

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2018

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

A.2 ANNUAL REPORT ON DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

(Report prepared by Lisa Hastings and Katie Sullivan)

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 11 March 2017.

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. This report covers the period from 11 March 2017 to 28 February 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standards Committee notes the contents of the report, subject to the Committee's comments through debate.

BACKGROUND and CURRENT POSITION

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 11 March 2017 to 28 February 2018 and provides statistics on the number of declarations of interest made, 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 Interests' 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 includes a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests for all District Councillors and this is updated, when an individual 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 dispensation has been granted by the Monitoring Officer.

One dispensation has been granted by the Monitoring Officer during the relevant period and the reasons for the decisions are recorded on the website together with the Register.

Declarations of interest at meetings

Currently, Members are only required to declare Other and Non-Pecuniary Interests at meetings and those recorded on the committee system, as declared by District Councillors for the period 11 March 2017 to 28 February 2018 are set out in the table below. All minutes of the meetings also record the declarations.

| | No. of Meetings | Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) | Prejudicial | Other Pecuniary Interest (OPI) | Non Pecuniary Interest (NPI) / Personal |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Audit Committee | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cabinet | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Community Leadership and Partnerships Committee | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Corporate Management Committee | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Council | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| Council Tax Committee | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| General Purposes Sub-Committee | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Human Resources Committee | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Licensing and Registration Committee | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Local Plan Committee | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Planning Committee | 12 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 34 |
| Premises/Personal Licences Sub-Committee 'A' | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Premises/Personal Licences Sub-Committee 'B' | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Premises/Personal Licences Sub-Committee 'C' | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Service Development and Delivery Committee | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Standards Committee | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

The Committee will note that on 13 instances, members at meetings of the Planning Committee, have declared a 'prejudicial' interest, which is not a term within the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, it is envisaged that the simplified definitions to '*personal interests*' will assist with using incorrect terminology.

The Committee will recall at its last meeting, the importance of members' correctly declaring interests was highlighted for recording in the minutes.

Use of Blanket dispensations

The current Members' Code of Conduct at paragraph 8.2, as agreed by full Council in November 2013 contains blanket dispensations for any business of the Authority where that business relates to the Council functions in respect of:

- i. housing, where you are a tenant of your Authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
- ii. school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are 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 you are in receipt of, or 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, some of these blanket dispensations have been called upon at meetings of the Cabinet and full Council.

Declarations of offers/receipt of gifts and hospitality

Following the Standards Committee review of the Councils Gift and Hospitality Policy for Members, new guidance and a notification form was issued to all District Councillors in May 2016. No declarations of offers/receipt of gifts and hospitality have been made by District Councillors during this period.

Revised Declarations of Interest with effect from April 2018

The Committee will recall that Declarations of Interests have been revised under the new Code of Conduct with effect from April 2018. Training has been organised to be presented at the All Member Briefing Session in March, where members are encourage to attend. The Monitoring Officer will also issue guidance highlighting the definition f Personal Interests and the requirement to register some of these interests in advance.

LEGISLATION/POLICY:

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.