
ADVISERS TO THE COUNCIL'S WORKING GROUPS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report addresses the position of advisers to the Council's Working Groups in the light of recent concerns.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the last meeting of the Cherry Orchard Country Park Working Group, Members gave consideration to the appointment of advisers. During debate reference was made to a Working Group meeting held earlier in the week during which it had emerged that papers circulated to Members of the Working Group had been copied and distributed outside the Members of the Group by one of the organisations represented in an advisory capacity. It was also observed at the Cherry Orchard meeting that advisers should be asked to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests they have during the course of meetings.
- 2.2 At its last meeting, Full Council considered recommendations from the Cherry Orchard Country Park Working Group and agreed that a view should be determined in respect of advisers to the Council's Working Groups.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The Council's protocol for Working Groups provides that a Working Group will not be given delegated decision-making powers and will exercise only a fact-finding consultancy or advisory role. As such, all Working Groups operate outside the Council's usual decision-making process and are not public meetings.
- 3.2 There is no reason why the Council's protocol cannot be adjusted to provide that, as a condition of appointment, advisers to Working Groups must agree to adhere to a requirement that they declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests they have during the course of meetings.
- 3.3 In terms of paperwork, advisers could be informed that all Working Group documentation should be treated in confidence as sensitive information not for public circulation. Alternatively, at the point a meeting is being convened, the lead officer could determine whether there is a need to identify any of the Agenda documentation as sensitive (taking account of what is already in the public domain). Working Groups can, of course, decide to convene at times without advisers present.

3.4 Pending determination of this aspect, the term 'Not for public circulation' is being included on Working Group Agendas and notes.

4 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee recommends:-

- (1) That the Working Group protocol be adjusted to provide that, as a condition of appointment, advisers must agree to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests they may have in connection with the business of the meeting.
- (2) That all paperwork is to be treated in confidence pending formal report to Council or a Committee unless already in the public domain.

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Background Papers:

Working Group Protocol

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