

Check List for Elected Members on Declarations of Interest

Types of Interest

Pecuniary Interests

Pecuniary (or financial) interests are those where the decision to be taken could financially benefit or financially disadvantage either you or a member of your close family. A member of your close family is defined as at least your spouse, live-in partner, parent, child, brother, sister and the spouses of any of these. Members may wish to be more prudent by extending that list to include grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces or even close friends.

Significant Non-Pecuniary Interests

These are interests which do not financially benefit or financially disadvantage you or a member of your close family directly but, nevertheless, are significant.

When do I need to declare an interest and what do I have to do?

At Council, Committee or Working Group Meetings

You are required to declare any pecuniary or significant non-pecuniary interest at any meeting of the full Council, any Standing Committee meeting or any meeting of a Council Working Group.

At the commencement of every meeting the Chairperson will ask if any Member has any interest to declare. You should either do so at that stage or immediately before the matter itself is discussed.

At the full Council meeting, you do **not** have to declare an interest if a matter simply appears in the minutes of a Committee meeting which are submitted for ratification **unless** that matter becomes the subject of a debate at the meeting. In those circumstances, you must declare the interest once the matter comes up for debate.

In making the declaration, you must state the nature of the interest. It is not sufficient to simply say that you have an interest. Having done so, you must leave the room in which the meeting is being held and not take any part in the debate or vote on the matter.

At Council, Committee or Working Group Meetings when issues affecting Outside Bodies to which you have been appointed by the Council are being discussed

The Code of Conduct for Councillors makes it clear that you must declare any interest which arises because you are a member of an outside body to which you have been appointed by the Council.

If the appointment is to a public body or a charity, voluntary body or other organisation formed for a public purpose then you may stay at the meeting and take part in the debate and vote. If the appointment is to a body not covered by that definition then you must follow the rules that would apply as if it were a Committee meeting and leave the meeting and not take part in the debate or vote.

The Outside Bodies to which the Council makes appointments and which are considered to fall under the definition of a public body or a charity, voluntary body or other organisation formed for a public purpose are as follows:

- Policing and Community Safety Partnership and the 4 District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships
- Active Belfast Ltd Board
- Belfast City Centre Management Board
- Belfast Strategic Partnership for Health and Wellbeing
- George Best Belfast City Airport Forum
- Visit Belfast
- Association of Port Health Authorities Executive Board
- Belfast Hills Partnership
- Board of the Ulster Orchestra Society Ltd
- Cathedral Quarter Trust
- Court of the University of Ulster
- Grand Opera House Trust
- Groundwork NI
- Lagan Canal Restoration Trust
- Lagan Valley Regional Park Advisory Committee
- Linenhall Library Board
- Local Strategic Partnership on Travellers' Issues
- Lyric Theatre Education Advisory Panel
- Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme
- Somme Advisory Panel
- Tall Ships
- University Community Liaison Forum
- National Association of Councillors
- Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- Community Centre Advisory Committees

At Council, Committee or Working Group Meetings when issues affecting other Outside Bodies to which you belong are being discussed

You may hold membership on other outside bodies where you have decided to take such membership on a personal basis (such as sporting or cultural clubs or associations) or where your membership has been through a public appointments process (such as the Belfast Harbour Commissioners). You are required to declare any pecuniary or significant non-pecuniary interests which you have in the same way in which you would at Council Committee meetings.

General Principles

In deciding whether or not you have a declarable interest you should apply the following principles:

1. It is the personal responsibility of each Councillor to ensure that he or she complies with the Conflicts of Interest Policy

2. Councillors should only play a role in the decision making process if they can demonstrate objectivity
3. In considering whether an interest is material, a Councillor must consider not only whether he or she will be influenced but also whether a member of the public, acting reasonably, might think that he or she might be influenced (the public perception test)
4. Where a material interest exists, either direct or indirect, objectivity will always be assumed to be impaired
5. If in doubt, even after discussing the matter with colleagues or the Town Solicitor, a Councillor should err on the side of caution. A Councillor cannot be accused of behaving improperly by declaring an interest which does not exist. However, Councillors do run the risk of serious criticism and possible sanction if they do not declare an interest and act appropriately in respect of an interest that does exist

If a Member is in any doubt about whether or not he or she has an interest which requires to be declared they should check either with the Democratic Services Manager or the Town Solicitor. However, ultimately, the responsibility as to whether or not to make a declaration lies with the individual.