

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 4 MARCH 2024

PRESENT: M. Dodd (Chair)

Independent Members (In Person):

D. Evans

Councillors (Virtually):

B.W. Jones

G.B. Thomas

Independent Members

(Virtually):

C. Davies

F. Phillips

Community Member (Virtually):

P. Rogers

Also Present (In Person):

R. Edgecombe, Legal Services Manager

J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer

E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 2.00 pm – 2.56pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 16TH JANUARY 2024

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 16th January, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

4. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Further to the departure of the previous Vice-Chair, the Committee considered nominations for the role of Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Committee members extended their gratitude to the former Vice Chair of the Committee, Julie James, for her sterling contribution to the work of the Standards Committee in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected councillors and co-opted members within Carmarthenshire County Council.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Daphne Evans be appointed Vice Chair of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

5. REVIEW OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

The Committee considered a report detailing the progress achieved in relation to the actions, requests or referrals that had emanated from previous meetings.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS

In accordance with the Standards Committee terms of reference, consideration was given to a report regarding the provision and delivery of Code of Conduct training for Town and Community Councillors for 2024.

In considering the accessibility arrangements, the Committee was reminded that at its meeting in September 2023, the Committee endorsed that consideration be given to future sessions being held remotely due to the low level of in-person attendance and the additional resources required to facilitate hybrid / multi-location training. It was reported that the live webcast of a remote training session hosted on the Council's website would enable councils to access the training for a period of 6-months, therefore only one session was required. Committee emphasised the importance of the training and expressed that Town and Community Councils could assist the Council with its data gathering requirements by confirming their attendance at the session in writing using the online training chat facility or verbally by way of a roll call at the commencement of the training.

Committee reviewed the training presentation which had been updated to include the latest decisions by the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that one online code of conduct training session be provided for Town and Community Councillors in June/July 2024 according to the availability of the presenters, with the webcast made available on the Council's website for a period of 6 months.

7. TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT DATA GATHERING EXERCISE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

The Legal Services Manager presented a report wherein the Committee was reminded that Town and Community Councils were annually requested to provide data regarding code of conduct compliance by their members and the responses received were combined with data held by the Council to provide a comprehensive overview of code compliance by these councillors covering:

1. Declarations of interest
2. Dispensation requests
3. Code of conduct complaints
4. Code of conduct training
5. Council Training Plan

The Committee's views were sought on the proposed scope and methodology for the 2024 data gathering exercise.

To ease the administrative burden associated with the data gathering exercise, it was proposed that the data be collected by way of an online snap survey, with a view to the results being presented to the Committee at a future meeting using a mixture of charts and graphs, enabling, where possible, for comparison with the preceding municipal year's results to be portrayed.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the questions detailed within the report, together with the use of an online snap survey be endorsed for the Town and Community Code of Conduct data gathering exercise.

8. DISPENSATION REQUEST BY COUNCILLOR RODERICK GRIFFITHS

The Committee considered an application submitted by Councillor Roderick Griffiths of Llansteffan and Llanybri Community Council for the grant of a dispensation under the provisions of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations to speak and make written representations only in relation to council business regarding 'The Green' in Llansteffan.

It was reported that Councillor Griffiths had a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter as

- he/his family owns land adjoining 'The Green';
- his family has the benefit of a restrictive covenant over part of the land in question. This covenant places restrictions on what can be done with, and on, land conveyed to the Council in 1980. This land forms part of the area covered by the proposed changes to 'The Green';
- his family own a business operating on land adjoining to The Green.

Councillor Griffiths sought dispensation by virtue of Regulation 2(d) – the nature of the member's interest is such that the member's participation in the business to which the interest relates would not damage public confidence in the conduct of the relevant authority's business and Regulation 2(f) – the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the members particular role or expertise.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

The Committee was advised that if it was minded to grant the dispensation request it would also need to determine the duration of that dispensation.

Following a discussion, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that dispensation be granted under Regulations 2 (d) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensation) (Wales) Regulations 2001 for Councillor Roderick Griffiths to SPEAK AND MAKE WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS ONLY BUT NOT VOTE at meetings relating to 'The Green' in Llansteffan and that the dispensation be valid until the end of his current term in office.

