

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8 FEBRUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

A.1 ANNUAL REPORT ON DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present the Committee with an overview on the register of, and declarations of, interests made by Members from 22 January 2022 until 31 December 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It was agreed at the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 29 June 2016 that, as part of its annual work programme, the Committee would receive an annual report on declarations of interest and associated matters.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee notes the contents of this report, subject to any comments or recommendations that the Committee may wish to make following its consideration of the report.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

To provide a timely update to the Committee as part of its agreed work programme.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There are no alternative options associated with this report.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, forms part of effective and positive governance, being a theme of the Corporate Plan 2020-24.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

The Council's Code of Conduct for Members sets out guidance for Councillors regarding the registration and disclosure of interests. The relevant legislation is the Localism Act 2011 and the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY	
The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:	
A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The agendas for the Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings include declarations of interest as a formal item of business.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	This is an annual report presented to the Standards Committee for openness and transparency in its decision making.
MILESTONES AND DELIVERY	
This is an annual report presented to the Committee in accordance with the work programme.	
ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION	
Not presenting this information could have a detrimental impact on the Council's reputation.	
OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT	
None undertaken.	
EQUALITIES	
Equality considerations are taken into account for each decision made.	
SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS	
Social value considerations are taken into account for each decision made.	
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030	
This is taken into account for each decision made.	
OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS	
Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.	
Crime and Disorder	Not applicable
Health Inequalities	Not applicable
Area or Ward affected	All Wards could be affected
ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION	
None	

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the Committee's Work programme, this is an annual report on declarations of interest and associated matters. This report covers the period from 22 January 2022 to 31 December 2023 and provides statistics on:

- the number of declarations of interest made at meetings;
- the number of offers of gifts and hospitality that have been registered by Members during this period; and
- updates to the Members' Register of Interests.

The data has been collated from the Committee system Modern.gov which the Council started using as of August 2016 and from Members' submissions.

Register of Members' Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The Council is required to publish the 'Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest' on its website in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, which prescribes the categories of interests.

It is confirmed that the Council's website included a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests for all District Councillors and that this is updated when a Member provides details of an amendment direct to the Monitoring Officer. Any entry, which is relevant to a business item on an agenda, must be declared by the individual Member and they must subsequently remove themselves from the meeting, unless a prior dispensation has been granted by the Monitoring Officer.

There have been eight requested dispensations during the relevant period.

Declarations of interest at meetings

Members are required to declare Personal and Disclosable Pecuniary Interests at meetings and those recorded on the committee system, as declared by District Councillors for the period 22 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 are set out in Appendix A to this report. All minutes of the meetings also record the declarations.

Use of blanket dispensations

The Members' Code of Conduct at paragraph 7.3, as agreed by full Council in January 2018, contains blanket dispensations for any business of the Authority where that business relates to the Council functions in respect of:

- i. housing, where the Member is a tenant of the Authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to their tenancy or lease;
- ii. school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where the Member is a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
- iii. statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where the Member is in receipt of, are entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
- iv. an allowance, payment or indemnity given to Members;

- v. any ceremonial honour given to Members; and
- vi. setting Council Tax or a Precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992

Since their introduction, only category iv and vi dispensations have been relied upon at meetings of the Cabinet and full Council.

Declarations of offers/receipt of gifts and hospitality

Following the Standards Committee review of the Council's Gift and Hospitality Policy for Members, new guidance and a notification form was issued to all District Councillors in May 2016. There has been one recorded declaration of offers/receipt of gifts and hospitality made by District Councillors in the time period covered by this report.

Updated to Members' Register of Interests

Since the new Members' Code of Conduct was adopted to take effect in April 2018, Members are required to register details of their Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and their Personal Interests within 28 days of becoming a Member (or being re-elected or reappointed) or a change in those details, in the Authority's Register of Interests. Personal Interests are defined in Paragraph 5 of the Code as relating to or is likely to affect any item of business of the Authority within any of the six categories as set out in 5.1 (a) to (f).

Following Guidance and a Notification Form being issued in 2018, Members are advised to register their Personal Interests with the Monitoring Officer. In the time period covered by this report three Members have registered a Personal Interest with the Monitoring Officer. To date these forms have not been published on the Council's website but retained within a central register.

The most common declarations are made under paragraph 5.1(d) being "any other body of which the Councillor is a member and in which they hold a position of general control or management –

- i. exercising functions of a public nature;
- ii. directed to charitable purposes; or
- iii. one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)"

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS TAKEN BY COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE ETC.

It was agreed at the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 29 June 2016 that, as part of its annual work programme, the Committee would receive an annual report on declarations of interest and associated matters.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

There are no background papers associated with this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Table of Members' Declarations of Interest made at Council, Cabinet or Committee meetings 22 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

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