



Department for
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02 AUG 2012

To all Local Authority Leaders

Dear Colleague,

I wrote to you on 28 June about the new standards arrangements for council members. I am now writing to let you know that we have today published a guide for councillors on openness and transparency on personal interests.

This is a practical guide which will help all to properly understand the new arrangements and shows clearly how these arrangements strike a common sense balance between accountability of elected representatives and personal privacy. I would hope that you and all members of your council will want to carefully look through the guide – I am sure that you will find it helpful as you go about your day-to-day business as elected members serving your local communities.

The guide gives straightforward information about how councillors should be open and transparent about their personal interests. It makes clear to monitoring officers that any heavy bureaucratic, 'gold plated' approach has no place in the new localist standards arrangements.

The guide equally makes clear that every councillor should be giving their monitoring officer all the information they need to get and keep their register of members' interests up to date. The legal requirements mean that sitting councillors, just like newly elected councillors, should be registering their disclosable pecuniary interests.

Moreover, a member's disclosable pecuniary interests, as the guide explains, include certain interests of their spouse or civil partner. But as the guide also explains, there is no requirement that in the register a member's interest should be differentiated from those of his or her spouse or civil partner or that the names of the spouse or civil partner should be disclosed.

Copies of the guide are available on my Department's web-site. We are confident that this will help all those who have chosen to serve their communities as councillors to ensure that there is openness and transparency about their affairs whilst their legitimate privacy is properly respected.

BOB NEILL MP