

Dear Ms Joanne Ferry,

Further to your attendance at the Bodedern Community Council Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September I write in response to your comments, as promised.

I will address your comments in the order they were made in your e-mail dated 29<sup>th</sup> of September.

Firstly, you commented that the views you expressed were yours and a “large proportion” of the community and you are aggrieved that you were questioned on this point. You are of course entitled to submit any views or opinions on behalf of yourself, family, acquaintances etc who may share your view, but I’m sure you can understand any attempt to strengthen any viewpoint by claiming to speak on behalf of a large proportion of the community should be probed.

You claim that your lack of knowledge with regard to the community council up until July 17 was said to be an “impossibility.” Nobody declared that this was an impossibility, but I testified that I had personally attended your business premises in late November/early December 2015 with a poster from the community council, which according to previous clerks has been displayed every December for a number of years. I did not personally attend your premises in December 2016, but rather posted this poster to you. You may of course not have realised the poster was from the community council, but may I suggest rather than denying knowledge and therefore insinuating that I was reporting an untruth you may perhaps try to refresh your memory or acknowledge that this may have been a possibility?

I note that you felt that your concerns were of no real importance to the council due to the timeframe you were given in which to expect a reply, which was “when it is ready.” With a general query I can expect to answer in full within a few days or so (workload dependent) and within the statutory requirement, but your comments were far reaching and required close scrutiny and are not the type of query I could realistically expect to answer in full and satisfactorily within a few days, and I would not wish to mislead you with an inaccurate timeframe. In fact, in order to ensure your comments were given the attention and consideration required, following your speech I requested that you submit them in writing so that I may have a full and accurate record of your concerns, rather than rely solely on the minutes which I was taking. I hope this demonstrates the seriousness in which your comments were taken, and they will remain part of the official record of the meeting.

I am disappointed and perplexed that you feel you were not shown respect by all council members. May I remind you that your first and only previous communication with the council was when you and others approached the council with a demand that the chairman be removed from office, and presented a petition which contained, amongst other things, abusive, libellous and extremely distressing remarks. This was a clear attempt to cause significant harm to his character, and as a consequence, the council itself. I am disappointed that you chose not to address this issue in your comments. The community council chose not to pursue legal recourse as a gesture of goodwill and to encourage positive community relations, and furthermore welcomed your desire to address the council without pre-judgement and in the same light. You were allowed to speak without interruption or distraction from the council members and were then allowed to further contribute to the

discussion and make further comments and pose further questions in the course of dialogue. Therefore, it is clear the council demonstrated exceptional goodwill and respect and a strong desire to be open, transparent and fair in dealing with all members of the community, even those who have previously attempted to engage negatively with the council. The council will continue to engage openly and transparently in the future, and I look forward to developing a more positive and productive relationship.

I understand that you were unaware that the community council existed in Bodedern. There are 735 community and town councils in Wales. They cover approximately 94% of the land area and 70% of the population of Wales. There are approximately 8000 community and town councillors, who represent the interests of the community they serve as a whole. Bodedern community council has met every fourth Monday of each month (with the exception of August and December) for at least 20+ years. The location and date of these meetings has never changed. Again I must question your accusation that a "large proportion" of the community is unaware of the council, and I am disappointed that you would choose to level this accusation, rather than comment that you were personally unaware. You may not be aware but community participation in local government is a real issue for all levels of local government, and in spite of council encouragement can only be successfully achieved by positive participation and a personal desire by individuals to be active participants within the community. As you will have heard at the meeting, the hardworking playground committee has been established for a number of years, their meetings are widely publicised online and on social media with the aim of encouraging interest from parents of local children who use the playground, and the count at their last meeting was 4. I think this may give you an indication of the issues and significant challenges facing all levels of local government. The council is always looking for and is open to new suggestions and ideas, so please feel free to contact me with any suggestions you may have with regard to this issue.

The public's right to attend community council meetings has been enshrined in the council's rules. It is noted at the top of each agenda that the public has a right to attend each meeting unless otherwise stated, and notify the clerk up to 48 hours before each meeting of any issue they would like to the council to discuss. I note your comments with regard to the website, and I would make the following comments:

It has been a statutory requirement for all community councils throughout Wales to have a website for a number of years. However, due to private and personal circumstances the previous clerk had been unable to action this. After becoming clerk in July 2015, I explored all the areas which required action and this, amongst other things was deemed a priority. Therefore in due course I went on to establish a website, and created and uploaded the current content. As previously stated, the website is by no means complete, and I anticipate this being an ongoing long-term project. The council members elected not to have their personal address and telephone number on the site. My details have been included in full, including no less than three telephone numbers for me. (My full time work, evening and mobile) Although it is not a requirement, I have made myself available at all times of the day, including my full time work hours to ensure I am always contactable should any member of the community have an urgent matter they wish to raise. Since becoming clerk and having less than 20

meetings, in addition to establishing and creating the website, the council have drafted, compiled and formalised from scratch the following:

- statutory rules for the council,
- financial regulations,
- a formal language policy,
- a complaints procedure,
- rules and regulations for the cemetery,
- created a risk assessment register,
- created an asset register,
- currently creating a register of members interests.

