

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

14 JUNE 2021

PRESENT: M.A. Morgan (Chair)

Independent Members:

M. Dodd, D. Evans, J. James and A. Williams

Community Member:-

Town Councillor P. Rogers

Councillors:

S.J.G. Gilasbey, R. James and G.B. Thomas

The following Officers were in attendance:

L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;
R. Edgecombe, Legal Services Manager;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer;
A. Eynon, Principal Translator;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Virtual Meeting: 10:00am - 11:00am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST.

Member	Item Number	Nature of Interest
Councillor Rob James	4 – Application for Dispensation by Councillor N. E. Holman	The applicant is known to him.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 25TH MARCH 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on the 25th March, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

4. APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION BY COUNCILLOR N. E. HOLMAN

[Note: Councillor Rob James having declared an interest in this item took part in the deliberation, but did not vote].

The Committee considered an application submitted by Community Councillor Nathan Edward Holman for the grant of a dispensation under the provisions of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations to speak and vote on matters relating to finance and staff at Llannon Community Council

It was reported that a dispensation was sought as Councillor Jones had a personal interest in this matter by virtue of paragraph 10(2)c - Council business which affects your well-being or financial position, or the well-being, financial position or other interests of a person with whom you live or have a close personal association

Councillor Holman's interest was also prejudicial in that a member of the public, with full knowledge of the facts, would reasonably regard that interest as being so significant that it would be likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest. Councillor Holman had accordingly requested that a dispensation be granted under Regulations 2 (d) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensation) (Wales) Regulations 2001.

Following a discussion it was:-

RESOLVED that the application submitted by Councillor Nathan Edward Holman for dispensation to speak and vote at meetings of Llannon Community Council in respect of matters relating finance and staff at Llannon Community Council be refused.

5. REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Legal Services Manager highlighted that the Whistleblowing Policy appended to the report did not display the changes that had been made to the policy therefore it was recommended that in order for the Committee to consider the changes this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to defer the consideration of the Whistleblowing Policy to the next Standards Committee meeting.

6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021

The Committee considered the legislative changes within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and how they impacted upon the work of the committee.

The Act included several provisions which would directly impact upon the work of the committee as follows:-

- A duty on the leaders of political groups to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of their group.
- A duty on the leaders of political groups to co-operate with the standards committee in the exercise of that committee's functions.
- Amending the functions of the Standards Committee to include monitoring compliance by group leaders with the above duties and advising and training them in respect of those duties.
- Introduces a statutory requirement on Standards committees to produce an annual report as soon as possible after the end of each financial year. And prescribes certain content to be included in those reports, namely.

- (a) A summary of what has been done to discharge the functions referred to above
 - (b) A summary of any reports or recommendations received
 - (c) A summary of any action taken following consideration of any reports or recommendations received
 - (d) An assessment of the extent to which political group leaders have complied with their duties under the Act
- A duty on Town and Community Councils to develop and publish training plans for their members and staff.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the legislative changes being made by the Act and how they impact upon the work of the committee be noted.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT DATA

The Committee considered a report which provided information in relation to the progress made to date in obtaining data from Town and Community Councils.

It was reported that only a third of Councils had responded to the e-mail requesting information on their compliance data from Town and Community Council. The Committee was informed that officers would write again to those Councils that have not responded to date and report back at the next committee meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the progress made to date in obtaining data from Town and Community Councils be noted.

8. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered a report which sought a decision on the method and frequency of training for town and community council.

The Committee, at its meeting in March, 2021 resolved to offer further code of conduct training to Town and Community Councillors, in the form of two online events during the summer.

The Legal Services Manager reported that letters had been sent to all Town and Community Councils informing them of the training and sought their views. Of the councils that responded the overwhelming majority indicated an interest in attending such events. However, a small number did express concern that a few of their members would be unable to attend the event due to a lack of suitable equipment or confidence in its use.

The Committee noted that several councils expressed an interest in the sessions being split between the evening and daytime in order to accommodate the working patterns of their members.

In light of the responses, it was therefore proposed that 2 online sessions be held in July, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

It was hoped that the training could be recorded, and a link made available for Council Members who would not be able to attend the proposed training dates.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that two online sessions be held in July 2021, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

9. OMBUDSMANS CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOK

The Committee considered the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales' latest issue of the 'Code of Conduct' Casebook, which covered the year 2020,

The casebook provided summaries of 9 cases where no evidence of a breach had been found. The Committee noted that one of these cases related to a member of Carmarthenshire County Council and another to a member of Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

10. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

CHAIR

DATE