

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
2024**

23rd May

LOCALISM ACT 2011 – STANDARDS REGIME – DISPENSATIONS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor K. May Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
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Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	An effective and sustainable Council.
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

- 1) (any Individual Member Dispensations (IMDs) and Outside Body Appointments dispensations requested by Members up to the point of the meeting, and as advised by the Monitoring Officer at the meeting, be granted under section 33 (2) of the Localism Act 2011, to allow those Member(s) to participate in and vote at Council and Committee meetings in the individual circumstances detailed;**

- 2) the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee grant a dispensation under Section 33 (2) of the Localism Act 2011 to allow Members to address Council and Committees in circumstances where a member of the public may elect to speak;**

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
2024**

23rd May

- 3) subject to the caveat set out in paragraph 4.9 of this report in relation to setting the Council's Budget, the Audit, Standards and Committee grants dispensations under Section 33 (2) of the Localism Act 2011 to allow all Members to participate in and vote at Council and Committee meetings when considering the setting of:
- a) the Budget;
 - b) Council Tax;
 - c) Members' Allowances; and
 - d) Non-Domestic Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and Guidance affecting properties within the District;
- 4) it be noted that all dispensations granted by the Committee take effect on receipt of a written request from Members for such a dispensation and where Members may have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the matter under consideration, which would otherwise preclude such participation and voting; and
- 5) it be noted that the dispensations referred to at resolutions (1), (2) and (3) will remain valid until the first meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee following the next District Council Elections in 2027 unless amended by the Committee prior to that date.

2. BACKGROUND

To consider the granting of any new Individual Member Dispensations (IMDs) requested by Members up to the point of the meeting, and which will be detailed by the Monitoring Officer at the meeting. To also consider granting General Dispensations and Outside Body Appointment Dispensations.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None.

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
2024**

23rd May

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 provides that dispensations can be granted in respect of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (“DPIs”).
- 4.2 Section 33 (1) requires that a Member must make a written request for a dispensation.
- 4.3 Section 33 (3) provides that a dispensation must specify the period for which it has effect, and that period may not exceed 4 years.

Service / Operational Implications

Background

- 4.4 Under s31 (4) of the Localism Act 2011 a Member who has a DPI in a matter under consideration is not permitted to participate in the discussion or vote on the matter unless they have first obtained a dispensation under s33.
- 4.5 Section 33 (2) includes a number of situations where a dispensation can be considered, but should be granted “only if, after having regard to all relevant circumstances” the Committee considers that one of those situations applies. The consideration of whether to grant a dispensation under s33 was previously delegated to the former Standards Committee.
- 4.6 The statutory grounds under s33 (2) for the granting of a dispensation are where the authority –
- “(a) considers that without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited by section 31(4) from participating in any particular business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business,
 - (b) considers that without the dispensation the representation of different political groups on the body transacting any particular business would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of any vote relating to the business,

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
2024**

23rd May

- (c) considers that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area,
- (d) if it is an authority to which Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000 applies and is operating executive arrangements, considers that without them dispensation each member of the authority's executive would be prohibited by section 31(4) from participating in any particular business to be transacted by the authority's executive, or
- (e) considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation."

4.7 Since the introduction of the current standards regime in 2012, the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee has been responsible for considering the granting of dispensations in circumstances where the Monitoring Officer feels that a dispensation may be warranted. This function was previously carried out by the former Standards Committee.

4.8 Dispensations, all of which require the advance approval of the Committee and a subsequent written request from the Member to the Monitoring Officer, currently fall within four categories:

- (i) General Dispensations
- (ii) Council Tax Arrears
- (iii) Individual Member Dispensations
- (iv) Outside Body Appointment Dispensations

4.9 It should be noted that under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 there is a caveat that any Member who is 2 months (or more) in arrears with their Council Tax payments cannot participate in any Council meeting concerning the budget. In the event that any Members were affected by the provisions of section 106, the statutory rule that they be barred from taking part in the budget decisions would prevail and any dispensation granted under this report would not apply.

AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

23rd May

2024

4.10 The table below sets out the IMDs and Outside Body appointment dispensations that have been requested in previous years by Members. Further requests for dispensations may be made after the publication of the agenda for this meeting and will be reported by the Monitoring Officer for Members' consideration. Subject to approval by the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, these dispensations will apply until the next District Council elections in 2027 unless amended by the Committee prior to that date.

Councillor(s)	Relevant DPI	Reason for dispensation
S Baxter	Vice President of the National Association of Local Councils.	To allow participation in debates involving Parish Councils within the district.
S Baxter and B Kumar	President and Chair respectively of the Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils.	To allow participation in debates involving Parish Councils within the district.
B McEldowney	Chair of Bromsgrove and Redditch Area County Association of Local Councils (CALC)	To allow participation in discussions related to Parish Councils within the Bromsgrove District.
A. Dale, J. Elledge, B Kumar, M. Marshall, B McEldowney and D Nicholl	The Artrix Holding Trust (Bromsgrove Arts Development Trust)	To allow participation in debates concerning the Artrix theatre generally but not in relation to funding issues.
S Colella	Employee of South Staffordshire Water	To discuss potable water issues that are related to planning policies and planning matters.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

23rd May

2024

J. Robinson	Employed by National Highways	To allow participation in Planning Committee where National Highways are a consultee or an applicant.
J. Robinson	Spouse employed by Birmingham City Council	To allow participation in Planning Committee where Birmingham City Council are the applicant or a consultee.
S. Robinson	Employed by Birmingham City Council	To allow participation in Planning Committee where Birmingham City Council are the applicant or a consultee.
S. Robinson	Spouse employed by National Highways	To allow participation in Planning Committee where National Highways are a consultee or an applicant.
S. Ammar and S. Webb	Bromsgrove and Redditch Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)	To allow participation in debates concerning the CAB generally but not in relation to funding issues

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
2024**

23rd May

- 4.11 In relation to IMDs, Officers have contacted all Members to ask whether they wish to seek to add any dispensations.
- 4.12 The latest Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct was considered at the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meeting held on 12th April 2022. It was recommended by the Committee that the Council adopt the new Model Code. The new Model Code of Conduct was subsequently presented at the Council meeting held on 18th May 2022 with Members agreeing to adopt the LGA Model Code of Conduct. As a result of this adoption Members are now required to complete an 'Other Registerable Interests' (ORI) form to declare any ORIs.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The issues detailed in this report help to ensure that there is an effective and sustainable Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 None.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 None.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 None.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The granting of general dispensations by the Committee will, subject to receipt of a written request from Members for such a dispensation, clarify, for the avoidance of any doubt, Members' ability to participate in

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
2024**

23rd May

and vote at Council and Committee meetings on certain matters as part of the Council's decision-making process, where such Members have a DPI which would otherwise preclude them from so participating / voting.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011.
- Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- Reports to Standards Committee on 28th November 2012, 10th October 2013, 9th January 2014 and 9th October 2014.
- Reports to Audit, Governance and Standards Committee on 16th July 2015, 16th June 2016, 15th June 2017, 23rd July 2018 and 30th July 2019.