

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE
4th FEBRUARY 2005**

FREEMASONS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of some revised advice received from the Standards Board concerning Freemasons.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the advice be noted.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In early part of 2004 the Standards Board advised that although it was not necessary for Freemasons to register membership of their lodge (unless it was directed to charitable purposes or had charitable status), it was necessary for Freemasons to register their membership of the Grand Charity.

3.2 The Standards Board have now modified that guidance. The position remains that most Freemasons, will by virtue of membership of the Grand Charity, be required to register an interest. However, it is permissible for a member to opt out of the Grand Charity.

3.3 The Standards Board have also amended one of its frequently asked questions:

FAQ (38) states:

Registering and declaring membership of the Freemasons.

Freemasons who are members of the Grand Charity must register membership of the Grand Charity under paragraph 15(c) of the Code of Conduct in the Register of Members' Interest and declare when appropriate their membership of the Grand Charity as a personal or prejudicial interest before or during Council meetings.

If an individual Lodge is one which has charitable status or could be described as a body directed towards charitable purposes then membership would need to be registered.

Membership of charities or bodies directed to charitable purposes must be registered in the register of interests in accordance with paragraph 15(c) of the Code of Conduct.

It is important to remember that declarations of interest operate independently of the requirement to register certain interests. As with all types of interests, if a matter under discussion would affect a member more than other people in the Council's area because the member is a Freemason, then the Member will need to declare the existence and nature of that interest, such as membership of the Order or an individual Lodge, before the matter is discussed. The Member will need to consider whether the interest is also prejudicial.

R G Long
Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Telephone: 01642 729781