

**Extract of minutes of the Standards Committee
dated 10 July 2013**

34 Code of Conduct: Registration and Disclosure of Additional Interests

The Monitoring Officer presented a report on whether the Council's Code of Conduct should be amended to provide for the registration and disclosure of additional interests in accordance with the Council's power under the Localism Act 2011. Parish, Town and City Councils had been consulted on the issue and their responses were summarised in the report.

It was noted that many of these councils had adopted the same Code as Wiltshire Council, as the principal authority, and therefore any changes to Wiltshire Council's Code might impact upon these councils; they could decide to go with the changes, stay as they are or do something different. It was preferable from the point of view of consistency and enforcement for most councils to have the same Code of Conduct, but this was ultimately a matter for each council.

Members were minded to adopt an advisory approach rather than a mandatory one involving amendment of the Code of Conduct. The DCLG's revised guide for councillors 'Openness and transparency on personal interests' in Appendix D to the report would assist with this and should be drawn to the attention of parish, town and city councils.

The Committee were also advised by the Monitoring Officer that Wiltshire Council's Code of Conduct at paragraph 6 in any event requires councillors to 'declare any private interests, both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, that relate to your public duties, and must take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest ...'

The Committee went on to consider whether the Council's Constitution should be amended to include a requirement for councillors with a disclosable pecuniary interest to withdraw from a meeting when business relating to their interest is being considered. Opinion was divided on this issue but overall the Committee were minded to support the introduction of such a requirement.

Finally, the Committee considered whether the Code of Conduct should include more specific provisions on gifts and hospitality, as suggested in one of the consultation responses. However, they felt that this was already sufficiently covered by the existing Code, at paragraph 2, 'you must not place yourself under a financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties.'

The Committee, therefore,

Resolved:

To recommend Council:

(1) Not to amend the Code of Conduct to impose a requirement to register additional interests over and above the statutory disclosable pecuniary interests, but to rely on the existing provisions of the Code, in particular, paragraph 6, and guidance from the DCLG 'Openness and transparency on personal interests' and to draw this guidance to the attention of parish, town and city councils.

(2) To amend the Council's Constitution to require councillors with a disclosable pecuniary interest to withdraw from a meeting when business relating to their interest is being considered.

(3) Not to make any changes to the Code of Conduct on gifts and hospitality on the basis that the existing provision is adequate.