

Localism Act 2011 c. 20

Part 1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Chapter 7 STANDARDS

26 Amendments of existing provisions

Schedule 4 (which amends the existing provisions relating to the conduct of local government members and employees in England and makes related provision) has effect.

27 Duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct

(1) A relevant authority must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority.

(2) In discharging its duty under subsection (1), a relevant authority must, in particular, adopt a code dealing with the conduct that is expected of members and co-opted members of the authority when they are acting in that capacity.

(3) A relevant authority that is a parish council—

(a) may comply with subsection (2) by adopting the code adopted under that subsection by its principal authority, where relevant on the basis that references in that code to its principal authority's register are to its register, and

(b) may for that purpose assume that its principal authority has complied with section 28(1) and (2).

(4) In this Chapter "*co-opted member*", in relation to a relevant authority, means a person who is not a member of the authority but who—

(a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or

(b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority,

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee.

(5) A reference in this Chapter to a joint committee or joint sub-committee of a relevant authority is a reference to a joint committee on which the authority is represented or a sub-committee of such a committee.

(6) In this Chapter "*relevant authority*" means—

(a) a county council in England,

(b) a district council,

(c) a London borough council,

(d) a parish council,

(e) the Greater London Authority,

[...] ¹

(g) the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority,

(h) the Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority or police authority,

(i) the Council of the Isles of Scilly,

(j) a fire and rescue authority in England constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies,

[...] ²

(l) a joint authority established by Part 4 of the Local Government Act 1985,

(m) an economic prosperity board established under section 88 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,

(n) a combined authority established under section 103 of that Act,

(o) the Broads Authority, or

(p) a National Park authority in England established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995.

(7) Any reference in this Chapter to a member of a relevant authority—

(a) in the case of a relevant authority to which Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000 applies, includes a reference to an elected mayor;

(b) in the case of the Greater London Authority, is a reference to the Mayor of London or a London Assembly member.

(8) Functions that are conferred by this Chapter on a relevant authority to which Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000 applies are not to be the responsibility of an executive of the authority under executive arrangements.

(9) Functions that are conferred by this Chapter on the Greater London Authority are to be exercisable by the Mayor of London and the London Assembly acting jointly on behalf of the Authority.

(10) In this Chapter except section 35—

(a) a reference to a committee or sub-committee of a relevant authority is, where the relevant authority is the Greater London Authority, a reference to—

(i) a committee or sub-committee of the London Assembly, or

(ii) the standards committee, or a sub-committee of that committee, established under that section,

(b) a reference to a joint committee on which a relevant authority is represented is, where the relevant authority is the Greater London Authority, a reference to a joint committee on which the Authority, the London Assembly or the Mayor of London is represented,

(c) a reference to becoming a member of a relevant authority is, where the relevant authority is the Greater London Authority, a reference to becoming the Mayor of London or a member of the London Assembly, and

(d) a reference to a meeting of a relevant authority is, where the relevant authority is the Greater London Authority, a reference to a meeting of the London Assembly;

and in subsection (4)(b) the reference to representing the relevant authority is, where the relevant authority is the Greater London Authority, a reference to representing the Authority, the London Assembly or the Mayor of London.

28 Codes of conduct

(1) A relevant authority must secure that a code adopted by it under section 27(2) (a "code of conduct") is, when viewed as a whole, consistent with the following principles—

(a) selflessness;

(b) integrity;

(c) objectivity;

(d) accountability;

(e) openness;

(f) honesty;

(g) leadership.

(2) A relevant authority must secure that its code of conduct includes the provision the authority considers appropriate in respect of the registration in its register, and disclosure, of—

(a) pecuniary interests, and

(b) interests other than pecuniary interests.

(3) Sections 29 to 34 do not limit what may be included in a relevant authority's code of conduct, but nothing in a relevant authority's code of conduct prejudices the operation of those sections.

(4) A failure to comply with a relevant authority's code of conduct is not to be dealt with otherwise than in accordance with arrangements made under subsection (6); in particular, a decision is not invalidated just because something that occurred in the process of making the decision involved a failure to comply with the code.

