

COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM 7(ii)a
24 FEBRUARY 2010	PUBLIC REPORT

PUBLICATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS AND GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S
FROM : Solicitor to the Council
That Council receives the recommendation of the Standards Committee and further considers the motion from the Council meeting on 2 December 2009.

1. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises Council of the recommendation from the Standards Committee following a referral of a motion submitted to the Council meeting held 2 December 2009.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A motion was moved by Cllr Goldspink at Full Council on 2 December 2009:

“That as a matter of policy, in the interests of ease of access, openness and transparency and to be consistent with the spirit of the Standards Board for England’s National Code of Conduct, Members’ interests will be automatically published online via the Council’s website, unless a Member specifically requests otherwise, in which case a note to that effect will appear on the website instead.”

- 2.2 It was agreed by Council to refer the motion to the Standards Committee for consideration and report.

3. STANDARDS COMMITTEE RESPONSE

- 3.1 The Standards Committee agreed at its meeting held on 13 January 2010 to recommend:

“That all City Councillors’, Parish Councillors’ and co-opted members’ Register of Interests submissions be made available on the council’s public website unless withheld at the Monitoring Officer’s discretion due to the information creating a serious enough risk that someone in their household would be subjected to violence or intimidation.”

- 3.2 The Committee further agreed to recommend that all submissions on the Gifts and Hospitality Register be published on the Council’s public website.

- 3.3 The Standards Committee agreed that publication on the website would make the council’s decision making as open and transparent as possible which were principles the Committee supported. The committee agreed that all entries (unless withheld as noted above in 3.1) should be published on the Council’s website as the internet was often the first place members of the public looked for information on Councillors and other members and this was an appropriate means of displaying an already public register given that one of the aims of the Standards

Committee was to move towards dedicated governance pages on the website. The same rules around the protection of sensitive information would apply to web registers.

- 3.4 Further to the reasons above, the committee acknowledged that many other authorities were moving towards the public display of their registers on their web pages and therefore this appeared to be becoming routine good practice especially in the unitary authorities and London Boroughs.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Code of Conduct for Members required that all City Councillors, Parish Councillors and Independent and Co-opted Members of the Council's Committees must make declarations of interests and any Gifts and Hospitalities received over the value of £25 are recorded. This information is currently held on public deposit in paper format and is open to public inspection.

Where a Member considers that the information relating to any personal interest is sensitive information and the Monitoring Officer agrees, this information need not be included when registering that interest. Under the Code, "sensitive information" means information whose availability for inspection by the public creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that you or a person who lives with the Member may be subjected to violence or intimidation.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

Standards Committee report from 13 January 2010.