decision highlights significant breaches of the Councillor Code of Conduct, including bullying, intimidation, and bringing the Council into disrepute.

Public meetings can be challenging, particularly when contentious issues such as Controlled Parking Zone restrictions are discussed. However, councillors must navigate these discussions with professionalism and decorum. The report makes it clear that Cllr Ahmed's actions, including aggressive behaviour and public accusations against officers, crossed the line of acceptable conduct. His refusal to engage meaningfully with the investigation or acknowledge any wrongdoing has only exacerbated the situation.

It is particularly concerning that the Committee found evidence of intimidation directed toward a fellow councillor, especially in a manner perceived as misogynistic. Such behaviour has no place in local government, where collaboration and mutual respect are essential. The Committee's sanctions, including public censure and mandatory training, are appropriate and necessary steps to reinforce the standards expected of all councillors. Moving forward, all members must reflect on this case and reaffirm their commitment to respectful and constructive public service."