(5) A relevant authority may—

(a) revise its existing code of conduct, or

(b) adopt a code of conduct to replace its existing code of conduct.

(6) A relevant authority other than a parish council must have in place—

(a) arrangements under which allegations can be investigated, and

(b) arrangements under which decisions on allegations can be made.

(7) Arrangements put in place under subsection (6)(b) by a relevant authority must include provision for the appointment by the authority of at least one independent person—

(a) whose views are to be sought, and taken into account, by the authority before it makes its decision on an allegation that it has decided to investigate, and

(b) whose views may be sought—

(i) by the authority in relation to an allegation in circumstances not within paragraph (a),

(ii) by a member, or co-opted member, of the authority if that person's behaviour is the subject of an allegation, and

(iii) by a member, or co-opted member, of a parish council if that person's behaviour is the subject of an allegation and the authority is the parish council's principal authority.

(8) For the purposes of subsection (7)—

(a) a person is not independent if the person is—

(i) a member, co-opted member or officer of the authority,

(ii) a member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council of which the authority is the principal authority, or

(iii) a relative, or close friend, of a person within sub-paragraph (i) or (ii);

(b) a person may not be appointed under the provision required by subsection (7) if at any time during the 5 years ending with the appointment the person was—

(i) a member, co-opted member or officer of the authority, or

(ii) a member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council of which the authority is the principal authority;

(c) a person may not be appointed under the provision required by subsection (7) unless—

(i) the vacancy for an independent person has been advertised in such manner as the authority considers is likely to bring it to the attention of the public,

(ii) the person has submitted an application to fill the vacancy to the

authority, and

(iii) the person's appointment has been approved by a majority of the members of the authority;

(d) a person appointed under the provision required by subsection (7) does not cease to be independent as a result of being paid any amounts by way of allowances or expenses in connection with performing the duties of the appointment.

(9) In subsections (6) and (7) "*allegation*", in relation to a relevant authority, means a written allegation—

(a) that a member or co-opted member of the authority has failed to comply with the authority's code of conduct, or

(b) that a member or co-opted member of a parish council for which the authority is the principal authority has failed to comply with the parish council's code of conduct.

(10) For the purposes of subsection (8) a person ("R") is a relative of another person if R is—

(a) the other person's spouse or civil partner,

(b) living with the other person as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners,

(c) a grandparent of the other person,

(d) a lineal descendant of a grandparent of the other person,

(e) a parent, sibling or child of a person within paragraph (a) or (b),

(f) the spouse or civil partner of a person within paragraph (c), (d) or (e), or

(g) living with a person within paragraph (c), (d) or (e) as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners.

(11) If a relevant authority finds that a member or co-opted member of the authority has failed to comply with its code of conduct (whether or not the finding is made following an investigation under arrangements put in place under subsection (6)) it may have regard to the failure in deciding—

(a) whether to take action in relation to the member or co-opted member, and

(b) what action to take.

(12) A relevant authority must publicise its adoption, revision or replacement of a code of conduct in such manner as it considers is likely to bring the adoption, revision or replacement of the code of conduct to the attention of persons who live in its area.

(13) A relevant authority's function of adopting, revising or replacing a code of conduct may be discharged only by the authority.

(14) Accordingly—

(a) in the case of an authority to whom section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 (arrangements for discharge of functions) applies, the function is not a function to which that section applies;

(b) in the case of the Greater London Authority, the function is not a function to which section 35 (delegation of functions by the Greater London Authority) applies.

29 Register of interests

(1) The monitoring officer of a relevant authority must establish and maintain a register of interests of members and co-opted members of the authority.

(2) Subject to the provisions of this Chapter, it is for a relevant authority to determine what is to be entered in the authority's register.

(3) Nothing in this Chapter requires an entry to be retained in a relevant authority's register once the person concerned—

(a) no longer has the interest, or

(b) is (otherwise than transitorily on re-election or re-appointment) neither a member nor a co-opted member of the authority.

