

## Slough Borough Council

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	20 March 2025
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Annual Update on Members' Register of Interests and Gifts & Hospitality 2024/25
<b>CHIEF OFFICER:</b>	Monitoring Officer, Sukdave Ghuman
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Colin J Sweeney, Head of Democratic Services & Scrutiny
<b>WARD(S):</b>	All
<b>EXEMPT:</b>	No
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix A – summary of Register of Interests 2024/25  Appendix B – summary of Gifts & Hospitality 2024/25

### 1 Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report provides the annual update to the Standards Committee on the Members' register of interest and declarations of gifts & hospitality in the 2024/25 municipal year.

#### Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to note and comment on any aspects of the report.

#### Reason:

Members' registering and declaring interests and receipt of gifts and hospitality is a key part of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. This report sets out the processes in relation to such declarations and the activity in 2024/25 to provide both transparency and an opportunity to review and strengthen any of the Council's processes. Article 9A of the Council's Constitution sets out the terms of reference of the Standards Committee and includes a requirement "to receive an annual statistical report from the Monitoring Officer on declarations of interest."

#### Commissioner Review

*"The Council's Code of Conduct (the Code) is based on the LGA Model Code, which is a template for Local Authorities to adopt in whole and or with amendments to take into account local circumstances.*

*In considering this report on Members' Register of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality, and the associated elements within the Code, the committee should consider whether there are any areas within the Code that would benefit from being enhanced. For example, providing*

*greater depth to aid the understanding of the key associated provisions, the inclusion of the reference to the Public Bodies (Corrupt Practices) Act 1889, as they pertain to the registering of interest, gifts and hospitality. A strengthened code supported by training to encourage good conduct, could assist in further improving the public's trust and confidence in the role of councillors in Slough."*

## **2 Report**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interest for Members of the authority. This is to ensure that the authority, public and any other interested parties know of any interests a councillor may have that might give rise to a conflict of interest. An accurate and up to date register is a core part of the Council's Ethical Framework, demonstrates openness and promotes accountability.
- 2.2 The Councillors' Code of Conduct in Part 5.1 of the Constitution sets out the relevant interests that should be declared and disclosed in both the register and at meetings. Members are personally responsible for registering and declaring their interests and are encouraged to seek advice from the Council's legal and democratic services officers.
- 2.3 There are three types of interest
  - Disclosable pecuniary interest (DPIs)
  - Other registerable interests
  - Non-registerable interests
- 2.4 DPIs must be registered within 28 days of election and whenever a change is required. DPIs include employment, land, directorships and contracts that may be held with the Council. The Council also requires councillors to register and declare non-statutory interests which can include membership of outside bodies, political parties and other community bodies such as charities or school governorships.
- 2.5 The procedure at Slough Borough Council is that a councillor must complete a new registration of interest form at the start of their term of office. Any changes during the course of their term must then be notified within 28 days. The Council requires hard copy forms to be completed which must be signed and dated by the Member.
- 2.6 To ensure that councillors review the accuracy of their register each year all Members will be required to confirm they have reviewed their register and either confirm its accuracy or notify any changes on an annual basis. This annual update process is currently underway for the 2024/25 municipal year. A majority of councillors that have reviewed their register have confirmed it remains accurate and up-to-date. The review has prompted some councillors to notify democratic services of minor changes to non-statutory interests which have been updated.
- 2.7 Members must also declare any interest which relate to any matters on a meeting agenda and take any appropriate action. If a Member has a DPI they must not take any part in the decision and should leave the meeting room. Declarations, and the action taken, are recorded in the minutes and published on the Council website on each councillor's webpage.

## Activity in 2024/25

2.8 Appendix A shows the activity in relation to the register and declarations at meetings since the start of the 2024/25 municipal year. In summary it shows that:

- All councillors have a completed register of interest form which is published on the Council website.
- 22 councillors made declarations at meetings, up from 13 in 2023/24. These includes a variety of matters but a significant number were from the Planning Committee, for example where a councillor declared that an application was in their ward or that they had been contacted by the applicant or an objector.
- The other significant type of interest declared this year has been Members, or a close family member, who are landlords in the borough. Matters relating to property licensing were discussed separately at meetings of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee and a motion to full Council. Advice was sought and given prior to consideration of the items and Members with an interest took appropriate action, including withdrawing from the Chamber during consideration of the matter at scrutiny.

