

Conflicts of Interest Guidance for Members

To: Constitution and Ethics Committee

Meeting Date: 27 July 2021

From: Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: To respond to recommendations arising out of the Council's Audit & Accounts Committee's Manor Farm Audit, that comprehensive training of Members takes place and that guidance is issued to Members regarding conflicts of interest.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note that Code of Conduct training has taken place and an update on Members who have attended or watched the training subsequently will be provided at the next Committee meeting; and
- b) Approve the Guidance on Conflicts of Interest (Appendix 1 of the report) and recommend to Full Council that it forms an appendix to the Member's Code of Conduct in the Council's Constitution.

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1. Background and History

- 1.1 The Manor Farm Audit and its recommendations were considered by the Audit & Accounts Committee on three occasions in March 2021 and agreed.
- 1.2 Three recommendations related to the role of the Constitution and Ethics Committee, one of which forms the basis of a separate exempt report on the Committee meeting's agenda on Code of Conduct issues. The other two, covered in this report, relate to the Monitoring Officer ensuring that comprehensive training takes place for all Members of the Council on the Code of Conduct and associated issues, including how to deal with conflicts of interest, and that guidance was issued to Members about conflicts of interest.

2. Training

- 2.1 A virtual training session on the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for all newly elected Councillors, alongside returning Councillors, took place on Friday 18th May 2021 run by Simon Goacher, Local Government partner at Weightmans solicitors. The training included guidance on conflicts of interests and the Council's Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, along with bias and predetermination, and Members worked through a number of case studies in small groups.
- 2.2 The training was very well attended on the day and video-recorded, so those Members who were not able to attend could watch at another time alongside the training notes. All Members who were not able to attend were asked to watch the session as soon as possible and Democratic Services is compiling a training record which will be reported back to the Constitution and Ethics Committee with the aim of ensuring all Members of the Council have participated.

3. Conflict of Interests Policy

- 3.1 A Guidance on Conflicts of Interest for Members has been drafted and is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 It is proposed that this guidance will form an appendix to the Members' Code of Conduct in the Council's Constitution to ensure the necessary level of visibility.
- 3.3 The draft guidance was presented to the Audit & Accounts Committee's meeting on 13th July 2021 for comment and the Committee did not propose any amendments to the draft version.