

Committees	Dated:
Standards Committee	4 October 2019
Subject: Annual Update to Member Declarations	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Discussion
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Summary

This report provides Members with an overview of the annual update to the Members' Declarations which took place in July 2019.

Each of the City of London Corporation's elected Members and relevant Co-opted Members (those captured by the Code of Conduct) were contacted via email in early July 2019 with a request that they review their existing Members' Declaration and, having re-familiarised themselves with the Code of Conduct and the appropriate guidance, submit any amendments to the Town Clerk's Department by no later than 5th August 2019.

This report sets out the background to the annual reminder process 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. Whilst it is not a statutory requirement for registers of interest to be updated annually, the Code of Conduct requires Members to maintain an up to date register of interests, and the relevant guidance states that Members will be contacted once a year to review and, where necessary, update these. In accordance with good practice, the annual reminder is normally circulated towards the start of each new municipal year.
2. All elected Members and those Co-opted Members who serve on the City Corporation's committees and sub-committees that are captured by the Code of Conduct were contacted via email on 9 July 2019 and reminded about the requirements under the Code of Conduct.
3. All were asked to respond either in writing by no later than 5 August 2019. Where no amendments were required to the existing Members' Declaration

and/or no non-pecuniary interests required registration, Members and Co-opted Members were advised that they should still submit a 'nil response' confirming that this was the case.

Current Position

4. In advance of the Annual Update an up to date list of elected Members and of relevant Co-opted Members was compiled and every time a response has been received, this has been logged accordingly. Where amendments have been highlighted, these have been updated on the committee management system which also enables the changes to be visible to the public via the City Corporation's webpages.
5. A reminder email was sent to all later in July about the importance of this exercise and a short piece was also included within the July 2019 Members Briefing.
6. As at 20 September 2019, just 41 elected Members have responded to the annual reminder and all updates have been made to the on-line register of interest webpages.
7. With regards to the Co-opted Members, 41 responses are still outstanding from a total of 81 Co-optees who are currently captured by the Code. Where updates have been made, all updated forms are also now available online.

Moving Forward

8. The response rates from both elected and Co-opted Members do not compare favourably with those of previous years. In previous years, the Standards Committee have taken further steps in an attempt to ensure compliance which have included writing to individual Members and also issuing reminders via relevant Committee Chairmen.
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/ a 'live document' for all.
10. It is proposed that the annual reminder to Members continue to take place each year following the start of the new municipal year. 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 2021. 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 also continue to take place on a rolling basis.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. 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

11. 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

12. 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.

Background Papers

Members' Code of Conduct (as agreed March 2018)

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