



Court Rules Against Walsall Conservative Cabinet Member and West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner Chairman and Officers in Landmark Discrimination Claim

Press Release

Judgement Link

<https://www.smb.london/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/F00BM913-Judgement.pdf>

Walsall, West Midlands, Friday 3rd April 2026:

The Birmingham County Court has yesterday handed down judgment in favour of Mohammed Arif, a veteran Cabinet Member and former Conservative Councillor for St Matthew's Ward in Walsall, concluding proceedings relating to his discrimination claim against officers of the former Walsall Conservative Federation (now the Walsall and Bloxwich Association).

Following an eight-day trial in the Birmingham County Court in November and December 2025, His Honour Judge Tindal has yesterday found in favour of Mr Arif, represented by law firm Simons Muirhead Burton, finding that he was the victim of unlawful discrimination and victimisation on the basis of his Pakistani heritage and Muslim beliefs.

In a detailed 150-page judgment, the court found Mr Arif had been discriminated against or victimised in 13 different respects by officers of the former Walsall Conservative Federation between 2015 and 2018. The court found that Mr Arif's Muslim faith had been "weaponised" against him in a decision not to select him as a local election candidate and the Federation had victimised him in expelling and then re-expelling from both the Federation and the Conservative Party.

Judge Tindal names current Walsall Councillor and Chair of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Suky Samra as lead defendant for the officers and members of the Executive Council during the period in question and has taken the unusual step of publishing his judgment as he could find no previous reported case "addressing victimisation in the context of political parties" and that "there is a public interest in how political parties address internal issues of race and religion".

Gordon Clough, Legal Director at Simons Muirhead Burton, led the team representing Mr Arif in this matter. He said of yesterday's judgment:

"This vindication for my client is long overdue. Although the judgment focusses on events in the West Midlands, the bigger scandal is how Mr Arif was treated by the central Conservative Party. He consistently reported his unlawful treatment to CCHQ, only for his complaints to be largely swept under the carpet. The Judge's findings very closely mirror those reached by an independent investigation into the same allegations in 2021, but the Party failed to take proper action. My client has needlessly faced the expense and emotional anguish of taking his claim to trial and it is now incumbent on the Party to finally take proper disciplinary action against those responsible."

Reflecting on the verdict, **Mohammed Arif** stated:

“I would like to thank Gordon Clough, his Legal team at SMB and my Barrister Akua Reindorf KC for their advice and guidance since 2016. We worked as a team and without their confidence and legal advice this historic victory against Walsall Conservative Federation would not have been achieved.

It has been a tough 10-year battle that has been immensely difficult for me and my family, who have supported me all the way through the drawn-out legal proceedings. This fight was not for me alone but for all of the people in politics across all parties who have faced discrimination and victimisation. In politics, strong principles come at a price but this verdict proves that if you stand-up and fight for your principles resolutely, you will attain justice in the end.

I hope now the people at CCHQ will wake-up and take strong action against those who victimised and discriminated against me and others in Walsall. It is now a matter of record that we raised these issues time and again, but despite three investigations organised by the Central Party it has taken no concrete action. This proves the belief of many Muslims of Pakistani or British origin in the Conservative Party that Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims is tolerated.”

A further hearing to determine legal costs has been scheduled for **Friday, 8 May 2026**.

A full, more detailed press-release continues below. In this detailed account, Mr Arif demands the Walsall and Bloxwich Association be placed into “assisted status”, he reflects on the tendency to vilify British Muslims who work in politics, acknowledges the witnesses who bravely appeared in court despite facing intimidation and writes about the unheeded warnings given to the Conservative Party on Islamophobia in the party. Mr Arif also expresses his puzzlement at Muslim and Sikh defendants taking oaths on the Bible during the court hearing and gives his reflections on this. Mr Arif expresses his heartfelt gratitude to his legal team and has hopes that as this case will be a part of case law, it will go some way to making Britain, the country that he loves, more equitable and fair. To conclude the detailed press-release, Mr Arif reflects on his achievements as a ward councillor to illustrate his commitment to local politics, achievements he was not allowed to build upon due to his de-selection and lack of action by the Conservative Party. As stated, this full, more detailed press-release is available below.

