

Committee(s)	Dated:
Standards Committee	18 May 2018
Subject: Co-opted Members and Declarations of Interests	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Information

Summary

This report provides an update on the registration of interests by Co-opted Members and their online publication.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City Corporation's Code of Conduct for Members, adopted in its latest iteration by the Court of Common Council on 8 March 2018, applies to any Member of the City Corporation and any Member of a Committee of the City Corporation. The Code requires the registration of disclosable pecuniary interests, as specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State, together with certain non-pecuniary interests.
2. The Committee has considered previous reports concerning the registration of interests by Co-opted Members. In May 2015 the Committee noted that whilst the statutory provisions in relation to online registration only applied to those Co-opted Members who were entitled to vote on matters relating to the City Corporation's local authority or police authority functions, this did not preclude the register of interests of all Co-opted Members being made available online as a matter of policy. It was agreed that all Co-opted Members should be required to submit a register of interests' form, which would be published online to promote greater consistency and transparency. The need to make Co-opted Members fully aware of the new approach to managing and publishing interests, and to afford them ample time to raise any queries, was acknowledged.
3. Subsequently, in October 2015, the Committee was advised that over 50% of Co-opted Members had not submitted a response and that many of those contacted had also expressed concern at plans to publish their interests, with some suggesting that they might resign over the matter. With regard to the

technicalities around publishing the responses received, the Town Clerk reported that this had now been trialled and would be technically possible if the Committee were minded to proceed with this exercise. The Committee requested a paper for the following meeting detailing how each of the various Sub/Consultative/Grand Committees concerned were constituted and providing Members with some advice on how best to proceed in each case. The Committee requested that, in the interim, the Town Clerk contact all relevant Committee Chairmen requesting that they remind their Co-opted Members of the need to submit responses.

4. Further details of Co-opted Members by Committee were then considered by the Committee in May 2016. This included the number of Co-opted Members on each Committee, whether they were a legal requirement, whether they were involved in City Fund functions, whether they had voting rights, and the number of forms returned. The Committee requested that the Town Clerk write to all Co-opted Members as a final reminder regarding the completion of their declaration of interests forms before publishing all information received by the end of the calendar year. Following the Committee's decision in July 2016 to recommend to the Court that a review of the standards regime be undertaken, work on some associated framework issues, including interests' publication as detailed above, was temporarily paused pending the review's outcome.

Update on the registration of interests

5. With the latest iteration of the Code of Conduct recently approved by the Court, it is now considered timely to update the Committee on the online publication of all registered interests, in accordance with the Committee's decision in May 2015. The Town Clerk has recently commenced the annual exercise to contact all Elected and all Co-opted Members to remind them to review and update their existing declarations. Co-opted Members whose declarations are not currently held on file have been invited to complete and return a form within 28 days. The Town Clerk has informed Co-opted Members that declarations will be published on the City Corporation's webpages and it is anticipated that we will be able to start publishing returns online by the end of May.
6. The Committee will receive a report back at its October meeting with an update on progress, together with the latest statistics on response rates for each Committee. The Committee may wish to review the overall policy at that stage and consider how best to address any non-compliance.

Conclusion

7. The Committee is asked to note the commencement of the annual exercise to remind all Co-opted Members to review and update their registrable interests and that all such interests will be published online. An update will be made to the Committee at its next meeting on progress with this matter.

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