

## Standards Committee

Thursday, 25 March 2021

**PRESENT:** M. Dodd (Chair)\*

**Independent Members:**

D. Evans, J. James, M.A. Morgan\* and A. Williams;

**Community Member:**

Town Councillor P. Rogers;

**Councillors:**

S.J.G. Gilasbey and G.B. Thomas;

\*[NOTE: M. Dodd (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting due to technical issues experienced by M.A. Morgan (Chair) in joining the virtual meeting]

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

R. Edgecombe, Legal Services Manager;

M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer;

J. Corner, Technical Officer;

S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;

R. Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer;

M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

**Virtual Meeting: 10.00 am - 11.10 am**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

There were no declarations of personal interest.

**3. MINUTES - 14TH DECEMBER, 2020**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 be signed as a correct record.

**4. DISPENSATION APPLICATION BY CLLR. JOHN JENKINS**

The Committee considered an application submitted by County Councillor John Jenkins 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 at meetings of Llanelli Town Council and Carmarthenshire County Council in respect of "Matters relating to collection of refuse in Brettenham Street and highway safety issues exiting Brettenham Street onto Chapman Street and Pryce Street", Llanelli.

Councillor Jenkins's interest was personal and prejudicial as he lived in Brettenham street and 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.

Following a discussion it was

**RESOLVED** that dispensation be granted under Regulations 2 (d) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensation) (Wales) Regulations 2001 to Councillor John Jenkins to **SPEAK AND MAKE WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS ONLY** on matters relating to collection of refuse in Brettenham Street and highway safety issues exiting Brettenham Street onto Chapman Street and Pryce Street, Llanelli.

## **5. ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES DECISIONS**

The Committee considered a report recently published by the Adjudication Panel for Wales detailing its findings in the cases of former Sully and Lavernock Community Councillor Baguley, in relation to social media posts, and Councillor Kevin O'Neill of Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council, in relation to a personal and prejudicial interest and his treatment of the former Chief Executive of the Relevant Authority.

The matters had been referred to the Panel by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales as a result of complaints received.

With regard to former Councillor Baguley the Panel had concluded by a unanimous decision that the Respondent should be disqualified for 15 months from being or becoming a member of Sully and Lavernock Community Council or of any other relevant authority within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2000.

With regard to Councillor O'Neill the Panel had concluded by a unanimous decision that the Respondent should be suspended from acting as a member of the Relevant Authority for a period of seven months or, if shorter, the remainder of his term of office from the date of the decision notice.

The Committee was of the view that the first case referred to above emphasised the importance of including reference to the use of social media in Code of Conduct training.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.**

## **6. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS**

The Committee was reminded that arrangements for the delivery of code of conduct training to town and community councillors within the county was a task that fell within its remit. Whilst annual sessions were, in normal circumstances, usually held in County Hall, in 2020, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, these sessions had been cancelled and training notes had, instead, been circulated to all town and community councils. Following several enquiries from town and community councils about when further training sessions would be held the Committee was asked to consider, in light of the ongoing restrictions associated with the pandemic, the option of hosting an online training session via Zoom or Microsoft Teams as the only alternatives would be to defer the sessions for another year or provide copies of training notes as in 2020.

Members considered it important that a training session in some form should be held, as opposed to the distribution of notes, and that guidance on the use of social media should be included, particularly in light of the findings of the Adjudication Panel for Wales referred to in minute 5 above.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Legal Services Manager be requested to explore the possibility of arranging Code of Conduct Training online and ascertaining from town and community councils their ability to participate.

**7. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLIANCE BY TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

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 Monitoring Officer 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.

Whilst the majority of Councils had consistently provided the requested data, a small minority had failed to do so, some for several years. Accordingly, it was suggested that a letter requesting information along the lines appended to the report be sent to all Town and Community Councils immediately after the end of the current municipal year, with a view to the data being collated in time to be presented to the committee at its December meeting. The Legal Services Manager noted a number of minor suggested changes to the letter.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to endorse the action proposed above.

**8. 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