



the
Standards Board
for England

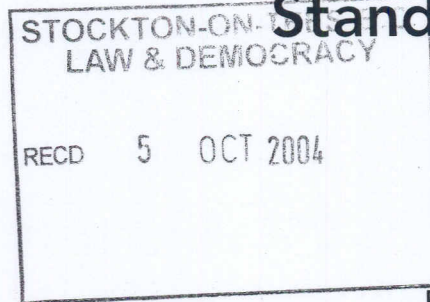
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4 October 2004

Mr David Bond
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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
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Dear Sir/Madam

Code of Conduct: Registering of Interests and Freemasonry – revised advice

We wrote to you earlier this year regarding the issue of Freemasons under the code of conduct and whether or not they should register membership of their Masonic lodge on the public register of interests. We advised that although it was not necessary for Freemasons to register membership of their lodge (unless it was a lodge directed to charitable purposes or had a charitable status), it was necessary for Freemasons to register their membership of the Grand Charity.

Following discussions, we have been asked to issue further clarification on the issue. 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 an individual Freemason to opt out of membership of the Grand Charity.

We have amended our website FAQ (number 38) to reflect this clarification, but I should be grateful if you could pass on this advice to members accordingly.

Please note below the amended FAQ:

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' Interests 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.

As you may be aware, the Board has been asked by the Government to look at possible revisions to the Code of Conduct. In consulting on possible revisions we shall be seeking views as to whether registration provisions could be made clearer.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Hoey', written in a cursive style.

Paul Hoey
Head of Policy and Guidance