(4) In the case of a relevant authority that is a parish council, references in this Chapter to the authority's monitoring officer are to the monitoring officer of the parish council's principal authority.

(5) The monitoring officer of a relevant authority other than a parish council must secure—

(a) that a copy of the authority's register is available for inspection at a place in the authority's area at all reasonable hours, and

(b) that the register is published on the authority's website.

(6) The monitoring officer of a relevant authority that is a parish council must—

(a) secure that a copy of the parish council's register is available for inspection at a place in the principal authority's area at all reasonable hours,

(b) secure that the register is published on the principal authority's website, and

(c) provide the parish council with any data it needs to comply with subsection (7).

(7) A parish council must, if it has a website, secure that its register is published on its website.

(8) Subsections (5) to (7) are subject to section 32(2).

(9) In this Chapter "*principal authority*", in relation to a parish council, means—

(a) in the case of a parish council for an area in a district that has a district council, that district council,

(b) in the case of a parish council for an area in a London borough, the council of that London borough, and

(c) in the case of a parish council for any other area, the county council for the county that includes that area.

(10) In this Chapter "*register*", in relation to a relevant authority, means its register under subsection (1).

30 Disclosure of pecuniary interests on taking office

(1) A member or co-opted member of a relevant authority must, before the end of 28 days beginning with the day on which the person becomes a member or co-opted member of the authority, notify the authority's monitoring officer of any disclosable pecuniary interests which the person has at the time when the notification is given.

(2) Where a person becomes a member or co-opted member of a relevant authority as a result of re-election or re-appointment, subsection (1) applies only as regards disclosable pecuniary interests not entered in the authority's register when the notification is given.

(3) For the purposes of this Chapter, a pecuniary interest is a "*disclosable pecuniary interest*" in relation to a person ("M") if it is of a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State and either—

(a) it is an interest of M's, or

(b) it is an interest of—

(i) M's spouse or civil partner,

(ii) a person with whom M is living as husband and wife, or

(iii) a person with whom M is living as if they were civil partners,

and M is aware that that other person has the interest.

(4) Where a member or co-opted member of a relevant authority gives a notification for the purposes of subsection (1), the authority's monitoring officer is to cause the interests notified to be entered in the authority's register (whether or not they are disclosable pecuniary interests).

31 Pecuniary interests in matters considered at meetings or by a single member

(1) Subsections (2) to (4) apply if a member or co-opted member of a relevant authority—

(a) is present at a meeting of the authority or of any committee, subcommittee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority,

(b) has a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter to be considered, or being considered, at the meeting, and

(c) is aware that the condition in paragraph (b) is met.

(2) If the interest is not entered in the authority's register, the member or co-opted member must disclose the interest to the meeting, but this is subject to section 32(3).

(3) If the interest is not entered in the authority's register and is not the subject of a pending notification, the member or co-opted member must notify the authority's monitoring officer of the interest before the end of 28 days beginning with the date of the disclosure.

(4) The member or co-opted member may not—

(a) participate, or participate further, in any discussion of the matter at the

meeting, or

(b) participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting,

but this is subject to section 33.

(5) In the case of a relevant authority to which Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000 applies and which is operating executive arrangements, the reference in subsection (1)(a) to a committee of the authority includes a reference to the authority's executive and a reference to a committee of the executive.

(6) Subsections (7) and (8) apply if—

(a) a function of a relevant authority may be discharged by a member of the authority acting alone,

(b) the member has a disclosable pecuniary interest in any matter to be dealt with, or being dealt with, by the member in the course of discharging that function, and

(c) the member is aware that the condition in paragraph (b) is met.

(7) If the interest is not entered in the authority's register and is not the subject of a pending notification, the member must notify the authority's monitoring officer of the interest before the end of 28 days beginning with the date when the member becomes aware that the condition in subsection (6)(b) is met in relation to the matter.

(8) The member must not take any steps, or any further steps, in relation to the matter (except for the purpose of enabling the matter to be dealt with otherwise than by the member).

