

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Standards Committee
Date: 22 September 2022
Report for: Decision
Report of: Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Report Title

Publication of Members' Addresses on the Declaration of Interests Register

Summary

This report follows on from the earlier report which the Committee received in December 2021 (Appendix 2). Since that meeting a report has gone been taken to the Executive and a consultation exercise has been carried out amongst Elected Members. The report now presents the outcomes of the consultation along with three proposals for how the Council may choose to proceed.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Standards Committee;

- a) Note the content of the report and;
- b) Select a preferred proposal from those identified in this report for the Council to adopt taking into consideration the information received through the consultation.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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1.0 Background Information

1.1 The Standards Committee received a report on the 15th of December 2021 (appendix 2). In that report the Committee was informed of the current position regarding the publication of members' addresses on the published Declarations of Interest pages within Trafford, the statutory requirements, the views of the Committee for Standards in Public Life, and approaches adopted by other Local Authorities. The report also contained three proposals on how Trafford could choose to proceed in this area.

1.2 As it is normally a matter for the member concerned and the Monitoring Officer to determine whether to treat an interest as a sensitive interest on a case-by-case basis (under section 32 (1) (b) of the Localism Act 2011; the Committee agreed that a consultation on publication of councillor addresses be conducted to inform the selection of which proposal to approve.

2.0 Options for consideration

2.1 There are effectively three potential options which could be applied regarding the requirement to register members' addresses: -

- Make no changes to the way the Council approaches the disclosure of Members' addresses on the public register - Trafford's current approach is in keeping with the rest of the Greater Manchester Authorities and most Authorities across the country;
- Remind all members about the possibility of applying for their details to be considered as sensitive interests and then apply a dispensation in respect of any and all members who request that the details of their address are not made publicly available. This is in line with the recommendations of the CSPL in their 2017 report;
- To apply a blanket policy whereby all Members' addresses are treated as sensitive interests and not made publicly available - This would mirror the approach already taken by a few authorities including City of Westminster Council.

3.0 Consultation outcomes

3.1 Appendix 1 contains the responses received to a survey sent to all Councillors on the subject of Councillor Addresses. The survey contained a series of questions which related to Councillor's feelings of safety in carrying out their role and the impact having their address being publicly available had upon their feelings of safety. The survey was completed by 41 Councillors, which represents a 65% return rate.

3.2 The survey raised several points and replies which are anonymised show the views of those who responded. The issues discussed related to Councillors feeling at risk, their protection by the Council, abuse and intimidation, safety, awareness of addresses being made available to the public, and the process for omission of that information.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Standards Committee;

- a) Note the content of the report and;
- b) Select a preferred proposal from those identified in this report for the Council to adopt taking into consideration the information received through the consultation.