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Date: **6th December 2018**
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STANDARDS HEARINGS SUB-COMMITTEE

14 DECEMBER 2018

A meeting of the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee will be held at **2.00 pm on Friday, 14 December 2018** in the Pugin Room - Council Offices.

Membership:

Dr Jonathan Sexton (Independent Chairman) and Mrs Janet Bacon (Independent Vice Chairman), Mr Dennis James (Independent Person)

Councillors: Tomlinson and Townend

Parish Councillor: Quittenden

A G E N D A

Item
No

Subject

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
3. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS** (Pages 3 - 6)
4. **TDCSC206/18** (Pages 7 - 68)

Declaration of Interests Form

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EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Standards Hearing Sub-Committee – 14/12/2018

Report Author **Director of Corporate Governance**

Status **For Decision**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Key Decision **No**

Executive Summary:

This report is necessary in order to exclude the press and public from the meeting for consideration of item 4. It will weigh the public interest factors for disclosure against the public interest factors for exemption and explain why the exemption factors take priority.

The report will also state the which paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the author is using in order to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

Recommendation(s):

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for agenda item 4 as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money	There are no direct financial implications.
Legal	As per Part 1 of Schedule 12A and Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).
Corporate	Thanet District Council will endeavour to keep the number of exempt reports it produces to a minimum in order to promote transparency.
Equalities Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty	Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.	
	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,	
	Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it	
	Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	
	There are no specific equity and equality considerations that need to be addressed in this report.	

CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓	
A clean and welcoming Environment	
Promoting inward investment and job creation	
Supporting neighbourhoods	

CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓	
Delivering value for money	
Supporting the Workforce	
Promoting open communications	✓

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Whilst the starting point for all public meetings of the Council is to admit the public and press, they may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that confidential or exempt information would be disclosed. Under such circumstances, confidential or exempt information may be excluded from the public agenda. The public and press must be excluded from meetings if confidential information will be considered and disclosed, and such material must be excluded from the public agenda.

Meaning of confidential information

- 1.2 Confidential information means information given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure or information which cannot be publicly disclosed by Court Order.

Exempt information – discretion to exclude public

- 1.3 Subject to Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 (right to a fair trial) the public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that “exempt” information would be disclosed.

2.0 Exempt information

- 2.1 The full rules are set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12A and Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972 (as Amended).

3.0 Reason Why Agenda Items 4 is considered to be “exempt”

- 3.1 The report author has classified Agenda Item 4 as disclosing exempt information under Paragraph 1 – *Information relating to an individual*, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) thereby suggesting that the press and public be excluded from the meeting whilst this item is debated.

4.0 Justification/Public Interest Test

PUBLIC INTEREST FACTORS FOR DISCLOSURE

Factors suggested by the Information Commissioner as being relevant to an assessment of public interest apply to this information. Disclosure would:-

- 1. Further public understanding of the issues involved;*
- 2. Further public participation in the public debate of issues, in that disclosure would allow a more informed debate;*
- 3. Promote accountability and transparency by the Council for the decisions it takes;*
- 4. Promote accountability and transparency in the spending of public money;*
- 5. Allow individuals and organisations /external agencies to understand decisions made by the Council affecting their lives & activities and assist individuals to challenge those decisions;*

REASONS IN FAVOUR OF DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO THE ISSUE IN QUESTION

[The report author should offer an argument for justification for disclosure of information that is specific to the information in question.]

PUBLIC INTEREST FACTORS FOR EXEMPTION

Considerations which may weigh against a decision to disclose information include:

- 1. Good local government depends on good decision-making and this needs to be based on the best advice available and a full consideration of all the options without fear of premature disclosure;*
- 2. Advice should be broad based and there may be a deterrent effect on external experts or stakeholders who might be reluctant to provide advice because it might be disclosed;*
- 3. The impartiality of the officers might be undermined if advice was routinely made public as there is a risk that officials could come under political pressure not to challenge ideas in the formulation of policy, thus leading to poorer decision making;*
- 4. Members and officers also need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and programmes including considerations of the pros and cons without there being premature disclosure which might close off better options;*
- 5. There needs to be a free space in which it is possible to 'think the unthinkable' and use imagination, without the fear that policy proposals will be held up to ridicule;*
- 6. Some aspects of Legal advice to Members may need to be taken in private as disclosure of such information would prejudice the position of Council in the event of Court proceedings taking place thereafter;*
- 7. Local Councils are obliged to adhere to legislation that include the Data Protection Act, 1998; where appropriate and failure to do so may result in litigation against Council by an*

aggrieved party thereby putting at risk the general public interest to protect the public purse

