

Dartford Borough Council- Guidance on Sensitive Interests

1. As the report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life said, “Everyone in public life must play their part in taking responsibility for combatting intimidatory behaviour”. Intimidation is unacceptable and it is vital that councillors feel able to raise concerns about intimidation, and that those in leadership positions in councils take any concerns seriously, and deal with them appropriately.
2. A ‘**sensitive**’¹ disclosable pecuniary interest is one where you consider that the public disclosure of the details could lead to you, or (a person connected with you), being subject to violence or intimidation, and the Monitoring Officer agrees.
3. A ‘sensitive’ interest may include specific types of employment e.g. scientific research, Special Forces, police and judiciary or other interests such as your home address, that are likely to create serious risk of violence or intimidation against you or someone who lives with you.

You should provide this information to the Monitoring Officer and explain your concerns regarding the disclosure of the sensitive information, including why it is likely to create a serious risk that you or a person who lives with you, will be subjected to violence or intimidation.

The Monitoring Officer will look sympathetically at such requests where there are legitimate concerns of abuse or intimidation e.g. if you are dealing with matters pertaining to criminal justice and may be taking decisions that will affect those who may be involved in crime or who are affected by crime, the publication of your address may put you in a particular category of risk of retaliation, retribution or death threats for your action/decisions.

4. The [Member] Register of Interests is publicly accessible, through inspection and published on the [Council's website](#). If the Monitoring Officer agrees that your interest is ‘sensitive’, the Register will not include details of the interest, other than stating that you have an interest, the details of which are withheld.
5. If you are required to declare an interest at a meeting, you should disclose merely the fact that you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, rather than detail/nature of the interest².
6. The Monitoring Officer may disagree that your interest is ‘sensitive’ You should be aware that choosing to post the ‘sensitive’ information in the public domain, using social media websites, then further amplified by Google and other search engines, may dilute the ‘sensitivity’ of the information.
7. If the Monitoring Officer disagrees that your interest is ‘sensitive’, you must declare the interest as normal. The interest will be entered on the [Member] Register of Interests.
8. **Elections**³ – all candidates in local government elections are able to request that their home address is not made public. Candidates can continue to include a home address if they wish to highlight their local connection to their ward. Candidates’ provide their ‘qualifying address separately.

¹ Section 32 Localism Act 2011

² Standing Order 19(4)

³ The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) (Amendment) (England) Rules 2018

The elections process has its own set of rules. So too matters relating to declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Localism Act 2011. The fact that you, as a candidate in a local government election, have chosen not to make your home address public, in itself, is not a reason for withholding your address from the [Member] Register of Interests. You are still required to satisfy the Monitoring Officer that the public disclosure of your home address in the Register, could lead to you, or (a person connected with you), being subject to violence or intimidation.