

STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL

DISPENSATION POLICY

STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL – Dispensations to Council members

This policy was approved by the Council at its meeting held on: - 25th May 2023

Introduction

Parish Councils are now responsible for determining requests for a dispensation by a parish councillor under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011. The dispensation allows a decision to be made where the Council would otherwise be inquorate, by virtue of the number of Councillors having an interest and being therefore unable to take part.

A dispensation enables Councillor(s) to take part in Council business where this would otherwise be prohibited because they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or another interest. Provided Councillors act within the terms of their dispensation there is no breach of the Code of Conduct of the law.

Please note: If a Parish Councillor participates in a meeting where he/she has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and he/she does not have a dispensation, he/she may be committing a criminal offence under s34 of the Localism Act 2011.

Process for making requests

Any Councillor who wishes to apply for a dispensation must complete a Dispensation Request form and submit it to the proper officer of the Parish Council (i.e., the Parish Clerk) as soon as possible *before* the meeting which the dispensation is required. Applications may also be made at the meeting itself (if the Council has a standing item on the agenda to deal with dispensation requests) and the nature of the interest has only become apparent to a Councillor at the meeting itself.

A request for dispensation must be made on an individual basis.

Consideration by the Parish Council

The Parish Council can either delegate to the Parish Clerk the authority to grant dispensations or reserve such decisions for the full Council.

The Clerk or the Council may grant a dispensation to a councillor who has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest to participate in any discussion of a matter at a meeting and/or to participate in any vote on the matter if they consider that:

- So many members of the decision-making body have disclosable pecuniary interests that it would impede the transaction of the business (i.e., the meeting would be inquorate); or
- The authority considers that the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area; or
- It is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

The Council may wish to extend the provisions of the above paragraph to apply in the same way in the case of a "non-disclosable pecuniary interest" or an "other interest", as defined in the Code of Conduct, but this is at the discretion of the Council.

The Clerk or Council should formally notify the Councillor of their decision and reasons in writing at the earliest opportunity and in any event within 5 working days of the decision.

Criteria for Determination of Requests

In reaching a decision on a request for a dispensation the Council or the Clerk (as appropriate) will take into account:

- The nature of the Councillor's prejudicial interest
- The need to maintain public confidence in the conduct of the Council's business
- The possible outcome of the proposed vote
- The need for efficient and effective conduct of the Council's business
- The member has a particular expertise or knowledge in the matter that may be useful to its consideration (e.g., a member could be allowed to speak, but not vote).

Terms of Dispensations

Dispensations may be granted:

- For one meeting; or
- For a period not exceeding 4 years; or
- To participate in any vote on the matter.

Disclosure of Decision

Any Councillor who has been granted a dispensation must declare the nature and existence of the dispensation before the commencement of any business to which it relates.

A copy of the dispensation will be kept with the Register of Councillors Interests.