5.0 Not Excluding the Press and Public

- 5.1 There will be occasions when the meeting may decline to exclude the press and public from the meeting. If that occurs it does not simply mean that those members of the press and public who are present are allowed to stay for the discussion of the item(s). Declining to exclude the press and public would also mean that the press and public are allowed access to the actual report contained within the confidential part of the agenda (what Democratic Services refer to as the “pink pages”).
- 5.2 Members may wish to note that if a committee member is of the view that it is possible that the recommendation in this report may not be approved at the meeting, they should let Democratic Services know (as soon as they have read the agenda papers before the meeting); in order that spare copies are made available ready to be distributed, if necessary, at the meeting.
- 5.3 If the referred item is not exempted, Democratic Services would also make arrangements for the report to be retrospectively published on the Council’s website.

6.0 Decision Making Process

- 6.1 If the press and public are to be excluded for the agenda item; this Committee must exercise its power to agree the recommendation.

Contact Officer:	Nicholas Hughes, Committee Services Manager
Reporting to:	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance

Annex List

None	
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Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	

Corporate Consultation

Legal	Timothy Howes, Director of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer
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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Agenda Item 4 Annex 1

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THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL DECLARATION OF INTEREST FORM

Do I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and if so what action should I take?

Your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) are those interests that are, or should be, listed on your Register of Interest Form.

If you are at a meeting and the subject relating to one of your DPIs is to be discussed, in so far as you are aware of the DPI, you **must** declare the existence **and** explain the nature of the DPI during the declarations of interest agenda item, at the commencement of the item under discussion, or when the interest has become apparent

Once you have declared that you have a DPI (unless you have been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee or the Monitoring Officer, for which you will have applied to the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting) you **must:-**

1. Not speak or vote on the matter;
2. Withdraw from the meeting room during the consideration of the matter;
3. Not seek to improperly influence the decision on the matter.

Do I have a significant interest and if so what action should I take?

A significant interest is an interest (other than a DPI or an interest in an Authority Function) which:

1. Affects the financial position of yourself and/or an associated person; or
Relates to the determination of your application for any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration made by, or on your behalf of, you and/or an associated person;
2. And which, in either case, a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgment of the public interest.

An associated person is defined as:

- A family member or any other person with whom you have a close association, including your spouse, civil partner, or somebody with whom you are living as a husband or wife, or as if you are civil partners; or
- Any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors; or
- Any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000;
- Any body of which you are in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by the Authority; or
- any body in respect of which you are in a position of general control or management and which:
 - exercises functions of a public nature; or
 - is directed to charitable purposes; or
 - has as its principal purpose or one of its principal purposes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

An Authority Function is defined as: -

- Housing - where you are a tenant of the Council provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease; or
- Any allowance, payment or indemnity given to members of the Council;
- Any ceremonial honour given to members of the Council
- Setting the Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992

If you are at a meeting and you think that you have a significant interest then you **must** declare the existence **and** nature of the significant interest at the commencement of the

matter, or when the interest has become apparent, or the declarations of interest agenda item.

Once you have declared that you have a significant interest (unless you have been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee or the Monitoring Officer, for which you will have applied to the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting) you **must**:-

1. Not speak or vote (unless the public have speaking rights, or you are present to make representations, answer questions or to give evidence relating to the business being discussed in which case you can speak only)
2. Withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the matter or immediately after speaking.
3. Not seek to improperly influence the decision.

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

Councillors must declare at meetings any gift, benefit or hospitality with an estimated value (or cumulative value if a series of gifts etc.) of £25 or more. You **must**, at the commencement of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, disclose the existence and nature of the gift, benefit or hospitality, the identity of the donor and how the business under consideration relates to that person or body. However you can stay in the meeting unless it constitutes a significant interest, in which case it should be declared as outlined above.

What if I am unsure?

If you are in any doubt, Members are strongly advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager well in advance of the meeting.

DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS AND GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY

MEETING.....

DATE..... AGENDA ITEM

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY

THE NATURE OF THE INTEREST, GIFT, BENEFITS OR HOSPITALITY:

.....
.....
.....

NAME (PRINT):

SIGNATURE:

Please detach and hand this form to the Democratic Services Officer when you are asked to declare any interests.