

REPORT TO:	ETHICS COMMITTEE 7 March 2019
SUBJECT:	DISPENSATIONS APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERS
LEAD OFFICER:	JACQUELINE HARRIS BAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES & MONITORING OFFICER
CABINET MEMBER:	COUNCILLOR SIMON HALL
WARDS:	ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT: The Council has determined that the Ethics Committee shall consider dispensations for Members under the new ethics regime.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT Implementation of the recommendations contained in this report shall be contained within existing budgets	
FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: N/A	

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to:

- 1.1 In the event of applications for dispensations received, consider the application from the Members and determine whether to grant the dispensation, and if so, the length of time for which such dispensation is to be granted.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following statutory amendments to the ethics regime, full Council adopted a new Code of Conduct and delegated to the Monitoring Officer and the Ethics Committee the power to consider dispensations under the new ethics regime.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 Under Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 ("the Act"), a Member or co-opted Member who has a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) in a matter to be considered or being considered at a meeting of the authority at which that Member or co-opted Member is present and the DPI is one which the Member or co-opted Member is aware of, the Member or co-opted Member may not participate or participate further in any discussion or vote on the matter at the meeting unless he/she has first obtained a dispensation in accordance with the Council's dispensation procedure.

3.2 The Council has adopted dispensation criteria which are attached for Members' ease of reference at Appendix 1. There are 5 circumstances in respect of which a dispensation may be granted, namely:

- i) That so many members of the decision-making body have disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) in a matter that it would "impede the transaction of the business";
- ii) That, without the dispensation, the representation of different political groups on the body transacting the business would be so upset as to alter the outcome of any vote on the matter;
- iii) That the authority considers that the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area;
- iv) That, without a dispensation, no member of the Cabinet would be able to participate on this matter; or
- v) That the authority considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

3.3 The Council has determined that in respect of grounds (i) and (iv) above, which involve an objective assessment of whether the requirements are met, it is appropriate to delegate dispensations on these grounds to the Monitoring Officer for determination. The Monitoring Officer is permitted, but not required, to consult with the Ethics Committee prior to determining an application for dispensation on grounds (i) or (iv).

3.4 In respect of grounds (ii), (iii) and (v) above, assessment of these grounds involve a value judgement and are less objective and Council has therefore considered it appropriate that the discretion to grant dispensations on these grounds is delegated to the Ethics Committee, after consultation with the Independent Person.

3.5 The Council currently does not have any outstanding applications for dispensations, however should any be received following the dispatch of the agenda they will be circulated on the evening for consideration.

3.6 In considering the matter, the Ethics Committee is required to assess whether, in light of the contents of the application, the public interest in excluding a Member from participating where a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest exists is outweighed by the considerations set out in the application which support the public interest in the Member being able to participate.

3.7 The Committee is also asked to set out the time period in respect of which it is appropriate to grant the dispensation. In this regard, Members should be mindful of the fact that any dispensation may not be granted for a period exceeding four calendar years, nor is it recommended that a dispensation be granted for a period longer than the remaining term of office of the relevant Member.

4. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal consequences arising from the contents of this report beyond those set out in the body of the report.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Dispensation Criteria