HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL

INTERNAL AUDIT MEMORANDUM

To:	**Jill Coule – Head of Legal and Democratic Services**	**From:**	**Vince Brock** **Internal Audit** **Ext. 3530**
Copy to:	**Steve Wallace – Audit Manager**	**Date:**	**11 March 2010**
Subject:	**Declarations of Members' Interests**		

Introduction and Background

1. As part of a proactive anti-fraud and corruption exercise and inspection of our governance arrangements, a review of the Members' Declarations of Interests was undertaken.

2. Completed Declaration of Interest forms were examined in relation to the 'Councillor's Code of Conduct' under the provisions based on the National Model Code of Local Government Conduct made by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which came into force on 3rd May 2007.

3. Members are required to register their financial and other interests and complete a notice within 28 days of election, re-election or appointment to office. Any change in the information contained in the notice must be notified within 28 days of the change to the Monitoring Officer at Hertsmere Borough Council.

4. Members' Declarations are published on the Hertsmere website and can be viewed by the General Public.

Scope and Methodology

5. The review of Members' Declarations of Interests involved the following: -

   a) Confirming that a declaration had been completed for each Member

   b) Ensuring that the declarations held were up to date and were current

   c) Examining details on the declarations to confirm that these were accurate and complete

   d) Potential conflicts of interest identified were traced to minutes of meeting to test whether or not these had been declared

Findings / Recommended Actions

6. Three findings or recommended actions have emerged from this review and these are as follows: -

Declarations Available

7. The review of all thirty-nine Members found one exception where a declaration had not been completed and published on Hertsmere's website. Although, the exception was found to relate to a recently elected Member.

   Recommendation:

8. A declaration of interest form should be completed by the Member concerned and published on Hertsmere Borough Council's website at the earliest opportunity.

Current Declarations

9. Fifteen instances were found where a new declaration has not been completed in its entirety and instead the front of the declaration had been re-dated. Of these, four were found to hold inconsistent information concerning nominations to outside bodies, compared to information held under Councillor profiles on the Hertsmere website.

   Recommendation:

10. A complete new Members' Declarations of Interest form should be completed in its entirety, rather than only being re-dated and signed. This will assist in ensuring that omissions are not made and changes are not overlooked.

Accuracy of Information

11. From the thirty-nine Members a total of nine exceptions, including the four at paragraph nine above, were found where details listed under the Councillor profiles on the website showing nomination to outside bodies that did not match the declaration form.

    Recommendation:

12. The list of outside bodies should be checked against details held on the Member's Declarations and changed where necessary.

Conclusion

13. This memo serves as a summary of the findings and following the review of Member's Declarations of Interest and presents three recommended actions for your consideration.

14. Should you have any comments or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Vince Brock
Auditor