

Surrey Business Leaders Forum – Conflict of Interest Policy (2024)

Purpose of Policy

This policy is to protect the interests of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum (the Forum) and Surrey County Council by:

- a) Avoiding any unethical financial, professional, or political gain on the part of such individuals and
- b) Preventing the personal and direct professional interest of Forum Members from interfering with their duties to the Forum.

An actual or perceived conflict of interest occurs when a Forum Member is in a position to influence a decision that may result in personal or professional gain (or gain for a relative) as a result of the Forum's decisions.

Obligations of Members

The Forum expects that all Forum Members will ensure:

- Their private interests or beliefs do not conflict with their responsibilities as a Forum Member
- Their position on the Forum is not used to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or company
- They are not involved in, nor will influence, any decision or allocation of Council services or resources from which they, their direct business connections, partner or spouse might benefit.

For the purpose of this policy, spouse or partner means anyone who meets the definition in the Localism Act, i.e. my spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom I am living as a spouse or a person with whom I am living as if we are civil partners.

Members of the Forum must declare at the start of every meeting any conflict of interest where there is, or could be perceived to be, a conflict of interest between their responsibilities as a Member of the Forum and their personal interests / employment / other membership / sponsorship duties. If a Member of the Forum recognises a conflict during the meeting, they must make this known to all present at the start of the meeting. If in any doubt as to whether or not a conflict exists, Forum Members should err on the side of caution and declare connections to any associated entity as set out below.

All Members of the Forum must declare:

1. Any financial or non-financial interest which could be considered in any way to bring about a conflict with the Forum's / Council's interests.
2. Membership of any organisation within Surrey that a Member of the Forum believes could be relevant to declare in circumstances which could impact their conduct or influence their actions, including those which:
 - a. Exercise functions of a public nature
 - b. You are in a position of general control or management
 - c. Their principal purpose includes the influence of public opinion or policy.
3. If you, or a spouse or partner, holds a senior managerial position in an organisation with which the Council does, or seeks to do, business.

Procedure

There will be a standing item at the start of every meeting, at which point all Members of the Forum have a duty to disclose the existence of any real or perceived existence of any conflict of interest relating to the meeting agenda items. A decision will be made regarding the impact and relevance of the conflict, and which of the following actions are required:

- Documentation of the conflict, but no further action necessary
- Allowing involvement with the relevant agenda item, however, prohibiting the interested Member of the Forum from voting on the matter related to the declared conflict
- Prohibiting the Member of the Forum from any discussion or vote on the matter related to the declared conflict.

It is the role of the Chair to uphold the integrity of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum meetings. If any Member of the Forum believes that a Member of the Forum failed to disclose an existing or possible conflict of interest, they shall notify Surrey County Council as Secretariat of the Forum explaining the rationale. The individual will then have an opportunity to explain reasons for the failure to disclose the conflict. In the event of repeated failure to disclose a relevant interest, the Chair or SCC in their Secretariat function may propose appropriate action, including removal of the Member from their position on the Forum.

To ensure the implementation of a robust process to manage conflict of interests, this policy has been drafted considering resources of best practice.