

Wiltshire Council

Standards Dispensation Sub-Committee

19 January 2012

Consideration of a Dispensation Request

**Consideration of a Request for Dispensation from
Councillor Dawn Watson of Steeple Langford Parish Council**

Introduction

1. On 22 December 2011 the Monitoring Officer received a request for a dispensation from Councillor Watson, a member of Steeple Langford Parish Council. Councillor Watson's completed Dispensation Request Form and supplementary information are attached.
2. Councillor Watson is an allotment holder of allotments in the area of the parish council. She also lives in close proximity of the Allotments Gardens. She therefore has a personal and prejudicial interest in council agenda matters relating to the allotments.
3. The Steeple Langford Allotments are managed by a charitable trust. Two of the Steeple Langford Council members are trustees of the allotment trust and have personal and prejudicial interests arising from their position as trustees.
4. Councillor Watson and one other councillor (Councillor Grover) have a personal and prejudicial interest in the allotments by virtue of being an allotment holder and living next to the site of the allotments.
5. This means that four of the seven members of Steeple Langford Parish Council have a personal and prejudicial interest in the Steeple Langford allotments, representing 57% of the total membership of the parish council. The parish council is inquorate when considering matters relating to the Steeple Langford allotments.
6. Two of the seven parish councillors currently have a dispensation for matters relating to the Steeple Langford allotments and Councillor Grover has resubmitted an application for a dispensation which is being considered alongside this request from Councillor Watson.
7. Councillor Watson is requesting a dispensation to apply to future meetings of Steeple Langford Parish Council at which the allotments are considered. She has requested the dispensation for a duration of the current council.

Criteria for Determination of Requests

8. Under Section 17(1)(a)(i) of The Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 (**enclosed**), the Dispensation Sub-Committee may grant a dispensation where the transaction of the Council's business would otherwise be impeded by, or as a result of, the Code of Conduct because more than 50% of the members who would be entitled to vote at a meeting are prohibited from voting.
9. The Dispensation Sub-Committee may grant a dispensation:
 - a. for one item of business
 - b. for a period not exceeding 4 years
 - c. allowing the member to participate in the meeting and vote
 - d. allowing the member to speak but not vote
10. In reaching a decision on a dispensation request the Dispensation Sub-Committee must:
 - a. have regard to guidance issued by Standards for England (**enclosed**);
 - b. disregard any dispensations that have already been granted to other members of the same body; and
 - c. take into account:
 - i. the nature of the member's prejudicial interest;
 - ii. the need to maintain public confidence in the conduct of the Council's business;
 - iii. the impact on the outcome of the proposed vote;
 - iv. the need for efficient and effective conduct of the Council's business;
 - v. any other relevant circumstances.
9. The Dispensation Sub-Committee is therefore requested to determine this request for a dispensation.

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Background Papers: None