Draft Notes for Councillors : Code of conduct : Declaration of Pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests

The PC has adopted the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct which deals with the registration of personal interests. This note is a very brief summary of the basic principles, bearing in mind that issues around members’ interest may emerge meeting by meeting.

**A pecuniary interest** is a financial interest you may hold in any matter that the council is discussing and/or making a decision about, or you may be related to or associated with the people or an organisation involved in a financial consideration. That interest would be considered as being likely to influence any specific council actions or decisions.

**A non-pecuniary interest** is a personal or private interest that is non-financial that would be considered as being likely to influence any specific council actions or decisions. It may, for example, arise from family or personal relationships, involvement in community, social, sporting, religious or other cultural groups.

It includes any tendency toward favour or prejudice resulting from friendship, animosity or other personal involvement that could bias your judgement or decisions.

It is not just a matter of whether you personally feel able to ignore the connection and make an unbiased decision. The test is whether:

- a reasonable person,

- with knowledge of **all the circumstances**,

would consider that a person in your position would be likely to be influenced in making the decision.

For example, a councillor may work for the same organisation as a person affected by the decision, but the actual connection between them may be so slight as to be insignificant.

The decision whether to participate in a decision or to withdraw because of an interest is for the individual member to make. It is not for the Chair or the meeting as a whole to direct them.

All Council members should come to meetings where decisions are being made with an open mind- that is, with the possibility that they may be persuaded to change their view if they have one prior to the meeting.

All of this hinges on the notion of bias.

Bias

It is possible that you might not have a formal interest to declare in an item, but your personal circumstances link you closely with some business of the council so that you might find, or be perceived to find, it difficult to take an impartial decision you should not take part in the decision.

General advice: Always declare an interest where you have a relationship with people or organisations involved in an issue the council is making a decision about. The safest option is to withdraw from the room while the matter is discussed or decision is made.

*Information gleaned from a number of current local councils published documentation and askyourcouncil.uk/personal-interests which in turns refers to gov legislation .*

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