

Committee:	The Standards Committee
Date:	4 November 2024
Title	Register of Members' Interests
Author:	Siôn Huws, Propriety and Elections Manager
Action:	For Information and to offer any observations on the arrangements

Background

1. This report is presented to the Committee as part of its work of monitoring standards within the Council.

Gwynedd Council's Register of Members' Interests

2. The Members' Code of Conduct states that members (including co-opted members entitled to vote) must disclose orally to any meeting in which they are present, the existence and nature of any personal interest they have in the business being considered at that meeting. Furthermore, it states that a written notice must be provided to the Monitoring Officer.

3. In addition, the Code of Conduct also states that, within 28 days of being elected or appointed, members must register their personal interests by providing a written notice to the Monitoring Officer. They must also provide a notice of any changes to those interests and also any new interests, within 28 days of becoming aware of them.

4. To assist members to adhere to the requirements of the Code of Conduct, the Council has provided two forms; one which is suitable for 'upfront' registration, and the other for registering declarations made at meetings. The declarations made on both forms constitute the register of interests. Copies of these forms are attached as **Appendices 1 and 2**.

5. The Monitoring Officer is under a statutory duty to establish and maintain a register of interests. This is a public document, and it must be available at an office of the authority for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable hours. It must also be published on the authority's website. On Gwynedd Council's website, each member's declarations are available on their personal pages. Declarations made in meetings can also be found in the published minutes of that meeting.

Reminding Members

6. As stated above, it is the responsibility of members to inform the Monitoring Officer of any change to their registered personal interests and of the existence of any new interest. To assist them in doing this, the intention is to establish a process of reminding members annually. This would involve emailing all members, asking them to consider their current

registrations, which can be found on their personal pages on the website, and informing us of any changes that are required so that we may update the register.

Registration of Interest in a Meeting

7. When a member declares at a meeting a democratic service officer will provide him/her with a form to be completed and will collect it at the end of the meeting. Distributing registration forms to members attending meetings virtually and ensuring their return has meant considerably more work for democratic service officers. Returning them by post, by hand or by scanning and emailing them is also more troublesome for members. We are therefore currently developing a process of online registration using the Microsoft Forms application. This will mean that an officer can send an email containing a link to an online form to a member during the meeting. The only thing the member will then have to do is complete the online form.

Community Councils

8. The above statutory provisions are also applicable to town and community councils but with the following differences:

- There is no requirement to register personal interests 'upfront'.
- It's the Clerk to the council, rather than the Monitoring Officer, who is responsible for establishing and maintaining the register and for receiving notifications of personal interests.

9. We have provided community councils with Gwynedd's forms so that they can use them as templates if they wish. Whilst there is no requirement to register interests 'upfront', we advocate this as good practice.

Recommendation

10. The Committee is asked to:

(a) Accept and note the report

(b) Put forward any observations on steps that could be taken in relation to the registration of interests