

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 14 JULY 2009

COUNCIL – 10 NOVEMBER 2009

MEMBERS' REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Report of the: Corporate Resources Director

Status: For Decision

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Elaine Bracken

Head of Service Mrs. Christine Nuttall – Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Recommendation: That Council be recommended to agree the online publication of all District Councillors' and Standards Committee Members' Register of Interest forms, subject to any individual Councillor or Standards Committee member being able to opt out.

Background

- 1 It is a legal requirement that Members' Register of Interest forms are made available for public inspection during normal office hours. Currently, anyone wishing to view a Member's Register of Interests must come to the Council offices and physically view the file.

Introduction

- 2 A number of other authorities make their Members' Register of Interest Forms available on their website and Standards Board Guidance encourages this, as it increases openness and transparency. However, Members' consent should be sought under the Data Protection Act 1998 before their forms are made available online. An e-mail was sent to all Councillors and members of the Standards Committee, asking for their views on this matter.

Response to the Survey

- 3 Fourteen members replied to the e-mail. Of these, eleven were in favour of publishing the information online and three were against. Four non-councillor members of the Standards Committee also replied to the e-mail, all of whom were in favour of publishing the information.

Standards Committee's Consideration

- 4 The Standards Committee has considered this report and has recommended to Council that District Councillors' and Standards Committee Members' Register of Interest forms should be published online, subject to any individual

Councillor or Standards Committee member being able to opt out. The Minutes of their meeting can be found as Item 5(e) on the agenda.

Implementation

- 5 If the Council decides to publish Members' Register of Interest forms online, the Democratic Services Team would ensure that all Members had the opportunity to review their forms before they were published. Members would be kept fully informed as to the timescales for implementing the decision and individual Councillors and Standards Committee Members would be able to opt out of having their forms published online.

Key Implications

Financial

- 6 None arising directly from this report.

Community Impact and Outcomes

- 7 Publishing Members' Register of Interest forms online would make it easier for people to access this information and could only increase the Council's already strong commitment to openness and transparency.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

- 8 The Council is required to make Members' Register of Interest forms available for inspection under s. 81 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Risk Assessment Statement

- 9 None arising from this report.

Sources of Information: Standards Board for England Bulletin – May 2002
Issue 1

Contact Officer(s): Ally Round
Democratic Services Manager
01732 227 241

Christine Nuttall
Monitoring Officer