## Sensitive Interests

2.9 Five councillors currently have sensitive interests which are withheld from the register published on the website. This is unchanged from the position reported in 2023/24. A sensitive interest is one which the member and the Monitoring Officer consider that disclosure of its details could lead to the member, or a person connected to the member, being subject to violence or intimidation.

2.10 In considering such requests the Monitoring Officer would take into account the reasons for the request and guidance from March 2019 from Rishi Sunak MP, the Minister for Local Government at that time, on the publication of councillors' and candidates' home addresses which asked Monitoring Officers to treat requests to withhold such information sympathetically. For the avoidance of doubt, the Monitoring Officer still retains such information on the Members' register of interests, but publication is withheld from the version of the register published on the Council website.

## Training

2.11 Periodic training is provided on the Councillors' Code of Conduct, including declarations of interest. Mandatory training on particular committees such as planning and licensing is provided each year prior to the first meeting of the municipal year. This training includes any specific guidance to members on the Code of Conduct for Planning.

2.12 Refresher training on interests will be incorporated into the 2025/26 Member development programme.

## Gifts and Hospitality

- 2.13 The Code of Conduct sets out the procedure for registering Members' gifts and hospitality. Councillors are advised not to accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of the estimated value, if it could give rise to a real or substantive personal gain or reasonable suspicion of influence. However, it is recognised that there are occasions where gifts and hospitality are not refused and the Code requires Members to register any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of receipt. The Code also requires members to register the refusal to accept gifts or hospitality of a significant value. No councillors have registered a refusal to accept an offer of a gift or hospitality since May 2024.
- 2.14 Since June 2021 all registrations by Members have been published on each councillor's webpage. Older declarations are maintained in a file held by democratic services and available for public inspection.
- 2.15 Appendix B shows that no registrations of gifts and hospitality have been declared by councillors since the start of the 2024/25 municipal year. For comparison, one declaration was made during 2023/24.
- 2.16 The Council is not complacent about the low level of declarations of gifts and hospitality and will take further steps to regularly remind Members of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct to declare any such matters.

### **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

#### 3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### 3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of members' and co-opted members' interests and to make the register available for inspection and publish on the Council's website. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 set the disclosable pecuniary interests required to be registered under the Act.

#### 3.3 Risk management implications

- 3.3.1 Failure to maintain an accurate register of interests could cause a reputational risk to individual councillors and the Council as a whole. The risks are mitigated by the measures detailed in this response to maintain an accurate register and ensure councillors understand their responsibilities to register and declare relevant interests.

#### 3.4 Environmental implications

- 3.4.1 None.

### 3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The public sector equality duty (PSED) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

