

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Date:	4 December 2008
Subject:	Register of Members' Interests - Compliance
Responsible Officer:	Hugh Peart, Director of Legal and Governance Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report advises the Committee on Members' compliance with the statutory requirements with regard to the registering of interests.

Recommendations:

That the Committee consider what action, if any, should be taken with respect to those Members who have not returned their Register of Interest forms.

Section 2 – Report

Background

- 2.1 The Code of Conduct for Councillors is a statutory element of Local Authority Constitutions, based on a model Code of Conduct.
- 2.2 The Code includes a requirement that the Members of the Authority maintain a Register of Interests, which is held by the Monitoring Officer. The requirements falling on individual Members with regard to

registering their interests are set out in Part 3 of the Code of Conduct (within the Council's Constitution).

- 2.3 There is also a specific requirement on Members to inform the Monitoring Officer of any change in their registrable interests within 28 days of becoming aware of such a change.
- 2.4 In order to assist Members in their duty to register interests, the Monitoring Officer provides each Councillor with a registration form together with instructions on how to complete the various sections and the Part 3 guidance as to the obligations.
- 2.5 A reminder letter is then sent to Members at least every six months, including after each Annual Council meeting, as it is at this meeting that Outside Body appointments are made, resulting in possible changes to Members' registrable interests. Members are required to complete a new form, make amendments to the existing return or confirm that no change is necessary.

Current situation

- 2.6 Following Annual Council in May, Register of Interest forms were sent out to all Members for approval or amendment and return. Members were also advised that, in accordance with the Standards Committee decision of 23 March 2007, once their form was returned, their entry in the Register would be published on the Council's website.
- 2.7 A number of Members did not reply within 28 days and some of them took several months to return their forms. Up to five reminder letters were sent. At the time of writing, the majority of Members have now returned their forms, but the forms of Councillors Benson and Billson are still outstanding.
- 2.8 The Committee is therefore asked to consider what action it wishes to take, if any, in respect of those Members who have not returned their forms.
- 2.9 Failure to comply with the requirements regarding the registration of interests is a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Options

- 2.10 With regard to the action to be taken in respect of those Members who have not returned their forms, the options available to the Committee include the following:
 - instruct the Monitoring Officer to call in those Members who have not returned their forms to discuss the importance of the timely registration of interests and to complete their forms, and report back to the Standards Committee that this has been done at its next meeting;

- request the Monitoring Officer to raise a complaint against the Members to be dealt with through the Standards procedures.

Financial Implications

None.

Performance Issues

None.

Risk Management Implications

None.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Myfanwy Barrett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 20 November 2008		
Name: Hugh Peart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Monitoring Officer
Date: 20 November 2008		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Claire Vincent, Democratic Services, tel: 020 8424 1637,
e-mail: claire.vincent@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: No unpublished documents.

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES / NO / N/A
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES / NO / N/A