

**Committee: Full Council**

**Agenda Item**

**Date: 15 July 2014**

**15**

**Title: Member Attendance Records**

**Author: John Mitchell**

Item for decision

### **Summary**

1. Officers sought Members' views on a proposal to publish a summary of Members' attendance records on the Council's website, in common with many other councils. In the light of the comments received it is proposed that the matter is considered by the Council.

### **Recommendations**

2. That Members consider whether or not a summary of their attendance should be made public.

### **Financial Implications**

3. None

### **Background Papers**

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

### **Impact**

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	All

Workforce/Workplace	None
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## Situation

6. Not long ago a Councillor was disqualified from membership of the Council because he had not attended a meeting for 6 months. In looking at how this might be prevented in the future, officers considered that maintenance of a public record of attendance would give advance warning. Indeed, many councils publish the attendance record of their members. This also enables the electorate to see how much time their councillor spends on the formal business of the Council. UDC does not publish this information and it is considered, in the interests of openness, accountability and transparency, there is no good reason not to do so. In the event of a request being received under the Freedom of Information Act there are no exemptions which would permit this information to be withheld. There is a presumption therefore that this information should be in the public domain.
7. It is accepted that there are competing demands on Members' time: however Members will be aware that they are paid an allowance of at least £5,000 per annum from the public purse to cover their district council duties, which includes attending meetings - and there is no obligation placed on them to attend the meetings of parish and town councils, unless of course they are members of those councils.
8. To acknowledge those competing demands it is proposed to accompany the summary of attendance with the following commentary: *The table below gives attendance statistics for the year 2013/14 for all councillors at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Working or Task Groups to which they have been appointed as a member. Attendance at meetings in some circumstances is affected by personal circumstances, such as bereavement or ill-health. It should also be noted there are many instances throughout the year where members are invited or required to attend additional meetings, or choose to do so, for a variety of reasons. Such attendances are not included in the table, but are recorded in the minutes of meetings.*

*Examples where councillors attend additional meetings:*

- a. *Cabinet - Deputy Portfolio Holders, the leaders of the two opposition groups, and the chairmen of the Scrutiny Committee and the Performance and Audit Committee*
- b. *Planning Committee – members may attend to make representations about an application they have called in*
- c. *Scrutiny Committee – members may be asked to attend to give evidence or answer questions*

*A general point to note when considering this attendance data is that it is by no means wholly indicative of the work councillors undertake. Councillors are appointed to a wide variety of external community based or strategic*

*organisations and may attend meetings of parish councils based in their wards. The Chairman represents the Council at a variety of civic functions throughout Essex and sometimes beyond. Councillors also have an important ward role in representing constituents and answering their concerns. Taken alone, therefore, the figures should not be seen as the only indicator of a councillor's effectiveness.*

9. The proposed summary table would be headed thus:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Total Number of Meetings</b>	<b>Meetings Attended</b>
Councillor Example	10	8

## **Risk Analysis**

10.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating actions</b>
Members withhold details of their attendance	2 – those who oppose the idea are very vociferous	3 – the Council would appear to be deliberately secretive about members' attendance	The information can be obtained by a Freedom of Information request

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.