



AGENDA ITEM: 7

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10 July 2013

PUBLICATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS ONLINE

Report by Gareth Owens, Deputy Clerk to the Authority

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider publishing the current public register of members' interests online.

Background

2. Councillors are required to record or register certain matters with the Monitoring Officer:
 - Under Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000, councillors must record financial and other interests such as land holdings and membership of societies
 - Under paragraph 11(4) of the code councillors must confirm in writing to me the details of any interest declared orally at a meeting
 - Under paragraph 17 of the code councillors must notify me within 28 days of receiving any gift, hospitality, material benefit or advantage the value of which exceeds £10
3. The Fire Authority must ensure that copies of these records are available at an office of the Authority for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable hours. Until now, that has meant that the forms are held by the Committee Services Team and shown to members of the public on request.

4. It has been suggested by the Welsh Government that the "register" should be published online. This suggestion was endorsed by the WLGA on 22nd February (see attached letter from Carl Sargeant AM dated 15th January 2013). Sadly, the correspondence did not specify whether the term "register" included all 3 categories above or just the register under Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Considerations

5. Whilst it would be possible to put any or all of the categories of information on to the web site, this would need to be explored further in order to establish what changes would be needed to the site itself. Likewise, a decision would be made about whether the forms would need to be retyped or whether it would be possible to scan in the forms that are submitted.
6. Publishing registered interests in this way would make it easier for the public to inspect the register and would not give them access to any information that they do not already possess.
7. If the Fire Authority chooses to do this voluntarily then it can decide which of the 3 categories to publish. Given that declarations of interest at meetings are contained within the minutes of meetings (already online) I would suggest that the register under Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000 and notifications of gifts etc be published in this way.

Recommendation

8. That this matter be investigated and a report taken to the Executive Panel for further consideration.