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Ethics Committee

15 July 2016

**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

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

In July 2015 the Committee received a report on the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPis) and the exercise to get all members' declarations uploaded onto Modern.Gov. The Committee decided to receive a further report at a future meeting on how the new system was operating. This report sets out information about the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and updates the Committee on actions taken in the last 12 months to encourage members to keep their declarations up to date and the frequency with which the online register has been viewed.

**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 requirement to maintain a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests 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.
- 1.2 In 2015 the Council undertook 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 reviewed their declarations and where necessary updated them. Officers worked with members to deal with any inconsistencies in declarations and to ensure where possible that members did not declare as interests matters which did not have to be declared.
- 1.3 Officers in Governance Services and Members Services were trained in the use of the DPI facility on Modern.Gov and uploaded all declarations. The system went live at the beginning of June 2015 and members of the public may view the register of interests for each councillor through the council website. Members are 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 Acting Monitoring Officer, Acting Deputy Monitoring Officer and Members and Elections Team Manager) for review prior to publishing. The system maintains 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. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 The online self-service system for declaring DPis has been in operation for just over 12 months and officers believe that it is working well.
- 2.2 After the elections in May 2016, all councillors were reminded that it was good practice to review and, if necessary, update their entries on the register. This resulted in some entries being updated and again support was offered to newly elected members who needed advice on how to complete their forms. In addition all members attending the training in June (referred to in the Code of Conduct update report elsewhere on the agenda) were given a copy of their declarations. This also prompted a number of members to update their forms.
- 2.3 Officers have retrieved information from the Modern.Gov system which shows the number of times each councillor's entries in the register have been viewed on line in the eleven months from June 2015 to April 2016. The registers were viewed a total of 5139 times in this period with an average of 467 views a month. This gave an average number of views per month for each councillor of nine. The number of views for each councillor varied significantly from 551, being the highest number of views over 11 months to 26, being the lowest. While some of these views may be attributed to officers and to the members themselves, it is clear that members of the public are viewing entries in the register on a regular basis.

2.4 The Committee is asked to consider how it wishes to review declarations of pecuniary interests 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 DPs 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 assists 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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