

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 7 MARCH 2023

PRESENT: M. Dodd (Chair)(Ph)

Independent Members:

C. Davies (R), D. Evans (Ph), J. James (Ph),

Councillors:

R. James (R) and G.B. Thomas (R)

The following Officers were in attendance (In Person):

L. Rees Jones, Monitoring Officer
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer
S. Hendy, Member Support Officer

Also Present (Virtually)

M. Runeckles, Member Support Officer
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator

[Ph = physical attendance at County Hall. R = remote attendance via Zoom)

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 - 11.02 am

[Note: The Chair, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2(3) reconfigured the order of business on the agenda to enable Agenda Item 8 to be considered earlier in the meeting].

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F. Phillips and Councillor B. Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST.

Attendee	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Ms D. Evans	7. Dispensation Application By Councillor Kim Broom	Owns holiday homes

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH JANUARY, 2023.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 24th January, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLIANCE BY TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS.

The Monitoring Officer 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.

The Committee's views were sought on the scope and methodology for the 2022/2023 code of conduct compliance exercise. In view of the new duties imposed on Town and Community Councils by virtue of the provisions enshrined within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Monitoring Officer suggested that additional questions be included for 2022/23 to establish whether training plans had been adopted, published and implemented; and also whether any such training plans included a requirement for members to undertake code of conduct training. In response to a query regarding the feasibility of requesting open-ended questions with a view to further information and context being provided within responses, the Monitoring Officer clarified that whilst there was a requirement for Town and Community Councils to implement training plans, there was no scope at this time for the Council to probe further in respect of the content of such plans. However, it was noted that the Committee may be minded to further refine the questionnaire as part of the next compliance exercise in light of the guidance issued by Welsh Government in respect of training provision and skills gaps within Town and Community Councils.

The Committee agreed that a further question be included within the questionnaire to establish whether the new Model Code of Conduct had been adopted by Town and Community Councils.

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 its December 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 to endorse the suggestions proposed above.

5. 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 2023.

In considering the accessibility arrangements, the Committee was reminded that multi-location training sessions had been provided in 2022 which enabled

councillors to attend either in person at County Hall or remotely via Zoom. It was reported that recordings of the training sessions had also been provided to Town and Community Councils to enable councillors to access the training at their convenience.

A synopsis of the feedback provided as part of the preceding year's training events was provided to the Committee which indicated that overall, there was no appreciable demand for an additional session or for sessions to be held during the evenings. However, the Committee expressed that one of the sessions should be provided early evening, subject to demand, with the caveat that the session would proceed with a minimum of 10 attendees confirming their intention to attend.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 5.1 Two code of conduct training sessions for Town and Community Councillors to be arranged for June/July 2023.**
- 5.2 One session be held during normal office hours by way of a hybrid event, attended in person at county hall or remotely via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. One session be provided early evening, subject to demand, with the caveat that the session would proceed with a minimum of 10 attendees confirming their intention to attend.**
- 5.3 The sessions be recorded, and the recordings be made available to Town and Community Councils, along with the training materials used.**

6. ACTIONS UPDATE.

The Committee received a report which detailed the progress achieved in relation to the actions, requests or referrals which had emanated from previous meetings.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. DISPENSATION APPLICATION BY COUNCILLOR KIM BROOM.

[Note: Ms D. Evans having earlier declared an interest, re-iterated her declaration on this item and departed the meeting during the deliberation of the report and voting thereof].

The Committee considered an application submitted by County Councillor Kim Broom 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 Council Tax Levy on second homes.

It was reported that a dispensation was sought as Councillor Broom had a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter by virtue of paragraph 10 (2)(a) of the Members Code of Conduct as she is an owner of a second property which she lets as a holiday home.

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 to Councillor Kim Broom to **SPEAK AND MAKE WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS ONLY BUT NOT VOTE** at meetings of Carmarthenshire County Council on any council business relating to Tax Levy on second homes and the dispensation be valid for a period of 12 months.

8. DISPENSATION APPLICATION BY COUNCILLOR JAMES PICKUP.

The Committee considered an application submitted by Community Councillor James Pickup of Cilycwm Community Council for the grant of a dispensation under the provisions of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations to speak only in relation to Council business regarding the Bute Energy Towy Usk Grid connection scheme. Specifically, Councillor Pickup requested a dispensation to provide a presentation/briefing at a meeting of Cilycwm Community Council on the proposals put forward by Bute Energy in respect of the Bute Energy Towy Usk Grid connection scheme.

It was reported that Councillor Pickup had a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter by virtue of paragraph 10 (2)(a) of the Members Code of Conduct as he is employed by Bute Energy and is the scheme's senior land manager.

Councillor Pickup sought dispensation by virtue of Regulation 2(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(2)(f) – the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the members particular role or expertise.

Following a discussion, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that

8.1 the dispensation be refused.

8.2 the Standards Committee advise that Councillor Pickup refrain from participating in the Cilycwm Community Council discussions pertaining to the Bute Energy Towy Usk Grid connection scheme.

9. 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 was none.

CHAIR

DATE