Detailed Press Release Continues below

A Demand for Immediate "Assisted Status"

In light of the court’s findings, we call on the **Conservative Party Board** to take immediate and decisive action:

1. **Immediate Assisted Status:** The **Walsall and Bloxwich Association** must be placed into immediate "Assisted Status," with CCHQ taking direct control of it’s governance to end the documented culture of discrimination.
2. **Disciplinary Action:** Immediate action must be taken against the Officers involved in the discrimination and victimisation of Mohammed Arif and other Muslim Candidates during both Local and Parliamentary selection processes in Walsall.

3. **Sack from the Cabinet and Police Panel:** We call upon the Walsall Council Leader, Councillor Mike Bird to remove Councillor Suky Samra from the Walsall Cabinet and from the Police Crime Commissioner Panel where he serves as the Chairman.
4. I again ask the Conservative Party to issue an **unreserved apology**, as per Ms Aileen McColgan KC's Report that settled the case against the National Conservative Party.

A Legacy of Change

Despite the personal toll, Mr Arif's legal challenge has already benefitted the people of Walsall. By exposing the "underhanded" tactics used by Federation Officers to mask discrimination, his action paved the way for other Muslim candidates to stand in local elections and become Councillors. These individuals, previously were restricted by local officers, some have been selected in "non-safe" wards and successfully elected as Councillors.

The Human Cost: A 10-Year Battle – Thankful to Honourable Judge Tindal

Reflecting on the verdict, Mohammed Arif stated:

"This has been a long battle which no one else should ever have to go through again in any political party. The costs and the strains on my health and wealth have been considerable over the last 10 years. I took on this challenge to stop anyone, from any background, suffering the same fate in the future. More specifically: The tendency to vilify British Muslims, especially British Muslims in politics, many of whom have spent their entire careers making Britain a better place for all of us to live must be challenged. I hope this verdict will go some way towards shining a light on the discrimination and victimisation that Muslims in politics face in Britain today. I am grateful to Honourable Judge Jim Tindal for a verdict that has been framed in such a way that future generations will refer to this as case law and learn from it."

Acknowledgement to Witnesses and Intimidation they faced

- Councillor Mike Bird — Council Leader.
- Councillor John Murray — Councillor and former Chair of the Aldridge Brownhills Candidates Approval Panel.
- Mr Bob Barnard, former St. Matthew's Branch Chairman
- Mrs Nasreen Akhter – former Walsall Federation Secretary(resigned)

Intimidation and Reprisals Reported

- **Threats to Councillor Mike Bird** — Cllr. Bird was told that “**dogs of war would be let loose**” if he appeared as a witness in Mr Arif’s membership expulsion appeal at the Conservative Party HQ.
- **De-selection challenges faced by Councillor Mike Bird** after supporting the claimant.
- **De-selection of Councillor John Murray** — Councillor Murray was deselected from Aldridge Central and South in May 2022 and had to stand in Brownhills ward later that year.

Public Acknowledgement

I wish to extend my deepest thanks to Council Leader, Councillor Mike Bird, Councillor John Murray, Mr Bob Barnard and Mrs Nasreen Akhter who gave evidence in support. Their willingness to speak out despite threats, de-selection pressures, and coordinated attempts to discredit them was essential to exposing the discrimination documented by the Court.

Oath on the Bible by Muslims and Sikhs

During the trial, Mohammed Arif, a practicing Muslim took his oath on the Quran but he found it peculiar that witnesses for the defendants, Councillor Waheed Rasab, Mohammed Arshad, Sandeep Singh Sohal, Harry Gandham and Councillor Suky Singh Samra all took an oath on the Bible. These individuals were given the choice to take an oath on their own holy book or a non-religious oath. Mr Arif reflected on his understanding that Muslims are taught to respect the sanctity of all holy books and as a Muslim, he believes that giving false or misleading statements under oath while invoking holy texts is heinous.

