

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE GUIDANCE NOTE**

### **What is a friend?**

Those responsible for drafting the Code deliberately used a very broad term not qualified by precise decision. A "friend" can be defined as someone well known to another and regarded with liking, affection and loyalty by that person. A closer relationship is implied here rather than mere acquaintance. Such friendship will be established by the actual relationship existing between two people. Mutual membership of an organisation (such as a local charity, service association, lobbying group, political party or even political group on the authority) is unlikely to be sufficient on its own to establish the existence of a friendship between two people. Members may wish to consider the following question when considering if a friendship exists:-

- How many times do the two people meet?
- Where do they meet?
- Do they regularly attend the same social events?
- Do they know each other's family?
- Do they visit one another's homes?
- Are they close or connected in any other ways?

These questions should never be taken in isolation. It is the cumulative evidence of a close relationship that will establish a friendship. A certain amount of caution should also be exercised. Most members know each other and will often attend the same functions because of their positions in the community. A level of relationship above and beyond that which usually exists between colleagues and political associates will be required to establish the existence of a friendship.

Members are reminded that if the above definition is satisfied then they have a duty to declare a personal interest in any matter if the matter relates to an interest in respect of which wellbeing or financial position of a friend is affected. Members are further reminded that if, having declared the personal interest, the matter is such that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest then the member will be required to declare prejudicial interest and leave the room.