

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

28 SEPTEMBER 2011

REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Report from: Deborah Upton, Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services/ Monitoring Officer

Summary

This report seeks a view from the Committee on the timescale for publication of the register of Members' interests on the Council's website

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-optees. The Committee has power to advise, train or arrange training for Councillors and co-optees on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.

2. Background

- 2.1 Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of the members and voting co-opted members of the Council. This must be available at an office of the authority for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable hours.
- 2.2 The Committee previously agreed that the Council should aim to publish the register of members interests on the Council's website in line with good practice.
- 2.3 The intention was to publish the register on the website after the local elections in 2011 when Councillors had returned the completed forms.
- 2.4 Since this was last discussed by the Committee the Coalition Government has signalled its intention to abolish the existing standards regime. It will be open to local authorities to voluntarily adopt a local members' code of conduct and to decide whether or not to have a Standards Committee.
- 2.5 Section 18 of the Localism Bill includes provision making it an offence for a Councillor or voting co-opted member to fail to register or disclose certain interests (to be prescribed in regulations).

3. Timescale for publication of register of members' interests on the Council's website

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer is seeking a view from the Committee on the timescale for publication of the register of members' interests on the Council's website.

This work could proceed immediately or alternatively could be delayed until the enactment of the Localism Bill and publication of regulations relating to members' interests, which may require the content of the register to be changed.

4. Risk management

- 4.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community. Using the following table this section should therefore consider any significant risks arising from your report.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Cost and effort involved in publishing two versions of the register of members' interests	Work could commence to publish the register of members' interests on the website at this point but there is a risk the information will have to be republished within a year if the Localism Bill is enacted requiring different interests to be registered	A view from the Standards Committee is being sought drawing attention to the cost associated with publication of two different sets of information within short period of time

5. Financial and legal implications

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Localism Bill make provision for the registration and disclosure of interests.
- 5.2 Costs associated with publication of the register of members' interests on the Council's website will be met from within existing budgets for Legal and Democratic Services

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to advise the Monitoring Officer of its wishes in respect of timing of publication of the register of members' interests on the Council's website.

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Background papers

None