A History of Unheeded Warnings

The Court’s findings mirror a scathing 2021 report by **Aileen McColgan KC**, who was engaged by the Party to independently investigate Mr Arif’s complaints and who concluded that the Conservative Party lacked the "appetite" to use its mechanisms against the Walsall Federation, who refused to engage with the investigator. Ms McColgan’s report recommended that the local association be treated as "failing" and that Mr Arif be offered an **unreserved apology**. The Party chose instead to "wait for legal action to conclude"—effectively granting local officers a five-year reprieve and forcing Mr Arif to incur significant legal costs to obtain justice via the courts. This was despite the fact an earlier internal report by the Party had already found that Mr Arif had been “denied natural justice”.

Key Findings Recorded by the Court:

- **Systemic Discrimination:** The court found for Mr Arif in respect of 14 specific acts of misconduct, leading to his wrongful expulsion from the Party.
- **Witnesses Statements:** The Judge found that Councillor Samra had used a witness statement from an individual who had no knowledge or approval of it in order to justify expelling Mr Arif from the Federation and the Party.
- **Concerns with evidence:** The Judge also held that Councillor Samra had deliberately withheld evidence and that the Defendants co-ordinated their witness statements, including given written evidence that was contradicted by their own contemporaneous documents. Some of their witness evidence was described as “implausible” and “thoroughly unsatisfactory”.
- **Remedies:** The court has ordered declarations of discrimination and will consider an award for injury to feelings.

Next Steps

A further hearing to determine legal costs has been scheduled for **Friday, 8 May 2026**.

Judgement Summary

3 acts of discrimination (numbered 1-3 below) and 10 acts of victimisation (numbered 3-12 below).

The refusal to allow my appeal against non-approval on 22 October 2015 was held to be both. (writing in colour provided to give context to unfamiliar people with party selection processes)

1. The conduct of the approval interview on 28 September 2015.
Race and Religious Direct Discrimination upheld.

Before a candidate can stand in local elections, including Councillors, they have to be approved to go on the Candidate Approval List. The Panel then determine who is on the approval panel.
2. Declining to approve the Claimant as a candidate in September 2015.
Race and Religious Direct Discrimination upheld.

Refusal by the Approval Panel to place me on the Council Approved list.
3. Refusing to allow the appeal against non-approval on 22 October 2015.
Race and Religious Direct Discrimination and Victimisation upheld.

A Candidate can Appeal to the Association if denied a place on the list on a procedural point
4. Accusing the Claimant orally on or around 29 April 2016 and by letter dated 20 June 2016 of campaigning against the Party.
Victimisation only upheld.

The allegation against me was that after my deselection in St. Matthew's I campaigned Against the Conservative Candidate who lost the 2016 Council elections and with it the Control of the Council.
5. Failing properly or at all to inform the Claimant of the allegations against him in May-June 2016.
Victimisation only upheld.

I was not made aware of the allegations against me and was denied the evidence against me

6. Refusing in June 2016 to suspend the disciplinary investigation and hearing on the instructions of the national Party pending an investigation. **Victimisation only upheld.**
The Conservative Party Board asked Walsall Federation to hold-off the disciplinary action until the the Investigation ordered by the Party Chairman(Lord Feldman) was completed(never took place) as to why the St. Matthew's Ward was lost and with it the Council.
7. Purporting to expel the Claimant from membership of the Federation and the Party on 30 June 2016. **Victimisation only upheld.**
If a Member is expelled, the Party has to be informed but this was not reported.
8. Convening a meeting on 24 October 2018 to consider suspending or refusing membership to the Claimant. **Victimisation only upheld.**
The Conservative Party Board had written to the Walsall Federation not to hold this meeting.
9. Persisting in holding the meeting on 24 October 2018 notwithstanding the outcome of the Claimant's appeal against his previous expulsion had not been circulated. **Victimisation only upheld.**

