

Report to Standards Committee

Subject: Gifts and Hospitality 2024/25

Date: 26 June 2025

Author: Monitoring Officer

Purpose

To inform Standards Committee of gifts and hospitality received between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 and identify any issues arising from the annual review of the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

Recommendation

THAT Committee:

- 1) Notes the details of the annual review of gifts and hospitality.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council has a Gifts and Hospitality Code of Practice for Members and Officers to enable Members and Officers to decide on the circumstances and the manner in which gifts and hospitality may be accepted. The Code of Practice was reviewed during 2023 and minor amendments approved by both Standards Committee (December 2023) and Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee (October 2023). The register for officers is held centrally on the online Employee Claims system. The system automatically sends an email reminder to Managers at the end of each quarter requesting that they ensure the register entries are up to date.
- 1.2 Updates on the Gifts and Hospitality register entries are reported through the year to Senior Leadership Team.

- 1.3 The register of gifts and hospitality for Members is still held in an electronic folder in the I:Drive and is updated on the Monitoring Officer's behalf by Democratic Services. Members received induction training in 2023 on the need to notify the Monitoring Officer of gifts and hospitality accepted in excess of £50 as this will be included on their register of interests in line with the Member Code of Conduct. In addition to this requirement, Members should notify the Monitoring Officer of any gifts and hospitality offered for inclusion on the members Gifts and Hospitality register. Members are being reminded regularly to keep their Register of Interests including gifts and hospitality received up to date via the 'Councillor Contact' emails.
- 1.4 The entries on the Register for officers shows that during 2024/25, across the Council's officers, 38 offers of gifts were made; no gifts were refused. There were no recorded offers of hospitality.
- 1.5 The most commonly recorded gifts were boxes of chocolates, boxes of biscuits and flowers given by members of the public to staff which were generally shared amongst teams. Whilst officers are not encouraged to accept gifts personally, it is noted that on a number of occasions low level gifts were accepted so as not cause offence, or the gift was simply left at reception so could not be refused. In addition gifts have been shared across teams rather than given to an individual officer.
- 1.6 The Gifts and Hospitality Register for Officers appears at Appendix 1. There was only one gift recorded on the Gifts and Hospitality Register for Members in 2024/25. The gift was a cheque for £21 from a resident sent to a Councillor with a request that the amount be passed to charity. The donation was provided by the Councillor to the Mayors charity. Whilst not necessarily a clear gift it was given to the Councillor as a thank you.
- 1.7 In reviewing the register for officers, there are 2 fewer entries for 2024/25 than 2023/24.
- 1.8 A review of the registered entries has identified that managers are generally prompt to respond and authorise gifts and hospitality where appropriate. Only one gift raised concern due its value (est £100) and this was a gift of a pair of trainers provided to a member of staff attending a conference. The gift was provided to all attendees at the conference and whilst it is acceptable to receive low level items at such events where everyone is offered them, consideration should be given to refusing or re-purposing the gift of such value for the benefit of the Council ie offering as a raffle prize for example. This has been addressed with officers.

- 1.9 It is noted that with the change in management structure over the last year some refresher training on Gifts and Hospitality should and will be provided to new managers.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Committee notes the report in terms of the annual review of Gifts and Hospitality.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to provide an update on gifts and hospitality offered to officers and members, however, given that the Code relates to officers and members, this is considered to be the appropriate forum for consideration of such offers.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report, as indicated, all gifts and hospitality accepted were of a low value.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 With regard to Officers, Section 117(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that an Officer of a Local Authority shall not, under the colour of his or her office of employment, accept any fee or reward whatsoever other than his or her proper remuneration. The Bribery Act 2010 makes it an offence to seek, accept or agree to accept a financial or other advantage as an inducement or reward to perform a function improperly. In simple terms, it is a criminal offence for employees to seek or accept a financial or other advantage in return for making a decision, granting an award or performing any other public function, regardless of what decision is made.
- 5.2 The Code of Conduct requires Members to notify the Council's Monitoring Officer in writing of any gift, benefit or hospitality with a value in excess of £50.00 which they have accepted as a member from any person or body other than the authority within 28 days of receipt. Under the Code of Practice, members are also required to record gifts and hospitality on the gifts and hospitality register, in addition, refusal of gifts offered should also be recorded.

