

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD REMOTELY
10 SEPTEMBER 2020 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: S Miah (Chairman), A L L'Huillier (Vice-Chairman), B S Dawes, N Gale, S Griffiths and I Hardiman.

Independent Person: T J Hipkiss

Co-opted Member: Rev J Cox

Parish Council Representative: Councillor D Killingworth

Observers:

Councillors: J F Byng , P W M Young and M Rayner.

ES.01 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor W Mack.

ES.02 Appointment of Substitutes

No substitutes were appointed.

ES.03 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

ES.04 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ES.05 The Localism Act 2011 – Dispensations

A report was received from the Monitoring Officer which asked the Committee to consider giving Members appropriate dispensations in respect of issues relating to the Council's decision making process.

The Monitoring Officer presented the report. The Committee were advised that the authority was only permitted to give Members dispensations if the Standards Committee agreed; the generic dispensations are presented to the Committee for approval every four years.

The Monitoring Officer outlined each of the proposed generic dispensations and advised that the final general dispensation for members covered partners as well as spouses. She said that the dispensations had worked very well over

the last nine years since the Localism Act came into force, as it enabled members to participate where otherwise they would be excluded from taking part in debate.

In response to observations made by the Independent Person, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the first dispensation applied to any parish or town council; it was not limited to the boundaries of the County. She said it was important to maximise participation of Councillors who may have memberships in other areas.

With regard to declaring interests the Monitoring Officer said it was good practice that when Members were declaring their interest not to rely solely on the dispensation, but at the beginning of the meeting declare the relevant interest covered by the dispensation as it gives the Council the openness and transparency it strives for. She added that that when the Localism Act was introduced in 2011, it was made a criminal offence for Members not to declare Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs), therefore it is the responsibility of individual Members to make sure they check the agenda's and seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer prior to any meeting if there are any items on the agenda which they feel they may have to declare an interest in.

Agreed: Generic dispensations are given to all Members for a period of 4 years in respect of the matters detailed below:

1. Membership of outside bodies

A general dispensation under s33(2) (c) and (e) of the Localism Act 2011 and under the Code of Conduct to allow the full participation in Council, Committee and other meetings where members of the Council or their spouse or partner are members of or employed by one or more of the following bodies, and who because of this would or could be prevented from participating in such meetings unless a decision relates directly to their own (or spouse or partners) financial circumstances:

- (a) Membership of any parish or town council.**
- (b) Membership of Worcestershire County Council.**
- (c) Membership of any other body of a public nature to which the member has been appointed as the Council's nominee or representative.**

2. Addressing committees considering matters in which a member has an interest.

A general dispensation under s33(2)(c) and (e) of the Localism Act 2011 and under the Code of Conduct to allow members who would otherwise be prevented from doing so to address Council and committees in the same way as a member of the public may

[NB Such a member must still then withdraw from the meeting once they

have addressed it.]

- 3. A general dispensation for members whose spouse or partner are employed by a body of a public nature, unless a decision relates directly to their own financial circumstances.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.16pm.