
Ethics Committee

26 July 2018

Name of Cabinet Member:

N/A - Ethics Committee

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Annual Review of the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

In July 2016 and 2017 the Committee received reports on the Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) and the extent to which the online register was being updated by members and the frequency with which it had been viewed. The Committee decided to receive a further report at this 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: Annual 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. 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. 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.
- 1.2 Since then, members of the public have been able to 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, 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 3 years and officers believe that it is working well.
- 2.2 All councillors are reminded each year after Annual Council to review and, if necessary, update their entries on the register, particularly as some councillors may need to declare new appointments or remove old ones. This year 11 councillors amended their registers following Annual Council. In the municipal year 2017/18, a total of 24 councillors made at least one update, with 8 councillors making more than one update. Officers feel that this shows that they are actively keeping registers under review and updating as appropriate.
- 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 twelve months from May 2017 to April 2018. The registers were viewed a total of 7,689 times in this period with an average of 641 views a month. This gave an average number of views per month for each councillor of 12. The number of views for each councillor varied significantly from 608, being the highest number of views over 12 months to 57, 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 table below gives a comparison between the number of times the registers were viewed from its inception in June 2015 to April 2016 and April 2018. Members should bear in mind that the figures for 2015/16 only cover 11 months. The total number of views has reduced from the same period last year, but remains a significant number.

	June 2015 to April 2016 (11 months)	May 2016 to April 2017	May 2017 to April 2018
Total number of views	5139	9850	7689
Average number of views per month	467	820	641

Average number of views per month per councillor	9	15	12
Highest number of views for a single councillor	551	685	608
Lowest number of views for a single councillor over whole of period	41	120	57

- 2.5 The Committee is asked to consider how it wishes to review declarations of disclosable 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 Director of Finance and Corporate Services

- 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 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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