9. DISPENSATION REQUEST BY COUNCILLOR MARY MARGARET WENMAN

The Committee considered an application submitted by Councillor Mary Margaret Wenman of Burry Port and Pembrey Town Council for the grant of a dispensation under the provisions of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations to speak, vote and make written representations in relation to the former Copperworks School in Burry Port.

It was reported that Councillor Wenman had a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter as she is the Chair of the 'Friends of the Copperworks' a voluntary organisation which wishes to influence the Town Council over the future of the remaining building on the site and lease it. The application also detailed Cllr Wenman's membership of 'the Heritage and Historical society', but it was unclear from the application what direct interest this group has in the Copperworks site.

Councillor Wenman sought dispensation by virtue of:

1. Regulation 2(a) no fewer than half the members of the relevant authority by which the business is to be considered has an interest which relates to that business.
2. Regulation 2(d) the nature of the members interest in such that their participating in the business to which the interest relates would not damage public confidence.
3. Regulation 2(e) the interest is common to the member and a significant proportion of the general public.
4. Regulation 2(f) the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the member's particular role or expertise
5. Regulation 2(g) the business to which the interest relates is to be considered by an overview or scrutiny committee and the members interest is not a pecuniary interest.

The Legal Services Manager advised that of these grounds, Regulations 2(e) and 2(g) were unlikely to apply and there was nothing in the application to support the ground under Regulation 2(a). Regulations 2(d) and 2(f) were however deemed to be applicable.

The Committee was advised that if it was minded to grant the dispensation request it would also need to determine the duration of that dispensation.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Following a discussion, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that dispensation be granted under Regulations 2 (d) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensation) (Wales) Regulations 2001 for Mary Margaret Wenman to SPEAK AND MAKE WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS ONLY BUT NOT VOTE at meetings relating to the former Copperworks School in Burry Port and that the dispensation be valid until the end of her current term in office.

10. GROUP DISPENSATION REQUEST ON BEHALF OF MEMBERS OF LLANLLAWDDOG COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Committee considered a group application submitted by the clerk to Llanllawddog Community Council in respect of 6 of the 7 current members of that authority for the grant of a dispensation under the provisions of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations to speak and vote and make written representations in relation to council business regarding the Towy/Teifi overhead line proposed by Green Gen Cymru/Bute Energy.

It was noted that dispensations were sought by Councillors Deborah Dean, Elizabeth Gibbon, Havard Hughes, Darrell Lewis, Steven Mason and Peter Williams each of which had submitted declarations of interest as detailed in appendix 1 of the report.

The dispensations were sought by virtue of Regulation 2(a) no fewer than half the members of the relevant authority by which the business is to be considered has an interest which relates to that business and Regulation 2(d) – the nature of the member's interest is such that the member's participation in the business to which the interest relates would not damage public confidence in the conduct of the relevant authority's business.

Members commented on the number of dispensation applications received in connection with the aforementioned scheme, and the possible implications in terms of the quorum for community council meetings.

The Committee was advised that if it was minded to grant the dispensation request it would also need to determine the duration of that dispensation.

Following a discussion, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that dispensation be granted under Regulations 2 (a) and (d) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensation) (Wales) Regulations 2001 for Councillors Deborah Dean, Elizabeth Gibbon, Havard Hughes, Darrell Lewis, Steven Mason and Peter Williams to SPEAK, MAKE WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS AND VOTE at meetings relating to the Towy/Teifi overhead line proposed by Green Gen Cymru/Bute Energy and that the dispensation be valid until the end of their current term in office.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme [FWP] for 2024/25 which identified the key reports it should expect to receive at its scheduled quarterly meetings.

In considering the FWP, the Committee suggested that the minutes of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum (Wales) meetings, together with pertinent publications/reports from the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) and Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) be added to the scheduled quarterly meeting agendas.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the draft 2024/25 Forward Work Programme be adopted, subject to the inclusion of the above noted suggestions.

12. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100B(4)(B) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.

There were no items of urgent business.

CHAIR

DATE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.