

**TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 15 JANUARY 2008**

**REPORT OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER**

**Proposed Protocol For Allowing Councillors With A Prejudicial Interest To Speak at Planning Committee Meetings**

As members will probably recall, the new Code of Conduct allows councillors the right to speak at meetings of the Planning Committee where they might have a prejudicial interest in a particular planning application.

At the last meeting of this Committee, members were concerned to ensure that credibility was maintained when applications of this nature were under consideration. It also wanted to ensure that members of the public understood the new procedure and were aware of what was happening. It was suggested, therefore, that a protocol be prepared to ensure transparency.

This suggestion has already been taken on board by the Planning Committee and the following draft protocol has been prepared and is currently being used:

**“To be read out by the Chairman:-**

The revised Code of Conduct for Members, issued in May 2007 by the Standards Board for England, has introduced an ability for a Councillor who declares a prejudicial interest in a particular item to speak at Planning Committee meetings. In the past such a Councillor would have had to withdraw from the meeting as soon as the agenda item was reached.

As we have heard, Councillor xxxxxxxx has stated that he/she has a prejudicial interest in the following application. What will happen is that the Planning Officer will present the application to the Committee in the normal way and explain why the recommendation contained in the report has been made.

Once the presentation has ended and before any member of the public is called to speak, I will ask Councillor xxxxxxxx if he/she wishes to address the Committee. If he/she does, he/she will be provided with the same opportunity to speak as a member of the public. This means that he/she will be permitted to speak for a maximum of three minutes.

When he/she has finished speaking, I will invite him/her to leave the room before I call any other speakers or ask Members of the Committee to commence the debate on the application.

Can I repeat that this opportunity to address the Committee is now permitted under The Code of Conduct that applies to Councillors”

Members of the Standards Committee are asked to note the introduction of this protocol and to make any observations they feel necessary.

Greg Dyke  
Democratic Services Manager