(9) Where a member or co-opted member of a relevant authority gives a notification for the purposes of subsection (3) or (7), the authority's monitoring officer is to cause the interest notified to be entered in the authority's register (whether or not it is a disclosable pecuniary interest).

(10) Standing orders of a relevant authority may provide for the exclusion of a member or co-opted member of the authority from a meeting while any discussion or vote takes place in which, as a result of the operation of subsection (4), the member or co-opted member may not participate.

(11) For the purpose of this section, an interest is "subject to a pending notification" if—

(a) under this section or section 30, the interest has been notified to a relevant authority's monitoring officer, but

(b) has not been entered in the authority's register in consequence of that notification.

32 Sensitive interests

(1) Subsections (2) and (3) apply where—

(a) a member or co-opted member of a relevant authority has an interest (whether or not a disclosable pecuniary interest), and

(b) the nature of the interest is such that the member or co-opted member, and the authority's monitoring officer, consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to the member or co-opted member, or a person connected with the member or co-opted member, being subject to violence or intimidation.

(2) If the interest is entered in the authority's register, copies of the register that are made available for inspection, and any published version of the register, must not include details of the interest (but may state that the member or co-opted member has an interest the details of which are withheld under this subsection).

(3) If section 31(2) applies in relation to the interest, that provision is to be read as requiring the member or co-opted member to disclose not the interest but merely the fact that the member or co-opted member has a disclosable pecuniary interest in the matter concerned.

33 Dispensations from section 31(4)

(1) A relevant authority may, on a written request made to the proper officer of the authority by a member or co-opted member of the authority, grant a dispensation relieving the member or co-opted member from either or both of the restrictions in section 31(4) in cases described in the dispensation.

(2) A relevant authority may grant a dispensation under this section only if, after having had regard to all relevant circumstances, the authority—

(a) considers that without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited by section 31(4) from participating in any particular business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business,

(b) considers that without the dispensation the representation of different political groups on the body transacting any particular business would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of any vote relating to the business,

(c) considers that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area,

(d) if it is an authority to which Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000 applies and is operating executive arrangements, considers that without the dispensation each member of the authority's executive would be prohibited by section 31(4) from participating in any particular business to be transacted by the authority's executive, or

(e) considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

(3) A dispensation under this section must specify the period for which it has effect, and the period specified may not exceed four years.

(4) Section 31(4) does not apply in relation to anything done for the purpose of deciding whether to grant a dispensation under this section.

34 Offences

(1) A person commits an offence if, without reasonable excuse, the person—

(a) fails to comply with an obligation imposed on the person by section 30(1) or 31(2), (3) or (7),

(b) participates in any discussion or vote in contravention of section 31(4), or

(c) takes any steps in contravention of section 31(8).

(2) A person commits an offence if under section 30(1) or 31(2), (3) or (7) the person provides information that is false or misleading and the person—

(a) knows that the information is false or misleading, or

(b) is reckless as to whether the information is true and not misleading.

(3) A person who is guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(4) A court dealing with a person for an offence under this section may (in addition to any other power exercisable in the person's case) by order disqualify the person, for a period not exceeding five years, for being or becoming (by election or otherwise) a member or co-opted member of the relevant authority in question or any other relevant authority.

(5) A prosecution for an offence under this section is not to be instituted except by or on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

(6) Proceedings for an offence under this section may be brought within a period of 12 months beginning with the date on which evidence sufficient in the opinion of the prosecutor to warrant the proceedings came to the prosecutor's knowledge.

(7) But no such proceedings may be brought more than three years—

(a) after the commission of the offence, or

(b) in the case of a continuous contravention, after the last date on which the offence was committed.

(8) A certificate signed by the prosecutor and stating the date on which such evidence came to the prosecutor's knowledge is conclusive evidence of that fact; and a certificate to that effect and purporting to be so signed is to be treated as being so signed unless the contrary is proved.

(9) The Local Government Act 1972 is amended as follows.

(10) In section 86(1)(b) (authority to declare vacancy where member becomes disqualified otherwise than in certain cases) after "2000" insert "or section 34 of the Localism Act 2011".