- 5.3 The Council has a Gifts and Hospitality Code of Practice for Members and Officers which has been approved by Standards Committee and Appointments & Conditions of Service Committee but which should be kept under review.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Gifts and Hospitality Register for Officers 2024/25

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 None.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by the Chief Financial Officer

Date:

Drafted by the Monitoring Officer

Department	Offer Date	Description	Amount	Acceptance
Information & Comms Technology	13/11/2024	Box of chocolates	5.00	Accepted
Information & Comms Technology	02/12/2024	Box of chocolates	5.00	Accepted
Customer services	14/06/2024	small box of chocolates	3.00	Accepted
Customer services	07/02/2025	box of chocolates	5.00	Accepted
Arnold Leisure Centre	13/08/2024	Home grown pears and popcorn	4.00	Accepted
Arnold Leisure Centre	07/03/2025	Notebook, pen and cup	15.00	Accepted
Welfare Services	23/01/2025	chocolates	4.00	Accepted
Democratic Services	10/12/2024	Small box of chocolates and Snack biscuits - Christmas present for team	6.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	14/12/2024	Box of Christmas biscuits x2	5.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	18/12/2024	Tin of Quality Street	5.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	14/02/2025	Mixed fruit bowl	3.50	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	12/03/2025	Pot of caramel peanut brittle bites	2.50	Accepted
Calverton Leisure Centre	14/12/2024	Box of Celebration Chocolates	5.00	Accepted
Calverton Leisure Centre	15/12/2024	Box of Cadbury's Heroes	5.00	Accepted
Calverton Leisure Centre	18/12/2024	Box of Cadbury's Heroes	5.00	Accepted
Calverton Leisure Centre	23/12/2024	Shortbread	5.00	Accepted
Organizational Development	03/03/2025	Thorntons Chocolates for HR Team	20.00	Accepted
Democratic Services	15/11/2024	Chocolate for the team	5.00	Accepted
Democratic Services	03/12/2024	Chocolates for team	5.00	Accepted
Democratic Services	16/12/2024	Chocolates	5.00	Accepted
Democratic Services	19/12/2024	Chocolates for team	5.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	10/03/2025	Patterson's Shortbread	2.00	Accepted
Public Protection	21/01/2025	an Apple and a banana	1.00	Accepted
Arnold Leisure Centre	24/01/2025	Box of chocolates for	5.00	Accepted
Arnold Leisure Centre	27/01/2025	2 x Jars of Honey	6.00	Accepted
Leisure Services	26/02/2025	Pair of Velites trainers	100.00	Accepted
Financial Services	12/12/2024	3 bags of sweets	5.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	09/12/2024	Celebration chocolates	5.50	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	09/12/2024	Box of Celebration Chocolates	5.50	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	23/12/2024	McVITIES VICTORIA BISCUIT SELECTION BOX	4.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	20/01/2025	Fresh flowers	5.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	05/02/2025	Posters for the Theatrical release of Mufasa and the Lord of the rings :The Riders of Rohirrim	0.00	Accepted

Redhill Leisure Centre	14/02/2025	2 packets of love hear sweets for staff on duty	1.00	Accepted
Redhill Leisure Centre	25/03/2025	Foxes Biscuits	4.98	Accepted
Parks & Street Care	27/02/2025	Hamper	10.00	Accepted
Welfare Services	08/11/2024	Box of chocolates	5.00	Accepted
Property	04/10/2024	Cadbury Heroes	4.00	Accepted
Property	17/12/2024	Tub of Celebrations	4.00	Accepted
			290.98	