



Southend-on-Sea Borough Council


Legal & Democratic Services

Strategic Director (Legal & Democratic Services)

John Williams

 Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6ER

 01702 215000

 www.southend.gov.uk

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Our ref: JKW
Your ref:
Date: May 2019
Telephone: 01702 215102
Email: johnwilliams@southend.gov.uk

Dear Councillor

New Councillors – The Members’ Code of Conduct, Registration of Interests and Declarations of Interests

1. The Members’ Code of Conduct

I attach a copy of the Members’ Code of Conduct (“the Code”) which was adopted by the Council on 19th July 2012 (**Appendix 1**) and which you agreed to abide by when you signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office book, following your recent election

2. Register of Members’ Interests

- (a) The Code requires all Councillors to complete the Register of Members’ Interests form (attached at **Appendix 2**) and return this to me.

Please complete this as clearly as possible as the forms make up a Council Register of Members’ Interests which is publicly available in hard copy and on the Council’s website.

You must complete this form and return it to me within 28 days of your election, i.e. by Friday, 31 May 2019. If you fail to complete the form, or complete it incorrectly, you remain a Councillor but are in breach of the Code and may commit an offence

I have produced a guidance note (**Appendix 3**) to assist with completion of the form, which I hope you will find useful. However if you have any questions please contact me

Councillors must notify me of any changes to the details registered within 28 days of becoming aware of them.

- (b) On the last page of the Register referred to in (a) you are also required to give me written notification of any gifts or hospitality received with a value in excess of £50, within 28 days of receipt

This obligation only applies to gifts or hospitality which you receive in connection with your official duties as a Councillor. You do not need to register gifts / hospitality which are not related to your role as a Councillor, e.g. Christmas gifts from relatives or friends.

Notwithstanding this provision, you need to be cautious about accepting any gift or hospitality

3. Declaration of Interests at Meetings

If you have an interest under the Code in respect of any business of the Council and are present at a meeting of the Authority at which the business is considered, then you must declare that interest at the start of the meeting, even if you have already registered it.

Furthermore, unless a dispensation has been granted, you must withdraw from the meeting while that business is considered if your interest is.

- Pecuniary, or
- A disqualifying non-pecuniary interest (i.e. a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard your interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest or may give rise to a conflict of interest or bias).

If you are aware of something on an agenda of a meeting and are not sure whether you have an interest or not, please contact me in advance and I will be pleased to offer advice. However if in doubt it is always best to err on the side of caution and declare an interest and if necessary withdraw

4. Guidance

A summary of the requirements in the Code in terms of declaring and registering interests is attached at **Appendix 4**.

My summary reflects the content of a revised guide for councillors entitled "Openness and Transparency on personal interests" issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in September 2013 (**Appendix 5**)

5. **Blogging & Social Networking**

I attached a guidance note on Blogging and Social Networking which the Standards Committee asked me to send to all Councillors (**Appendix 6**). This reflects Guidance issued by the Local Government Association

Yours sincerely

John Williams
Strategic Director (Legal and Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer

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