

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2011

1. ONLINE REGISTER OF INTERESTS

The Committee, at its meeting held on 1 December 2010, considered a report by the Head of Democratic Services concerning the possible use of the Modern.Gov committee administration software to enable all Borough Councillors and Co-opted Members of the Standards Committee to register their interests online via the intranet and members of the public to inspect the Register of Interests forms online. It was noted that it was proposed that Parish Councillors would continue to use the current paper system. Having raised a number of queries/concerns, the Committee decided not to proceed with the new system.

At its meeting held on 10 February 2011, the Committee reviewed this decision. It was noted that Members/Co-opted Members were required to complete and submit the Register of Interests form to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of being elected/re-elected/appointed and within 28 days of a change in circumstances. Currently, the forms were completed by hand and sent to the Monitoring Officer. The completion of the process through the intranet would be less time-consuming. The Monitoring Officer would be sent an automatic email notification when a form was submitted, together with a link to the form. The Monitoring Officer would then review the form and any queries could be resolved and amendments made before publication. The system would send automatic reminders to Members/Co-opted Members who had not submitted the forms and the Monitoring Officer would also be able to see this information. Training sessions would be arranged.

In response to questions, the Officers explained that:-

- Independent Members and Parish Council representatives on the Standards Committee who did not have access to the intranet could continue to send hard copy details to the Monitoring Officer/system administrator for inputting (and indeed any Member who did not want to do it online);
- Only the Member/Co-opted Member would be able to amend an entry although the Monitoring Officer/system administrator could make changes if required, but only with the written approval of the Member/Co-opted Member concerned;
- If it did become necessary to amend a form, earlier versions would be archived for future reference if necessary;
- All Members/Co-opted Members would be asked to do the online version and not just those Members elected at the next election; and
- It was anticipated that the system provider would respond to changes in the regulations relating to the registration of interests.

The Committee felt that, in the interests of transparency, the Modern.Gov committee administration software should be used for the registration of interests.

RECOMMENDED: That the use of the Mod.Gov committee administration software to enable all Borough Councillors and Co-opted Members of the Standards Committee to register their interests online and members of the public to inspect the Register of Interests forms online be approved and that the new arrangements be introduced at the start of the new Municipal Year.