

Bristol 'coconut' row councillor's conviction is upheld

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Image caption,
Brown's insult was heard on the council's webcast

A Bristol city councillor who called an Asian colleague a "coconut" has had her conviction for racial harassment upheld.

Liberal Democrat Shirley Brown used the derogatory remark against Conservative Jay Jethwa at a council debate in 2009.

Brown was the first black woman to be elected to the authority.

The term coconut has been used to accuse someone of betraying their race by implying that they are brown on the outside but white on the inside.

The Conservative Party lodged a formal complaint and Brown was prosecuted.

She was given a conditional discharge after being found guilty of racial harassment at Bristol Magistrates' Court in June last year.

Speaking after Wednesday's hearing, Greg Foxsmith, Brown's solicitor, said: "She's disappointed with the outcome and she's going to consider the judge's ruling and her legal team are looking into whether there are any further avenues of appeal.

"It's been a fairly high profile case for what was a comparatively minor remark.

"We are not defending her use of the word, which was clearly inappropriate in a council meeting, but we challenge whether it passed the threshold for criminal conduct."

Brown is currently the councillor for the Ashley ward in Bristol but has said she will not stand in May's elections.