

PART 5 - Members' Gifts and Hospitality

This document is intended as a guide to assist members in determining the correct course of action with regard to acceptance and declaration of gifts and hospitality. The guide sets out a recommended approach in dealing with gifts etc, depending on their nature and value. A decision in respect of the gifts and hospitality rests with you, although further guidance can be obtained from the Monitoring Officer.

The Code of Conduct states *"You must not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties"* This includes any offers of gifts or hospitality and whilst there is general guidance about the value of gifts or hospitality acceptance of any gift or hospitality could still bring you or the Council into disrepute if it creates the impression that someone may be seeking, or has already received, special treatment.

In deciding whether to accept any gifts or hospitality, regardless of the value, you should consider whether a member of the public, knowing the facts, would reasonably think that you might have been influenced by the gift or hospitality received.

The Council has decided that **any gifts or hospitality worth more than £5 should be recorded.**

Gifts

As a general guide, you are strongly advised not to accept any gift which you know or believe to be worth more than £25. If you are unable to refuse such a gift, you must inform the Monitoring Officer who will record the details in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. The Register is maintained by Democratic Services in the Council House.

Where a gift is worth less than £25, but worth more than £5, there is no need to inform the Monitoring Officer but the gift must be entered in the Register so you will need to contact Democratic Services. There is no need to declare a gift worth less than £5 in the Register.

If you accept a gift and subsequently discover that the reason behind it was to exert undue influence, then you should, as soon as is practically possible, write to the Monitoring Officer giving details. For your own protection, you should advise the Monitoring Officer of any situation where you are concerned over the underlying intention behind the offer of a gift, even where such an offer has been refused.

Hospitality

In general, attendance in an official capacity at a function organised by a public authority or local non-profit-making organisation is acceptable. Offers of hospitality from individuals or profit-making organisations should be treated with care. An offer should be declined if you believe that it could have been made to exert influence, or to improve the standing of an individual or organisation, in relation to current or future dealings with the Council.

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If you accept an offer of hospitality and subsequently discover that the reason behind it was to exert undue influence, then you should, as soon as is practically possible, write to the Monitoring Officer, giving details. For your own protection, you should advise the Monitoring Officer of any situation where you are concerned over the underlying intention behind the offer of hospitality, even where such an offer has been refused.

Please also note that even if an offer of a gift or hospitality is refused, it is necessary to inform Democratic Services.

The table below sets out examples of hospitality and the recommended course of action:

Example of Hospitality	Action
Light refreshments prior to site meetings, presentations, etc. (but not related to planning applications or other applications on specific matters, such as grant applications)	No need to record.
Lunch/evening meal provided as part of an event by another public authority	No need to record.
Lunch/evening meal provided as part of a private sector sponsored conference or promotional event	Record in Register.
Meals and overnight accommodation as part of a private sector sponsored conference or promotional event	Caution advised: If possible, decline the offer.
Lunch/evening meal provided by a voluntary body at a meeting or AGM	No need to record.
Lunch/evening meal provided by a voluntary body, at a meeting for the specific purpose of fund raising/lobbying	Caution is advised, especially for Executive Committee Members who might determine grant funding for such bodies. If accepted, it should be recorded in the Register