

Minutes of the Meeting of ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE held Hybrid at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video conference on Monday, 04 December 2023

PRESENT: Mr John Weston (Chair) Mr Alan Davies and Ms.Gail Storr

Councillors Caryl Roberts, Gwyn Wigley Evans & Cllr Jan Culley (Elected Members)

Other Elected Members in attendance: Councillors Bryan Davies, Catrin M S Davies and Meirion Davies

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms Elin Prysor (Monitoring Officer)

Mrs Lisa Evans (Scrutiny and Standards Officer)

Mrs Dana Jones (Democratic and Standards Officer)

(10:00am-11:15pm)

1 Apologies

Miss Caryl Davies and Ms Carol Edwards apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair, Mr John Weston.

Councillor Delyth James had attended the meeting, however, due to the quorum of the Committee, it was agreed that she would leave the Committee in order that the number of Independent Members and Councillors were balanced.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

None.

3 To consider applications for dispensation from the following Councillors

(i) Councillor Bryan Davies - Ceredigion County Council

An Application dated the 17 October 2023 was received from Councillor Bryan Davies, Ceredigion County Council to speak and vote upon the Council Tax Premium for Long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes in Ceredigion. He co-owns a house with his wife and brother. The house was rented to a family long-term.

Councillor Davies was present at the meeting to present his application and answered questions regarding his application.

Councillor Davies was requested to leave the Chamber for the Committee to consider his application.

It was RESOLVED to grant Councillor Davies a dispensation to speak and vote on the grounds that the nature of the members' 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, (regulation 2 (d) of the Standards Committees (Grant Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001). The dispensation was granted for a period of 12 months.

(ii) Councillor Ifan Davies, Ceredigion County Council, Ceredigion County Council

An Application dated the 21 November 2023 was received from Councillor Ifan Davies, Ceredigion County Council to speak only upon the Second homes council tax. He owned a number of properties in Ceredigion

The Committee took the view that there was insufficient information in the application.

It was RESOLVED to grant Councillor Davies a dispensation to speak only (due to the lack of information on his application form in relation to the properties that he owned), on the grounds that the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the member's particular role or expertise (regulation (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001). The dispensation was granted for a period of 12 months.

(iii) Councillor Catrin M S Davies, Ceredigion County Council

An Application dated 03 November 2023 was received from Councillor Catrin M S Davies, Ceredigion County Council to speak and vote upon the Council discussion on raising the tax on second homes.

She owned an empty property but did not own a holiday home. Charging tax on holiday homes would not affect her.

Councillor Davies was present at the meeting to present her application and answered questions regarding her application.

Councillor Davies was requested to leave the video conference for the Committee to consider her application.

It was RESOLVED to grant Councillor Davies a dispensation to speak and vote on the grounds that the nature of the members' 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, (regulation 2 (d) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001). The dispensation was granted for a period of 12 months.

(iv) Councillor Rhodri Evans, Ceredigion County Council

An Application dated the 27 November 2023 was received from Councillor Rhodri Evans, Ceredigion County Council to speak and vote upon Council Tax Premium for Long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes in

Ceredigion. He owned properties (other than his home) which were rented/let out.

It was RESOLVED to grant Councillor Evans a dispensation to speak and vote on the grounds that nature of the members' 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, the interest is common to the member and a significant proportion of the general public; and the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the member's particular role or expertise (regulation 2 (d) (e) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001). The dispensation was granted for a period of 12 months.

(v) Councillor Marc Davies, Ceredigion County Council

An Application dated the 21 November 2023 was received from Councillor Marc Davies, Ceredigion County Council to speak and vote upon the Second homes council tax. He had other properties that he let on long term agreements.

It was RESOLVED to grant Councillor Davies a dispensation to speak and vote on the grounds that the nature of the members' 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, that the interest is common to the member and a significant proportion of the general public and the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the member's particular role or expertise (regulation 2 (d) (e) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001). The dispensation was granted for a period of 12 months.

