

**Registration and Declaration of Interests -
Standards of Conduct Committee consultation
Senedd Labour Group response
April 2023**

1. The Senedd Labour Group believes that the current arrangements and rules regarding the registration and declaration of interests remain broadly fit-for-purpose.
2. We would, however, like to make the following points relating to a number of the specific questions posed in the Committee's consultation document, which we hope will inform its ongoing inquiry into this matter.

Registering Interests

Are there any additional categories that should be captured? AND
Do the areas within each of the categories capture the correct information?

3. We believe there is a specific issue which should be addressed around the registration of a Member's interests where they are a landlord under category 8 of the register (land and property).
4. We believe that where a Member is a registered landlord with Rent Smart Wales, they should be required to specifically declare this in order to improve transparency as the financial and policy interests of landlords go beyond those of being a general property owner.

Declaring registerable and relevant interests

Are the rules on declaring relevant interests appropriate? AND

Could the rules and / or process be improved?

5. In our view, most Members comply with the current rules on the declaration of relevant interests.

6. However, we believe the rules for declarations during Senedd proceedings should be strengthened to require that Members have to specify the exact nature of the interest they are declaring.
7. At present, some Members have been known to make a very general declaration at the start of a contribution which simply refers to their 'entry in the Register of Members' Interests'.
8. In the name of full transparency, Members should be required to name the specific interest they are declaring, eg as a landlord.
9. We would also welcome a more vigorous enforcement of the rules on declarations in both Plenary and Committee meetings.
10. This should include an examination of whether the current consequences when a Member fails to declare an interest are sufficiently robust and public.
11. Further enforcement, consequences or penalties might help to encourage all Members to comply with these requirements at all times.

Do such declarations increase the transparency and accountability of Senedd proceedings?

12. We strongly believe that the declarations which Members are expected to make during Plenary and committee proceedings help to secure transparency and accountability in the system and that is why we would like to see these protections strengthened as outlined above.

Should interests be declared elsewhere, such as when tabling written questions and other tabled business?

13. We believe there is a case for requiring Members to declare interests when tabling written questions or other individual business, such as Member Bills, where there is a potential to influence decisions, financial arrangements or scrutiny. This would be consistent with the requirements on those tabling oral questions.

Additional registration requirements

Should family members be named under Standing Order 3?

14. We believe that the current requirement to record highly personal details relating to a Member's partner in some circumstances, including the date of marriage, civil partnership and divorce is both unnecessary and intrusive.
15. In our view, the pertinent information here concerns the financial and other interests of partners / spouses.
16. The requirement to declare the relationship status should therefore be reviewed, with a view to removing the need to register these very personal details.

The Guidance

Are there any improvements needed to the guidance?

17. We would welcome further guidance regarding the registration of the interests of partners, including whether their details have to be declared if they are not relevant to the Member's role and duties.

Any wider observations on the registration and declaration of interest for Members?

18. We welcome the changes which are being trialled to enable Members to register and update their entry via an electronic form.
19. Alongside this, we believe there would be a real merit in enabling Members to make changes to their entry via an email from their Senedd account.
20. Both methods would help to make the process of registering or updating interests far easier for Members and will therefore lead to a more up to date and robust register.