

Proposal form for items for consideration by Overview Committee



Submitted by: Cllr Paul Millar

Date submitted: 30/09/2021

Item for Consideration: Public Register of Senior Officer Interests

Expected outcome (i.e. new policy, new action, new partnership, improve the performance of other public bodies or of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas):

New policy, increase the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objective of greater democracy and transparency.

Priority for matter to be considered (please tick):

High (up to 3 months)	X
Medium (3 to 6 months)	
Low (over 9 months)	

Basis on which priority has been set:

The suggested item should be included in future programme(s) because: (please tick as appropriate)

a) It is a district level function over which the district has some control	X
b) It is a new policy area or service area of activity to be developed and introduced	
c) It is a policy area which has been required for some time and is due for development	
d) It is a major proposal for change	X
e) It is an issue raised via complaints received	
f) It is an area of public concern	X
g) It would be of benefit to residents of the district	X

Which of the Council's objectives does the issue address?:

Outstanding Council and Council Services

Is there a deadline for the Council to make a decision? (If so, when and why?): No, but as soon as possible would further increase public and Councillor confidence in officers that serve the Council.

Members are requested to provide information on the following:-

What do you wish to achieve from the review?:

A public register of senior officer interests

Are the desired outcomes likely to be achievable?:

Yes

Will it change/increase efficiency and cost effectiveness?:

These are not relevant - it would be a benefit to the organisation's corporate governance and transparency.

Additional information – an explanatory sentence or paragraph to be provided below to support each box which has been ticked:

It is a district level function over which the district has some control

East Devon District Council officers are accountable to the Council as a whole, including Councillors and residents of the District.

It is a major proposal for change

It is not for me to comment on whether this new page on the website would signify a major proposal for change. It would increase work for Democratic Services in terms of inputting adapted versions of forms which are already onto the Council website for senior officers. Many Councils published a Register for Senior Officer Interests, e.g. <https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/4365/Register-of-Senior-Officers-Interests>

It is an area of public concern

At the last Standards Working Group meeting, Cllr Ingham suggested that officers had attended corporate events and potentially accepted gifts and hospitality. I have also been told of a senior officer attending cricket matches with a senior Councillor of the former administration, which if true ought to be prevented in future to avoid any suggestion of a conflict of interest. In my view, this is something that would concern a reasonable member of the public, and a process for declaring such interests and have these available would be very beneficial. At Councils, senior officers have a large amount of delegated authority to take major decisions affecting the District - this includes spending up to £20 million from the Commercial Investment Fund.

It would benefit the residents of the District

It may lead to reassurance among some members of the public who prior to my election had a very negative view of certain senior officers. This affected the way I viewed officers.

Please can you return the completed form to Democratic Services via email to democraticservices@eastdevon.gov.uk.

MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS

It is a legal requirement for member's Register of Interests to be made publicly available. There is no such obligation in relation to employees of any level. All officers complete a register of interest that it is held by the Council. Consideration will need to be given to what level of officer the disclosure would affect and in

that regard the legal position and human rights / data protection considerations. If there was a recommendation to require this in relation to current officers, as opposed to in the future, it has the potential to affect the terms and conditions of employment and therefore it will need to involve discussion with the Union. Members should consider that this is appropriately a matter for the Standards Committee and / or Personnel Committee to be involved in given the foregoing.

Date: 4th October 2021