

Walsall Council Standards Committee Working Group  
Initiation Document

<b>Work Group Name:</b>	Standards Committee Working Group
<b>Committee:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Municipal Year:</b>	2024/25
<b>Chair:</b>	A. Green
<b>Vice Chair:</b>	Councillor R. Martin
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Tony Cox
<b>Support Officer:</b>	Luke Cook/Neil Picken
<b>Membership:</b>	Councillors R. Martin, R. Burley, H. Bashir, M. Follows, and R.K. Mehmi
<b>Co-opted Members:</b>	Ms D. Mardner and Mr A. Green

<b>1.</b>	<b>Context</b>
	On 30 September 2024, the Standards Committee agreed to re-establish a Working Group to look at the issue of disclosable and non-disclosable interests and receive a report back from this Working Group once it has concluded its work.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
	<p style="color: red;">What do you want it to achieve? It is important to have clearly defined outcomes at the start to give the working group direction and ensure it adds value.</p> <p>To review the Council's existing guidance and process for the registration and disclosure of interests. The working group would like to achieve: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity regarding the register, disclosure and monitoring of interests, including sensitive interests for Members and clearer guidance in relation to non-registerable interests.</li> <li>• An update of guidance for members of the public on the 'how to complain about a member' webpage with 'myth busting' examples and case studies.</li> <li>• To produce an action plan for how a training programme will be applied and provided to Members.</li> <li>• To produce a visual framework of definitions.</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Scope</b>
	<p style="color: red;">What should be included and excluded?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Committee on Standards in public life.</li> <li>b) Clarification on potential conflicts of interest such as trade matters when dealing with licensing.</li> <li>c) Guidance on Planning matters and disclosing interests.</li> <li>d) Improving guidance and definitions of 'Other Registerable Interests and 'Non-Registerable Interests'.</li> </ol>

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<b>4. Equalities Implications</b>											
	<p>The public sector equality duty in Section 149 of the Equality Act requires public bodies to take active steps to eliminate discrimination and to do positive things to promote equality.</p> <p>The working group will consider the equality impact of their recommendations.</p>										
<b>5. Who else will you want to take part?</b>											
	<p style="color: red;">Think about who else, other than lead officers and members, it would be useful to include either as part of the working group or to bring information at specific points. For example- partners, stakeholders, other authorities.</p> <p>This is an internal review with officers, elected Members, and Independent Members.</p>										
<b>6. Timescales &amp; Reporting Schedule</b>											
	<p>The following dates are based upon the need for the working group to be completed in the same Municipal Year:</p> <p>Initial meeting to be held during January 2025, second meeting in February 2025, and final report to Standards Committee on 22 April 2025.</p>										
<b>7. Risk factors</b>											
	<p style="color: red;">Are there any obstacles that can be predicted? For example, is it dependent on other organisations outside your control and duty to cooperate? Identifying these factors early and how they will be mitigated should help minimise their impact.</p>										
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Risk</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Likelihood</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Mitigation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Final report not completed within the Municipal Year.</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Clerk to work with Director of Governance to ensure adherence to schedule.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Labour Government have indicated that they will consult on the reform of Local Government Standards Framework (including a proposal to allow for the suspension of Members).</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Monitoring the national landscape with timely reporting to the Working Group where necessary and if this includes registration of interests.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation	Final report not completed within the Municipal Year.	Low	Clerk to work with Director of Governance to ensure adherence to schedule.	Labour Government have indicated that they will consult on the reform of Local Government Standards Framework (including a proposal to allow for the suspension of Members).	Low	Monitoring the national landscape with timely reporting to the Working Group where necessary and if this includes registration of interests.
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Date Agreed:	15.01.25	Date Updated:	16.01.2025
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**Timetable:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
15 January 2025	To approve the initiation document and undertake review of existing guidance.
TBC February 2025	Update on national landscape and further review of guidance and Q&As.
22 April 2025	Final report to Standards Committee.