## **4. Background Papers**

None

**SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' REGISTER OF INTERESTS 2024/25**

<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>Start of term of office</b>	<b>Register published within 28 days of taking office</b>	<b>Most recent update</b>	<b>Number of Declarations at meetings 2024/25</b>
Amjad Abbasi	May 2023	Yes	2 December 2024	4
Ejaz Ahmed	May 2023	Yes	22 May 2023	0
Iftakhar Ahmed	May 2023	Yes	13 November 2023	1
Zaffar Ajaib	May 2023	Yes	31 May 2023	2
Sabia Akram	May 2023	Yes	4 March 2025	1
Rob Anderson	May 2023	Yes	2 August 2023	0
Puja Bedi	May 2023	Yes	4 September 2023	1
Martin Carter	May 2023	Yes	28 July 2023	5
Wal Chahal	May 2023	Yes	24 August 2023	0
Haqeeq Dar	May 2023	Yes	8 February 2024	4
Siobhan Dauti	May 2023	Yes	27 March 2024	4
Balwinder Dhillon	May 2023	Yes	17 December 2024	2
Andrea Escott	May 2023	Yes	9 June 2023	0
Harjinder Gahir	May 2023	Yes	24 May 2023	3
Bally Gill	May 2023	Yes	13 November 2023	1
Christine Hulme	May 2023	Yes	25 May 2023	0
Adil Iftakhar	May 2023	Yes	6 November 2024	0
Mark Instone	May 2023	Yes	24 May 2023	0
Paul Kelly	May 2023	Yes	24 August 2023	0
Nadeem Khawar	May 2023	Yes	26 July 2023	0
Gurcharan Manku	May 2023	Yes	6 July 2023	0
Pavitar Kaur Mann	May 2023	Yes	21 May 2024	3
Fiza Matloob	May 2023	Yes	9 October 2024	1
Maroof Mohammad	May 2023	Yes	25 May 2023	0
Subhash Mohindra	May 2023	Yes	31 May 2023	0
Chandra Muvvala	May 2023	Yes	22 November 2023	1
Asim Naveed	May 2023	Yes	24 May 2024	0
Mohammed Nazir	May 2023	Yes	9 September 2024	1
Frank O'Kelly	May 2023	Yes	8 February 2024	0
Dilbagh Parmar	May 2023	Yes	25 May 2023	1
Naveeda Qaseem	May 2023	Yes	25 May 2023	0
Neel Rana	May 2023	Yes	23 May 2023	5
Jamila Sabah	May 2023	Yes	6 June 2023	0
Waqas Sabah	May 2023	Yes	29 January 2025	3
Zafar Satti	May 2023	Yes	28 July 2023	0
Ishrat Shah	May 2023	Yes	13 November 2023	1
Mabu Shaik	May 2023	Yes	23 May 2023	1
Dexter Smith	May 2023	Yes	6 November 2024	0
Robert Stedmond	May 2023	Yes	4 March 2025	1
Dhruv Tomar	May 2023	Yes	9 June 2023	6
Anna Wright	May 2023	Yes	8 February 2024	0
Rifaqat Zarait	May 2023	Yes	17 October 2023	0

**APPENDIX B****SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' REGISTER OF GIFTS & HOSPITALITY 2024/25**

<b>Number of Gifts &amp; Hospitality Declared, or Refused, since May 2024</b>					
<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>Under £50</b>	<b>£50 to £500</b>	<b>£500+</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Number of refusals to accept G&amp;H</b>
Amjad Abbasi	0	0	0	0	0
Ejaz Ahmed	0	0	0	0	0
Iftakhar Ahmed	0	0	0	0	0
Zaffar Ajaib	0	0	0	0	0
Sabia Akram	0	0	0	0	0
Rob Anderson	0	0	0	0	0
Puja Bedi	0	0	0	0	0
Martin Carter	0	0	0	0	0
Wal Chahal	0	0	0	0	0
Haqeeq Dar	0	0	0	0	0
Siobhan Dauti	0	0	0	0	0
Balwinder Dhillon	0	0	0	0	0
Andrea Escott	0	0	0	0	0
Harjinder Gahir	0	0	0	0	0
Bally Gill	0	0	0	0	0
Christine Hulme	0	0	0	0	0
Adil Iftakhar	0	0	0	0	0
Mark Instone	0	0	0	0	0
Paul Kelly	0	0	0	0	0
Nadeem Khawar	0	0	0	0	0
Gurcharan Manku	0	0	0	0	0
Pavitar Kaur Mann	0	0	0	0	0
Fiza Matloob	0	0	0	0	0
Maroof Mohammad	0	0	0	0	0
Subhash Mohindra	0	0	0	0	0
Chandra Muvvala	0	0	0	0	0
Asim Naveed	0	0	0	0	0
Mohammed Nazir	0	0	0	0	0
Frank O'Kelly	0	0	0	0	0
Dilbagh Parmar	0	0	0	0	0
Naveeda Qaseem	0	0	0	0	0
Neel Rana	0	0	0	0	0
Jamila Sabah	0	0	0	0	0
Waqas Sabah	0	0	0	0	0
Zafar Satti	0	0	0	0	0
Ishrat Shah	0	0	0	0	0
Mabu Shaik	0	0	0	0	0
Dexter Smith	0	0	0	0	0
Robert Stedmond	0	0	0	0	0
Dhruv Tomar	0	0	0	0	0
Anna Wright	0	0	0	0	0
Rifaqat Zarait	0	0	0	0	0