
2 July 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

N/A - Ethics Committee

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Resources

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Review of the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report sets out information about the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and updates the Committee on the recent Council-wide review of interests and uploading them on to Modern.Gov, the Council's software system for democratic services. The Committee is asked to note the report and to give guidance on how it would like to be kept informed of its use in future.

Recommendations:

The Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider progress on the review of the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and give guidance on how it wishes to be kept informed of its use in future.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Review of the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Ethics Committee has, as part of its work programme, decided to review on a regular basis the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- 1.2 Elected and co-opted members are required by law to declare any “disclosable pecuniary interests” (DPIs) they have. DPIs are defined in regulations and include matters such as:
 - Employment
 - Sponsorship
 - Interest in land
 - Contracts
 - Corporate tenancies
 - Licences
 - Securities

In addition the City Council requires members to declare membership of a trade union and of any organisation “whose rules or requirements of membership could be regarded as suggesting a degree of loyalty to that organisation or body”. These are not statutory DPIs.

- 1.3 Members have a legal duty to declare any DPI that they have in an item of council business and to not participate in the discussion of that matter or any voting on it. In addition, the City Council requires members with a DPI to leave the room during the discussion and voting on the item.
- 1.4 Failure to comply with some statutory requirements is a criminal offence.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The requirement to maintain a Register of DPIs was introduced in July 2012. At that time the Council provided training for members and produced frequently asked questions to help members understand their new responsibilities. The Register has been maintained since then with existing members providing updates to the Monitoring Officer as and when required. Newly elected members receive training as part of their induction and are given the opportunity to meet with a member of Legal Services to go through their declaration and raise any questions.
- 2.2 In recent months the Council has undertaken a major exercise to review and update all declarations and to arrange for those declarations to be managed in future through Modern.Gov, the Council’s democratic services software system. All members have reviewed their declarations and where necessary have updated them. Officers have worked with members to deal with any inconsistencies in declarations and to ensure, where possible, that members do not declare as interests matters which do not have to be declared.
- 2.3 Officers in Governance Services and Members Services have been trained in the use of the DPI facility on Modern.Gov and have uploaded all declarations. The system went live at the beginning of June and members of the public may view the register of interests for each councillor through the council website. In future, Members will be able to update their entries directly on-line, with support from Members Services staff if required. Any updates entered by members are automatically forwarded to nominated officers (the Council’s

Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Members and Elections Team Manager) for review prior to publishing. The system will maintain a history of changes made for future reference. Having the register on Modern.Gov, means that it can be kept up to date at all times and improves openness and transparency for the public.

- 2.4 As the new system has been in operation for less than a month it is too early to review the success of its operation. The Committee is recommended the note the report and to give guidance on how it would like to be kept informed of its use in future.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 None.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Any recommendations of the Committee will be implemented within an appropriate time frame.

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

- 5.1 Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

- 5.2 Legal implications

Members are required to declare their DPIs under the Localism Act 2011 and regulations made thereunder. The transfer of the register to Modern.Gov aids transparency and assists the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of ethical behaviour as is required under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

6 Other implications

None

- 6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

Not applicable.

- 6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There is no direct risk to the organisation as a result of the contents of this report. Having the statutory register maintained through Modern.Gov makes it easier and quicker to update changes to interests thereby ensuring that members fulfil their statutory duty and that the public are always able to see the most up to date version of the register.

- 6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

The ability to update and amend the statutory register quickly and easily should assist the Council to ensure open and transparent governance.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

There are no public sector equality duties which are of relevance at this stage.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None at this stage

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