

LOBBYING Factsheet

A. What is lobbying? Lobbying and campaigning is the practice of influencing decisions made by central and/or local government at a national or local level. Councillors may be involved in a number of groups or campaigns, either as a member of a particular interest group or as an individual.

B. Will I always have a prejudicial interest or be conflicted in other ways because of my membership of a lobby or campaign group, particularly if I campaigned on the issue as an individual, during an election campaign? No - you will not automatically have an interest or be conflicted (through predetermination or bias) in an item under discussion, just because you are a member of a lobby or campaign group and/or have previously campaigned on the issue. You need to consider the following factors in determining whether you have a prejudicial interest or be conflicted in other ways:

- (i) the nature of the matter to be discussed;
- (ii) the nature of your involvement with the lobby or campaign group;
- (iii) the publicly expressed views of the lobby or campaign group;
- (iv) what you have said or done in relation to the particular issue.

C. When will my membership of a lobby or campaign group give rise to a prejudicial interest? If *all* of the following conditions are met:

- the matter being discussed, affects the lobby or campaign group's financial position; and
- your interest affects you to a greater extent than Council Tax payers etc; and
- a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would believe that your ability to judge the public interest would be impaired.

Note: A regulatory application, including a matter of consent or approval, licence, permission or registration, made by the other authority/body, is considered to have an impact upon the financial interests of that lobby or campaign group.

D. Can I participate in the discussion and vote on an item in which I have a prejudicial interest? Only if you have been granted a dispensation to speak or to speak and vote. Otherwise, you must withdraw from the meeting room during the debate and not vote on the item.

Remember to declare at the beginning of the meeting, or as soon as you become aware of the interest, the existence and nature of the interest and how the business under consideration relates to your membership of the lobby or campaign group.

E. Do I need to consider whether my membership of a lobby or campaign group raises other conflicts? Yes – although you may not have a prejudicial interest, you may be conflicted because of actual or perceived predetermination or bias.

F. Can I represent my constituents if I have a prejudicial interest or am conflicted in other ways? Yes, by:

- making written representations - these should be addressed to officers;
- arranging for another Member to represent the views of your constituents.

G. Find out more - The Probity in Planning Protocol and the Probity in Licensing Protocol offer further guidance. Advice or clarification can be sought from the Monitoring Officer or the Head of Legal Services.