(vi) Councillor Meirion Davies, Ceredigion County Council

An Application dated the 27 November 2023 was received from Councillor Meirion Davies, Ceredigion County Council to speak and vote upon Council Tax Premiums. He owned a holiday let on his farm.

Councillor Davies was present at the meeting to present his application and answered questions regarding his application.

Councillor Davies was requested to leave the Chamber for the Committee to consider his application.

It was RESOLVED to grant Councillor Davies a dispensation to speak and vote on the grounds that the nature of the members' 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 the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the member's particular role or expertise (regulation 2 (d) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001). The dispensation was granted for a period of 12 months.

(vii) Councillor Wyn Evans, Ceredigion County Council

An Application dated the 27 November 2023 was received from Councillor Wyn Evans, Ceredigion County Council to speak and vote upon Council Tax premium for long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes in Ceredigion. He part owned a property (other than his home) which was rented/ let out.

It was RESOLVED to grant Councillor Evans a dispensation to speak and vote on the grounds that the nature of the members' 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 the participation of the member in the business to which the interest relates is justified by the member's particular role or expertise (regulation 2 (d) and (f) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001). The dispensation was granted for a period of 12 months.

4 To confirm as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Ethics & Standards Committee held on 15 July 2023

It was RESOLVED to confirm as a true record of the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 July 2023.

Matters Arising

Minute 3-The Monitoring Officer reported that Ms Gail Storr had agreed to become a second Independent Member for the Mid Wales CJC Standards Corporate Joint Committee sub-committee. These arrangements would be confirmed at the Council meeting on the 14 December 2023. It was noted that Carol Edwards and Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans was also a Councillor representative on the sub-committee.

Minute 7 – It was reported that a new independent Member had been appointed on the 16 November 2023 to replace Mr John Weston on the 22 February 2024, Ms Llinos James. This appointment would be confirmed at the meeting of the Council on the 14 December 2023.

Minute 13- The PSOW Decision Notices had been circulated by confidential email. The Monitoring Officer reported that she had attended the MO group on 01 December 2023, and it was reported that in the future Standards Committee hearings decision letters guidance would be circulated by the PSOW

Minute 14- It was agreed at the MO group that the information provided on the PSOW website in relation to decisions to replace the Casebook was not user friendly. This was currently being addressed and a newsletter would also be circulated in the future.

Minute 15- The MO had informed the group that the Chair of Ceredigion Ethics and Standards Committee had requested that IRPW Annual Report be placed as an item on the next agenda of the National Standards Committee Forum for consideration. The Chair would provide feedback from the Forum at the next meeting (29/1/24).

Minute 16- The MO reported that she had informed the MO group that Ceredigion County Council Ethics & Standards Committee had agreed that the gift/hospitality threshold for Ceredigion County Council Members remain at £21. It was stated that the £25 had been recommended by the Penn review. However, this was a recommendation only and that legislation would be required to ensure consistency.

5 Feedback from the political group leader's compliance assessment Workshop

It was AGREED to note the content of the report subject to the following:-

- (i) that the dates of the workshops had been arranged following the publication of the agenda for the 24 April 2024 and 20 May 2024;
- (ii) Group Leaders would be invited to attend the meeting held on the 06 March 2024; and
- (iii) to note the need to inform the Group Leaders that only two Members had attended the on-line Social media training and that all Councillors should complete this training as soon as possible.

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6 Review of application for dispensation form

It was AGREED to approve the amended dispensation form subject to additional insertion of the Ward that County Councillors represented in 'Your Details'

7 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was AGREED that Ms Gail Storr be appointed as Vice-Chair as from 22 February 2024 for a period of four years,

There was a need to agree to the appointment at this meeting as the next meeting was not held until March 2024. Council would be informed on 14/12/23.

All Members thanked Mr John Weston for his work on the Committee for the last six years and wished him well for the future.