

DISPENSATION PANEL OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July, 2017

PRESENT: **Independent Members**

Mr Michael Wilson (Chair)
Mrs Denise Harris-Edwards
Mrs Dilys Shaw

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Committee Officer (SC)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Carwyn Jones

APOLOGIES: None

1. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No declaration of interest was received.

1. **APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION**

Submitted - an application by Councillor Carwyn Jones for dispensation in relation to the County Council's strategy for the medium and long-term future of education on the Island.

The Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer gave a summary of the background to the application, and reported that the County Council is presently formulating and submitting a plan to Welsh Government on its proposals for the modernisation of schools on Anglesey. One of the priority areas to be assessed is the Seiriol ward, which Councillor Jones represents, along with two other members. As a local member, he would be expected to participate fully at a local level in the consultation and decision making process, up to implementation.

It was noted that Councillor Jones has declared three personal interests. He is a Council appointed school governor, and Chair of Llandegfan Primary School, which is one of the three schools under consideration in the Seiriol ward. The other two personal interests are also prejudicial and relate to family members, constituting close personal associates within the definition of the Code of Conduct. Councillor Jones' first cousin is employed at Beaumaris Primary School, which is also under review in the Seiriol ward. His cousin's son also attends Llandegfan Primary School.

Councillor Jones acknowledged that those family relationships and connections are close, but that his overriding motivation is for the benefit of the ward, and that he fully intends to act in the wider public interest.

Councillor Jones was afforded the opportunity to address the Panel and gave his views and detailed reasons for his application for dispensation.

In summary, Councillor Jones highlighted the importance of education to the electorate in the ward, and stated that he felt it was his duty as a local member to participate in the process of writing, gathering and sharing information regarding any future proposals for education in the area. He reported that should a dispensation be granted, he would be involved in attending and speaking at public and Town/Community Council meetings to gauge and reflect local opinion, and any decisions taken would have an impact on the education of future generations. He would also be using social media to gather and share information. He stated that he would not seek voting powers, and if the Panel thought it appropriate, he would leave meetings during voting. He further stated that he wished to act as a conduit between his community and the County Council in ensuring that the community voice is heard and given proper consideration in the process/decisions taken throughout the stages of consultation/implementation etc.

It was noted that Councillor Jones has not expressed his views/opinions to date on the proposals, but has attended meetings at Llangoed, Beaumaris and Llandegfan schools and Community Council meetings to listen to the views of local people. Councillor Jones stated that he has facilitated and shared information, and encouraged people to express their views at this stage in the consultation process, which is non-statutory and will be ending in two weeks' time. The local community are very concerned about the future of the three primary schools, the implications for the children, and the wider impact on the community as a whole.

Councillor Jones reported that the three local Councillors believe there is lack of a strategic plan for the Seiriol ward as a whole, as young people are leaving the area owing to lack of employment opportunities, resulting in empty school places and an ageing population. Councillor Jones advocated on behalf the community that his preferred option would be for all three schools in the ward to remain open as part of a wider community strategy for the area that would also give the three schools an opportunity to thrive. They at least deserve a change to try.

It was noted that the Seiriol ward Councillors believe it is premature to carry out an evaluation to close schools at this stage, and feel they would not be in a position to endorse any of the options at present. They believe a plan should be put in place to rejuvenate the ward by creating employment opportunities, affordable/social housing and modernise the three schools as part of that bigger package.

For the reasons set out in the application, Councillor Jones has requested that the Standards Panel consider granting a dispensation, which would overreach the two prejudicial interests, and would enable him to participate both at local and Council level in relation to discussing and formulating the Council's response to the consultation and statutory and non-statutory processes.

Members of the Panel deliberated in private session. Following discussion, the Chair announced that the Standards Committee **had RESOLVED to grant a dispensation to Councillor Carwyn Jones in respect of that / those interest(s)**

referred to in the Application, pursuant to paragraphs (d), (f) and (i) of The Standards Committee (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 as amended by The Local Government (Standards Committees, Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

The dispensation will expire on 8 May, 2022, and until then permits the Councillor to:-

- **Write to officers [and/or the Executive/Committee/Council etc] about the issue;**
- **speak to officers of the Council about the issue;**
- **speak at Executive/Committee/Council meetings (subject to permission of the Chair) and answer any questions about the issue;**
- **remain in the room during any debate on the issue and participate in any debate (when a member of the body);**
- ~~**vote at such meetings;**~~
- **other – to undertake a full role in representing the community at meetings outside the County Council, to include public meetings and any relevant meetings of Town and Community Councils etc.**

The meeting concluded at 2.30 pm

**MICHAEL WILSON
CHAIR**