(11) In section 87(1)(ee) (date of casual vacancies)—

(a) after "2000" insert "or section 34 of the Localism Act 2011 or", and

(b) after "decision" insert "or order".

(12) The Greater London Authority Act 1999 is amended as follows.

(13) In each of sections 7(b) and 14(b) (Authority to declare vacancy where Assembly member or Mayor becomes disqualified otherwise than in certain cases) after sub-paragraph (i) insert—

"(ia) under section 34 of the Localism Act 2011,".

(14) In section 9(1)(f) (date of casual vacancies)—

(a) before "or by virtue of" insert "or section 34 of the Localism Act 2011", and

(b) after “that Act” insert “of 1998 or that section”.

35 Delegation of functions by Greater London Authority

(1) The Mayor of London and the London Assembly, acting jointly, may arrange for any of the functions conferred on them by or under this Chapter to be exercised on their behalf by—

(a) a member of staff of the Greater London Authority, or

(b) a committee appointed in accordance with provision made by virtue of this section.

(2) Standing orders of the Greater London Authority may make provision regulating the exercise of functions by any member of staff of the Authority pursuant to arrangements under subsection (1).

(3) Standing orders of the Greater London Authority may make provision for the appointment of a committee (“the standards committee”) to exercise functions conferred on the Mayor of London and the London Assembly by or under this Chapter in accordance with arrangements under subsection (1).

(4) Standing orders of the Greater London Authority may make provision about the membership and procedure of the standards committee.

(5) The provision that may be made under subsection (4) includes—

(a) provision for the standards committee to arrange for the discharge of its functions by a sub-committee of that committee;

(b) provision about the membership and procedure of such a subcommittee.

(6) Subject to subsection (7), the standards committee and any sub-committee of that committee—

(a) is not to be treated as a committee or (as the case may be) subcommittee

of the London Assembly for the purposes of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, but

(b) is a committee or (as the case may be) sub-committee of the Greater London Authority for the purposes of Part 3 of the Local Government Act 1974 (investigations by Commission for Local Administration in England).

(7) Sections 6(3)(a) (failure to attend meetings) and 73(6) (functions of monitoring officer) of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 apply to the standards committee or any sub-committee of that committee as they apply to a committee of the London Assembly or any sub-committee of such a committee.

(8) Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 (access to meetings and documents) applies to the standards committee or any sub-committee of that committee as if—

(a) it were a committee or (as the case may be) a sub-committee of a principal council within the meaning of that Part, and

(b) the Greater London Authority were a principal council in relation to that committee or sub-committee.

(9) Arrangements under this section for the exercise of any function by—

(a) a member of staff of the Greater London Authority, or

(b) the standards committee,

do not prevent the Mayor of London and the London Assembly from exercising those functions.

(10) References in this section to the functions of the Mayor of London and the London Assembly conferred by or under this Chapter do not include their functions under this section.

(11) In this section "*member of staff of the Greater London Authority*" has the same meaning as in the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (see section 424(1) of that

Act).

36 Amendment of section 27 following abolition of police authorities

In section 27(6) (which defines "*relevant authority*" for the purposes of this Chapter) omit—

(a) paragraph (f) (the Metropolitan Police Authority), and

(b) paragraph (k) (police authorities).

37 Transitional provision

(1) An order under section 240(2) may, in particular, provide for any provision made by or under Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000 to have effect with modifications in consequence of any partial commencement of any of the amendments to, or repeals of, provisions of that Part made by Schedule 4.

(2) An order under section 240(2) may, in particular, make provision for an allegation or a case that is being investigated under Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000 by the Standards Board for England or an ethical standards officer—

(a) to be referred to an authority of a kind specified in or determined in accordance with the order;

(b) to be dealt with in accordance with provision made by the order.

(3) The provision that may be made by virtue of subsection (2)(b) includes—

(a) provision corresponding to any provision made by or under Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000;

(b) provision applying any provision made by or under that Part with or without modifications.

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