

ITEM 13

**From:** CDALC <[CDALC@durham.gov.uk](mailto:CDALC@durham.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** Friday, June 28, 2024 1:37 AM

**Subject:** CDALC questions for councils

Dear clerks, chairs and executive committee members,

We have a couple of issues which we at CDALC would like your councils to consider. We want to hear your council's views about:

- [Local proposals by DCC to remove Member home addresses from the Register of Interests, unless the Member decides to opt-in](#) and;
- [A reminder of our upcoming CDALC elections for our officials positions for which we are seeking re/nominations in anticipation of our AGM](#)

## Register of Interests Members Home Addresses

**Deadline 31 July 2024.** Complete our [Register of Interests Members Addresses survey](#)

The CDALC Executive Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> June considered the DCC Register of Interests proposal for all Members' home addresses to be treated as sensitive and only the electoral division in which they live to be published, unless a Member opts in to have their home address published.

I have included below the [report considered by the Executive Committee](#) which provides further information and here is the [DCC report to Full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> June](#) with the item at no. 9, which was agreed at that meeting. Before completing the survey we recommend that you have a good read of all the information that we have provided including the hyperlinks.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June, the majority of CDALC's Executive Committee were in favour of the proposal but they also agreed that we would put out a survey to all our councils to ascertain views on the proposals before taking a final view and engaging further with DCC. The Committee embraced that there is a legitimate concern for elected members' security and safety by having home addresses so easily available online and it is one issue (of many) which adds to member vulnerability. There was acknowledgement that the degree of concern about access to home addresses may

impact individual members differently, that there may be potential for it to be used by some members to their advantage but that the measure to acknowledge the electoral area in which the member lives should help address this and that councils must ensure that Member contact details are always easily available.

Here is the [Register of Interests Members Addresses survey](#) for your council to complete, which asks whether your council agrees with the proposal and with an additional field to add any comments. **The deadline is 31 July 2024.**

## **AGENDA ITEM 8 (from CDALC Exec Committee meeting report on 19 June 2024)**

### **Publication of Members Addresses on Register of Interests Forms**

1. On 7 June 2024, DCC's Standards Committee agreed to recommend to its Full Council for the publication of Members home addresses on their Register of Interest forms to be changed so that all home addresses be treated as sensitive unless a Member opts in to have their address published on the Register. The item will soon be presented to the Full Council (*this was on 24<sup>th</sup> June after the CDALC Exec Committee*).
2. Should the proposal be agreed by DCC's Full Council, it will be expedient for CDALC to engage with the Monitoring Officer to ensure that the position of our parish and town councils is clear with respect to the proposed changes.
3. The Monitoring Officer (MO) of a principal authority is required to establish and maintain a register of interests of not just their own authority but also that of the parish and town councils within its area. Although it is for the local council to determine what is entered in the register, since the introduction of this statutory requirement all our parish and town councils under the auspices of CDALC have worked with DCC so that the contents of the Interests declarations are consistent within our local council sector and between both tiers of local govt. There is provision for the MO to withhold sensitive disclosable pecuniary interests where it is considered their inclusion could lead to the member being subject to violence or intimidation.
4. The full report on the item is found at Item 4 of [DCC Standards Committee report, 7 June 2024](#). The item was considered due to a national and local growing concern about the increase in the amount of abuse and

intimidation being faced by councillors. Various developments over a number of years reflect an increasing acceptance that the provision of publicly available addresses adds significantly to safety concerns for elected Member. Examples include the Minister for Local Govt writing to Monitoring Officers, urging them to consider sympathetically requests for an interest to be treated as sensitive, rules around elections being amended so that it is no longer obligatory for candidate addresses to be provided on the ballot paper, a recommendation by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in Jan 2019 to change to the legislation, so removing home addresses on register of interests and the LGA report 'The impact of abuse on local democracy' suggesting for local authorities move towards an 'opt-in' system making the default position for home addresses to be treated as sensitive

5. DCC councillors were consulted on whether to maintain the existing arrangements or whether to adopt an 'opt-in' or 'blanket' approach. Just over half of those responding supported an 'opt-in' preference, just over a quarter indicating a preference for a blanket approach for all home addresses to be removed while a fifth were content to leave the status quo. There was therefore overwhelming support for change with an 'opt in' approach preferred.

6. The MO in her report to the Standards Committee notes that taking the approach could result in legal challenge, however, she considers that the accumulation of evidence demonstrating the scale of the issue and changing attitudes to the legislation around the sensitivity of home addresses could be used to defend the position. A couple of other principal authorities, Trafford and Amber Valley Borough Council, have already introduced the change without legal challenge, suggesting the risks are low.