I had successfully, challenged my expulsion from the party and an internal panel appointed by the Conservative Party Board upheld my appeal as the Walsall Federation had statements and Minutes dated few days before the expulsion meeting. A member should be given 14 days notice.The Party Board Appointed Panel informed both parties the outcome but said that the Party Board will decide if to approve or reject their findings. Walsall Federation went ahead with Another meeting to expel me again. I was not a member at the time anyway.
10. Relying at the meeting of 24 October 2018 on evidence which did not form a proper basis for suspending the Claimant or removal of membership. **Victimisation only upheld.**
Statements used against me by Walsall Conservative Federation, no-one could explain how they were obtained.
11. Deciding on 24 October 2018 to suspend or refuse membership to the Claimant. **Victimisation only upheld.**
12. Purporting to suspend or refuse membership to the Claimant by letter of 31 October 2018. **Victimisation only upheld.**
If a Member is expelled, the Party has to be informed but this was not reported.

Background

In May 2021, an Independent Investigation into Alleged Discrimination, including Islamophobia, within the Conservative Party, chaired by Professor Swaran Singh, found that two-thirds of all allegedly discriminatory incidents reported to the Party's headquarters, CCHQ, over the six years from 2015 to 2020 related to allegations of anti-Muslim discrimination, and that this was most likely to have occurred at the level of a local Party association.

A 2023 Independent Review into whether the Conservative Party had implemented the Singh Report's recommendations found that progress had "been slow" and that the Party "still [had] much to do" in identifying and dealing with complaints of discrimination at a local level.

Key Strategic Achievements As a Councillor (Some Examples)

As a Councillor I was **Chairman of Butts and Hatherton Health Centre Working Group** for 7 Years with bringing Lichfield Road GP Practice and Hatherton St GP Practice into a new health centre which eventually resulted in a £12m opening of the Hatherton Health Centre in August 2023. All meetings held in Committee rooms at the Council House.

Member of Highgate Residents Group for 14 Years as a resident and ward Councillor campaigning for a Main Access off the ring road for Wolverhampton University. **Road completed in 2017 to end** the misery of Broadway Park Estate Residents.

Caldmore Primary School - as Cabinet Member, I led on the work to secure the necessary funding to expand the school. This was a very complex problem, including negotiating with senior managers at WHG & Caldmore Accord to secure land, without my knowledge and expertise, I believe this project would not have been achieved. A 3 year battle that finally led to building of the extension at a cost £3.1m in 2011.

Caldmore and Palfrey - as a community volunteer, Trustee/Director and now Chair of Caldmore Village Festival Group I supported the initiation and development of the community festivals & events, the growth and expansion of the Community Garden and House. Which originally was derelict land and an unused house boarded up for 25 years, As a ward Councillor I was instrumental in negotiating the securing of these assets for the benefit of the group. The great success of this group is its extensive community cohesion role within the Caldmore and Palfrey areas.

Chair of Walsall South Area Partnership - I led the councilors from the four wards to support community activity to address and find solutions to residents concerns. For example installation of CCTV in crime hotspots, clearing up neglected sites, reducing street drinking and street sex working and authorising funding to support positive community activity.

Reducing on Street Sex Working – As a ward councilor, I have always been a champion in this area by working with the affected residents. I actively tried to find solutions including considering ways to help the vulnerable street workers. As part of this work I chaired a multi-agency project to support twenty of the most at risk street workers to help them escape their situation. This project was nominated for a Local Government Award 2014 and came runner up for its innovative way of tackling the problem.

Reducing Long Term Health Conditions - I was part of a joint working group to support diabetes prevention especially within hard to reach communities. My insight into these communities was invaluable to enable the diabetic nursing team to provide advice and support in a targeted way.

Member of West Midlands Police Authority June 2015 to May 2016. Campaigned for a new Police Station in Hatherton Street. Reserved £14m in the budget. Green Lane Police Station demolished and no new station built by the Police Commissioner.

Chairman of St. Matthew's Church Working Group established to organise work around the historic Church to celebrate the bi-centenary. Chaired the Group for 3 years and all the meeting were held at the Council House.

Tried to discredit my work as a Councillor

The questions that were asked at my Candidate Approval Panel in 2015 did not reflect the work I had done over 12 years and held-on to a marginal ward due to my work across the ward and across the diverse Communities of St. Matthew's Ward. The panel tried to discredit me as a person and my outstanding work.

Press Contacts

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