

2002 No. 339

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND AND WALES

**The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee)
(Dispensations) Regulations 2002**

Made - - - - - 18th February 2002

Laid before Parliament 25th February 2002

Coming into force - - 18th March 2002

The Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by sections 53(6), 81(5) and 105(2) of the Local Government Act 2000(a), and of all other powers enabling him in that behalf, hereby makes the following Regulations:

Citation, commencement and application

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Dispensations) Regulations 2002 and shall come into force on 18th March 2002.

(2) These Regulations apply in relation to standards committees of relevant authorities in England(b), and police authorities in Wales(c), and references to “authority” shall be construed accordingly.

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations—

“the Act” means the Local Government Act 2000;

“dispensation” shall be construed in accordance with section 81(4) of the Act(d);

“mandatory provisions” means the mandatory provisions of a model code of conduct which for the time being applies to the authority(e); and

“member” means a member or co-opted member(f) of an authority.

(a) 2000 c. 2.

(b) See section 49(6) of the Local Government Act 2000 (“the Act”) for the definition of “relevant authority.”

(c) See section 81(8) of the Act for the power of the National Assembly for Wales to prescribe in regulations the circumstances in which standards committees of relevant authorities in Wales (other than police authorities) may grant dispensations.

(d) Section 81(4) of the Act provides that any participation by a member in any business which is prohibited by the mandatory provisions of the model code of conduct applicable to an authority is not a failure to comply with the authority’s code of conduct if that member has acted in accordance with a dispensation granted by the authority’s standards committee.

(e) See the model codes of conduct in the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3575), the Parish Councils (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3576), the National Park and Broads Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order (S.I. 2001/3577) and the Police Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3578). Under section 51(4)(a) of the Act, a code of conduct adopted by an authority must incorporate the mandatory provisions of a model code of conduct which for the time being applies to the authority.

(f) See section 49(7) of the Act for the definition of “co-opted member”. Under section 83(3) and (4) of the Act, references to a member of a relevant authority include references to an elected mayor, an elected executive member, the Mayor of London and a member of the London Assembly.

Circumstances in which dispensations may be granted

3.—(1) The authority's standards committee may, subject to paragraph (2) below, grant a dispensation to a member in the following circumstances—

- (a) the transaction of business of the authority would, on each occasion on which the dispensation would apply, otherwise be impeded by, or as a result of, the mandatory provisions because—
 - (i) the number of members of the authority that are prohibited from participating in the business of the authority exceeds 50% of those members that are entitled or required to so participate; or
 - (ii) the authority is not able to comply with any duty which applies to it under section 15(4) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989(a);
 - (b) the member has submitted to the standards committee a written request for a dispensation explaining why it is desirable; and
 - (c) the standards committee concludes that having regard to the matters mentioned in paragraph (a) above, the content of the application made pursuant to paragraph (b) above, and to all the other circumstances of the case, it is appropriate to grant the dispensation.
- (2) Nothing in sub-paragraph (1) above shall permit a dispensation to be granted—
- (a) in respect of participation in business of the authority conducted more than four years after the date on which the dispensation is granted; or
 - (b) where the effect of the mandatory provisions from which a dispensation is sought is that—
 - (i) a member is prohibited from participating in the consideration of a matter at a meeting of an overview and scrutiny committee of the authority, or sub-committee of that committee, where that consideration relates to any decision made or action taken by any other of the authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees, or joint sub-committees of which he may also be a member; or
 - (ii) a member of the authority's executive(b) is prohibited from exercising functions which are the responsibility of the executive of the authority and which would otherwise be discharged by him solely.

Records of dispensations

4. The authority's standards committee must ensure that—
- (a) the existence, duration and nature of any dispensation is recorded in writing; and
 - (b) that such record is kept with the register of interests established and maintained under section 81(1) of the Act.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State
for Transport, Local Government and the Regions

Alan Whitehead
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,
Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions

18th February 2002

(a) 1989 c. 42. Section 15 has been modified by the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 (S.I. 1990/1552).

(b) Part II of the Act makes provision for executive arrangements for county councils, district councils, and London borough councils. Sections 14 to 16 make provision for individuals to exercise functions which are the responsibility of an executive.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations prescribe the circumstances in which a standards committee may grant dispensations to members and co-opted members of relevant authorities in England, and police authorities in Wales. If a member or co-opted member acts in accordance with the grant of a dispensation, any participation in business prohibited by the mandatory provisions of a model code of conduct issued under section 50(1) of that Act is not a failure to comply with the authority's code of conduct.

Regulations 1 and 2 make provision on citation, commencement and application, and define terms used in the Regulations.

Regulation 3 sets out the circumstances in which standards committees may grant dispensations. Paragraph (1) specifies that dispensations may only be granted if half the members entitled or required to participate in the business of the authority would not otherwise be able to, or the authority would not be able to comply with political balance principles. It specifies further that a member must submit a written request for a dispensation and that the standards committee must conclude that having regard to these matters and all the other circumstances of the case, it is appropriate to grant the dispensation. Paragraph (2) provides that a dispensation cannot be granted in respect of business conducted after four years. It also specifies that the circumstances in which dispensations can be granted do not extend to allowing a member of an overview and scrutiny committee to participate in the scrutiny of the decision of another committee in which he was involved or to allowing an individual to exercise executive functions where he is prohibited by the mandatory provisions from doing so.

Regulation 4 makes provision on keeping records of the dispensations granted.

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