

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **17TH JANUARY 2005**

PRESENT: Mrs C A Vant (Chairman);
Cllrs. Allcock, Cooling, Davidson, Mrs Larkin, Wickham

Mr D Lyward – Parish Council Representative
Mrs K McNicol – Independent Member

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Allcock attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Yeo.

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr. Taylor

Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager, Member Services Officer

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, a minute's silence was held as a mark of respect for the Independent Member Mr B Lowry who had passed away.

380 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Taylor	Code of Conduct - Personal and Prejudicial – Parish Councillor seeking dispensation who left the meeting for the substantive item.	382
Wickham	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Ward Member who had objected to the planning application but confirmed he retained an open mind for the substantive item on this agenda.	382

The Monitoring Officer advised that Councillor Taylor had an interest in the discussion and could assist in answering questions of a general nature. In response to a question, Councillor Taylor advised that there were two members of the High Halden Parish Council not seeking dispensation and one vacancy. One of these Councillors lived three to four miles away from the application site and the other four doors away from himself. Only one member of the Parish Council lived well away from the site and as far as he was aware none of the Parish Councillors had a direct financial interest in the application site. Councillor Taylor then left the meeting.

381 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on the 23rd September 2004 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

382 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION TO SPEAK AND VOTE AT A PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – HIGH HALDEN PARISH COUNCIL

A map showing the Planning Application No 04/02145/AS site and location of properties held by the four Parish Councillors seeking dispensation was tabled.

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The Monitoring Officer advised that the properties belonging to the Parish Councillors either abutted or were very close to the "Moriartis Workshop Site". It was a key employment site in the village and the application was of key importance to High Halden. Dispensation had been sought. Without this dispensation the Parish Council would not be able to comment on the application as more than half of the Parish Council would not be able to take part in discussions or make a decision. The Monitoring Officer was not aware of any other outline current planning applications for the site.

Issues raised in support of giving dispensation were concerned with enabling the Parish Council to give an overall view for the village. Further support was given for dispensation, provided it was on with the clear understanding that the Parish Council should represent the views of the community as a whole. The Monitoring Officer agreed to record in the Minutes (if dispensation were granted) that the letter of dispensation include reference to the Committee's expectation that Councillors would approach the matter solely on the basis of the wider public interest. Further support was given to dispensation, as without the Parish Council's view the community would not have a voice and it was ultimately for the Borough Council's Planning Officers/Planning Committee to make a decision on the site. With dispensation the Parish Council could put forward the salient points on behalf of the community.

The Monitoring Officer advised that he would be a little reluctant for the Planning Officer to report the views of the Parish Council and then qualify it by stating that a number of Parish Councillors had received dispensations.

Resolved:

That (i) each of the Councillors referred to below be granted dispensation to enable them to speak and vote at meetings of the Parish Council and/or its Planning Committee when matters relating to the formulation of the Parish Council's response on Planning Application 04/02145/AS are being discussed, notwithstanding that they have prejudicial interests therein by virtue of proximity of their private properties, such dispensations to expire when the Parish Council's response has been formulated and submitted to the Borough Council.

**Mr John Ball
Mr Robert Taylor
Mr David Dyer
Ms Sandra Relf**

(ii) The Monitoring Officer when writing to the Parish Councillors about the dispensation advise that the Standards Committee's expectation would be that the relevant Parish Councillors would continue to express views based only on the wider public interest.

DJS/AEH - MINS:STDx0503