

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Standards Committee	20 <sup>th</sup> February 2015
<b>Subject:</b> Report – Annual Update to Members’ Declarations	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> The Town Clerk	<b>For Information</b>

## **Summary**

This report provides Members with an overview of the annual update to the Members’ Declarations which took place in December 2014 following the introduction of new requirements in the Members’ Code of Conduct. As the new requirements, principally the registration and declaration of a range of non-pecuniary interests, took effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015, the annual reminder to all Members and Co-opted Members to review and update their Members’ Declaration form was postponed until such time that the revised Code of Conduct was approved by the Court of Common Council. Following the Court’s consent to the Code of Conduct on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014, revised guidance was thereafter approved by the Standards Committee and the annual reminder process commenced in early December 2014.

Each of the City of London Corporation’s elected Members and Co-opted Members were contacted in writing in December 2014 with a request that they review their existing Members’ Declaration and, having familiarised themselves with the revised Code of Conduct and the appropriately revised guidance, submit any amendments to the Town Clerk’s Department by no later than 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 when the new requirements came into effect.

This report sets out the background to the annual reminder process in 2014 and the outcome of the exercise.

## **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note the report and to consider any further steps it considers necessary to ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. It is customary for an annual reminder to be sent to Members about the importance of maintaining an up-to-date Members’ Declaration. In light of the Standards Committee’s review of the Members’ Code of Conduct over the past 18 months, which ultimately resulted in the introduction of a new Members’ Code of Conduct on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014, an annual reminder to all Members has not been circulated since August 2013.

2. In accordance with good practice, the annual reminder would normally be circulated towards the start of each new municipal year and now that the City of London Corporation's arrangements are clear and appropriate guidance has been developed to assist Members in respect of their statutory and non-pecuniary interests, an annual reminder will be circulated every April (or following the Ward elections) henceforth.
3. All elected Members and Co-opted Members who serve on the City Corporation's committees and sub-committees were contacted in writing and email on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014 and advised about the new requirements under the Code of Conduct, specifically the introduction of a number of categories of non-pecuniary interests. Following the Committee's approval of revised guidance for Members on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014, under urgency procedures in accordance with Standing Order 41(b), this was sent to all Members and Co-opted Members for information along with a copy of their existing Members' Declaration and a new form to enable people to register their non-pecuniary interests by category.
4. The new requirements came into effect as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 and therefore all Members and Co-opted Members were asked to respond before this date either in writing or email. Where no amendments were required to the existing Members' Declaration and no non-pecuniary interests required registration, Members and Co-opted Members were advised that they did not need to respond.

### **Current Position**

5. In advance of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 implementation date, a list of Members and a list of Co-opted Members was compiled and every time a response has been received, this has been logged. Where amendments have been highlighted, either in hard-copy or via email, these have been updated on the committee management system which enables, in the case of elected Members, the changes to be visible to the public straight away via their Members' webpage.
6. On 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015 a reminder email was sent to those elected Members that had not submitted any updates to their Members' Declaration or confirmed that no non-pecuniary interests required registration. A new Members' Declaration form and a non-pecuniary interests form were again circulated via email.
7. As at 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015, 106 elected Members have responded to the annual reminder and all updates have been made to the on-line register of interest webpages. Copies of the updated Members' Declarations are appended in a separately bound volume (Appendix 1). A list of Members, and confirmation of their annual update status, is attached at Appendix 2.
8. With regards to the Co-opted Members, all updated forms that have been received are retained on file in the Town Clerk's Department.

## **Moving Forward**

9. As and when updates are required, including the registration of gifts and hospitality, the changes will be effected immediately so that the on-line declarations remain up to date for all elected Members. Any updates in respect of the Co-opted Members will be retained on file within the Town Clerk's Department.
10. A significant number of queries have been received since the annual update reminder process commenced, specifically in respect of the new non-pecuniary requirements. It is anticipated that as Members and Co-opted Members become more familiar with the requirements of the Code of Conduct over the coming months, the annual reminder process will be less complex.
11. It is proposed that the annual reminder to Members take place each year following the start of the new municipal year, or after the Ward Elections. This will complement a more significant exercise of informing Members about the requirements of the Code of Conduct following Ward Elections, the next being in 2017. Member Development sessions regarding the Code of Conduct, good governance and lawful decision-making, as part of the formal Member Development offer to Members, will continue to take place on a rolling basis.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

12. The annual reminder to review and update Members' declarations satisfies the objectives of the Standards Committee in seeking greater transparency about the City of London Corporation's governance framework and those involved in decision-making processes.

## **Other Implications**

13. The annual reminder process has required a significant amount of resources, including officer time, to ensure that all Members and Co-opted Members are aware of the requirements of the Code of Conduct, including the new non-pecuniary requirements; and all updates have been entered onto the committee management system and published on-line in a timely manner.

## **Conclusion**

14. The annual reminder process is an important exercise to maximise transparency of the City of London Corporation's decision-making processes and those who serve on the City Corporation's committees and sub-committees.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Copies of the updated Members' Declarations are appended in a separately bound volume.

Appendix 2 - List of Members and confirmation of their annual update status.

## **Background Papers**

Members' Code of Conduct (as agreed on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014)

**Lorraine Brook**

**Town Clerk's Department**

T: 020 7332 1409

E: [lorraine.brook@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.brook@cityoflondon.gov.uk)