



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards (Corporate Issue)

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:
Standards Committee

24 November 2004

Code of Conduct: Registering of Interests and Freemasonry – Revised Guidance

Report of the Town Clerk and Director of Resources, Access and Diversity

1. Purpose of Report

To advise Members on the revised guidance issued by the Standards Board for England in relation to Members Declarations concerning Freemasonry membership.

2. Report

- 2.1. Members will recall that, at their January 2004 meeting, the then just published National Standards Board guidance on Freemasonry was considered. At that time, the advice was that, although it was not necessary for Freemasons to register membership of their lodge (unless it was a lodge directed to charitable purposes or had a charitable status) it was necessary for Freemasons to register their membership of The Grand Charity.
- 2.2. Following discussions, the National Standards Board have been asked to issue further clarification on the issue. The updated position remains that most Freemasons will, by virtue of membership of The Grand Charity, be required to register an interest. However, it is permissible for an individual Freemason to opt out of membership of The Grand Charity.
- 2.3. The National Standards Board have amended their web site FAQ (number 38) to reflect this clarification. The amended FAQ text is given below for information:-

'Registering and declaring membership of the Freemasons

Freemasons who are members of The Grand Charity must register membership of The Grand Charity under paragraph 15 (c) of the Code of Conduct in the Register of Members' Interests and declare when appropriate their membership of The Grand Charity as a personal or prejudicial interest before or during council meetings.

If an individual Lodge is one which has charitable status or could be described as a body directed towards charitable purposes then membership would need to be registered.

Membership of charities or bodies directed to charitable purposes must be registered in the register of interests in accordance with paragraph 15(c) of the Code of Conduct.

It is important to remember that declarations of interest operate independently of the requirement to register certain interests. As with all types of interests, if a matter under discussion would affect a member more than other people in the council's area because the member is a Freemason, then the member will need to declare the existence and nature of that interest, such as membership of the Order or an individual Lodge, before the matter is discussed. The member will need to consider whether the interest is also prejudicial.'

Several Members of the City Council have declared their membership of the Freemasons. However, as the current numbers may change, it is recommended that the attention be drawn to all Members of Council, including Co-opted Members, regarding this updated guidance from the National Standards Board.

3. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:-

- (i) note the updated guidance on Declarations of Interest by Freemasons produced by the Standards Board for England; and,
- (ii) endorse that the attention be drawn, by letter, to all Members of Council, including Co-opted Members, regarding this updated guidance as produced by the Standards Board for England.

4. Financial and Legal Implications

No financial implications. Legal implications are contained in the report. (Peter Nicholls).

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	No		
Policy	No		
Sustainable and Environmental	No		
Crime and Disorder	No		
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	No		

4. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

None.

5. Consultations

None.

6. Report Author

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