

REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING
STANDARDS COMMITTEE	4 March 2010

Report template revised June 2008



SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION FROM MEMBERS OF MUCH HOOLE PARISH COUNCIL	Not Applicable	David Whelan	4

SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The report relates to the possible granting of dispensation to relevant members in accordance with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standards Committee considers whether to grant dispensation to enable relevant Parish Council members to take part and vote in any debates relating to the consideration of any requests for financial assistance from Much Hoole Village Plan Steering Group.

DETAILS AND REASONING

The Much Hoole Parish Council will shortly need to consider a request for a grant from the Much Hoole Village Plan Steering Group. Four of the members of the Parish Council are members of the Steering Group – one other Parish councillor has only recently resigned from being a member of the Steering Group. It is considered that these five members would have a prejudicial interest in considering any requests for support/financial assistance from the Parish Council.

Notwithstanding having a prejudicial interest, under the Code of Conduct, a member may apply to the Standards Committee for a dispensation to allow him/her to take part in any such meeting if over 50% of the authority or committee members as appropriate would be prevented from so taking part because of prejudicial interests. Much Hoole Parish Council has 8 members (one current vacancy) – therefore over 50% of the committee members would indeed have a prejudicial interest. Of these five members Councillor Mrs Eunice Webster has indicated that she will not be applying for a dispensation – she has decided not to vote on the matter. The following members of Much Hoole Parish Council have though requested dispensations – Councillors T Brown, B Curley, J Hobson and H Davidson.

Only the Standards Committee can grant the dispensation applied for – it is a matter of discretion for the members of the Standards Committee. Standards Committee will need to balance the public interest in preventing members with possible prejudicial interests from taking part in decisions, against the public interest in decisions being taken by a reasonably representative group of members of the authority. It should be pointed out that whilst a vacancy remains on the Parish Council then the Council would not be quorate to debate and vote on these issues unless dispensation is granted. Such dispensation may only be granted to those members who have specifically applied for it.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these.

FINANCIAL	None		
LEGAL	The decision whether to grant dispensation is entirely a matter for this Committee. It must weigh carefully the public interest when making this decision.		
RISK	The Council must always ensure that it acts in a transparent fashion in order to avoid any possible reputational damage.		
OTHER (see below)	None		
<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings</i>	<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>
<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>
<i>Respect Agenda</i>	<i>Staffing</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>	<i>Training and Development</i>

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Much Hoole Parish Council's Code of Conduct.