This is in addition to the expected day to day duties of the clerk, and the process of bringing the council up to full compliance is by no means complete. Therefore, I must refute your accusation that there is any oversight by the council with regard to their responsibilities. As previously noted, the former clerk (through no fault of her own and due to personal circumstances) was understandably unable to ensure the council corresponded to the numerous new requirements placed on them, therefore I have been tasked with this project. I am fully aware of the responsibilities of the council, and have been working hard with the council members to achieve our goal. Again, this is a long-term project and most certainly a “work in progress” and I am very proud of the advancements made by the council in the short term I have been clerk. This is by no means due to my contributions only, but is a representation of the commitment and dedication the council members have to their community.

I note your comments with regard to a business plan. I would suggest that it is indeed good practice for a large town council to have a business plan showing what they wished to achieve within the next term, but this would be extremely unusual in the council the size of Bodedern. However, to ensure good practice and best financial management we convene yearly meetings deciding what we should aim to achieve within the next financial year, and a budget and plan is set to ensure these plans can be achieved successfully. I hope this will alleviate any concerns you may have with regard to forward planning within the council.

The council does indeed only have 9 members, and two empty seats. Again, I note you have made assumptions about the current situation of the council without the relevant or correct information. There have been numerous expressions of interest in the two empty seats by members of the community, with enquiries with regard to how one becomes a member and the process involved. I am currently in possession of one formal application, and am awaiting confirmation from another four individuals if they would like to put their names forward. The two members who were co-opted in May did not “fail to express their interest before the deadline.” The two members were members of the council in the previous term, and were unable to submit their application to the county council before the deadline. For one member it was due to being called away unexpectedly with work commitments, and the other had unfortunate personal circumstances. They both advised me of this on the day of the deadline. Respectfully, could I encourage you to enquire with myself as to the full circumstances of events before making negative assumptions and levelling accusations against members? I

think it would be much more productive and would certainly encourage a more productive and positive relationship moving forward.

You have expressed some concern as to the level of attendance at each meeting. Having reviewed the attendance figures of the last 20 meetings since I have been clerk, I must note your assumption with regard to the quorum is incorrect and also contest your allegation that the needs of the community are not being given the attention and consideration required. There have been 2 meetings where there have only been 4 members, September 16 and April 17. In every other meeting bar one the quorum has been exceeded by minimum of two, often with more or with full attendance. I have received a report previously from a member of the community that there was an issue with attendance, and in spite of my notifying him that this is not the case I am aware of his desire to cause discord and his inaccurate reporting of facts within the community, and I am disappointed that this continues to be the case. I am very pleased to be able to alleviate your concern and confirm there have been no issues with attendance levels within the council for the period I have been clerk.

I note you did not see the notice of co-option which was advertised in October 16 for the two new members, or the notice to co-opt previous terms members for the term beginning May 17. This was placed on the website for 28 days before the deadline, and for a further two weeks following the co-option. It would not be left permanently on the website. It was also placed on the local noticeboard in the local convenience store, which they would have arranged to remove in due course. I'm glad to report this process was adhered to correctly.

With regards to the Eisteddfod, it was explained in the July meeting the level of involvement the community council had with regard to the Eisteddfod arrangements. It was reiterated that the council had no involvement or consultation in the site location or transportation arrangements of the Eisteddfod. As you noted, Huw Aled attended the community council meeting to provide the council with details of the arrangements. You will also have noted that he advised the council that the Eisteddfod were arranging a "drop in session" in the near future to advise local residents of the plans. I would not consider it practical or appropriate for this responsibility to have been taken over by the community council.

Your assumption that the Eisteddfod utilised this meeting as a way of relaying the information to the wider community is not correct and I would emphasise this following my communication with Huw Aled following the Eisteddfod. Again, the Eisteddfod advised the council that they were arranging a drop-in session, which would have way exceeded the remit of the community council. I am fully aware that you have raised numerous issues with the Eisteddfod organisers, and I'm also aware of the extent the Eisteddfod have liaised with yourselves, and following July's meeting I had hoped that you would have a fuller understanding of the role of the community council in the Eisteddfod planning.

Also, I would challenge your assumption that the council failed to put across views of the community to the Eisteddfod. The council did not receive any requests from any members of the community to report concerns with regard to any aspect of the arrangements, and

therefore could not report any concerns it did not have. I personally became aware of concerns in early July 2017 after receiving a phone call from Councillor Ken Hughes. Immediately upon receiving this news, and due to the absence of any other individual willing to act upon these concerns I personally arranged a public meeting at the Village Hall. This was not in my role as a clerk as this was not a community council meeting, but I gave my time openly and freely in order to assist the community. I personally contacted the relevant officials from the Eisteddfod, Anglesey County Council Highways Department and Planning Department as well as Cymdeithas yr Iaith, liaised with the numerous officials to ensure they would be present and arranged to advertise the meeting locally as well as attend and minute the meeting, and again I did this all in my own time. If these concerns had been expressed directly to the community council these actions would have been carried out in the name of the community council as there is no possibility the councillors would ignore any concerns expressed to them. To repeat, the council did not fail to put across any views from the community as it did not receive any communication with this request, but I would have acted accordingly in the name of the council had this been the case.

In your closing comments you have expressed a desire to create a stronger awareness of the community council's existence. There is no doubt this is strongly welcomed by the council in its entirety. The council operates for the sole purpose of being a voice for the community, therefore anything that strengthens this will always, without exception be welcomed. If you do have any concerns moving forward may I encourage you to make initial enquiries with myself to try to ensure the correct facts have been established before any further action is taken which I'm certain will prove much more beneficial to the community as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

R.W.Owen

Clerk