

Report to Standards Committee

Subject: Gifts and Hospitality 2025/26

Date: 25 June 2026

Author: Monitoring Officer

Purpose

To inform Standards Committee of gifts and hospitality received between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026 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.
- 1.4 The entries on the Register for officers shows that during 2025/26, across the Council's officers, 40 offers of gifts were made, a slight increase on the 38 last year; no gifts were refused. There was one recorded offer of hospitality. The offer was tickets to a sporting event which were correctly refused by officers.
- 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. Quarter 3, over the festive period remains the busiest in terms of receiving gifts. 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 were no gifts recorded on the Gifts and Hospitality Register for Members in 2025/26.
- 1.7 A review of the registered entries has identified that managers are generally prompt to respond and authorise gifts and hospitality where appropriate. Only one reported gift was considered to be of higher than average value, this was a "goodie bag" containing various items received at a conference estimated to be worth £80 which was reported by two officers attending a conference. The items were repurposed for use across the team. The bag was given to all attendees at the conference so was not a direct gift to Council employees only.
- 1.9 Managers have been reminded of the importance of ensuring gifts and hospitality are correctly recorded and dealt with in accordance with the Code of Practice.

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 2025/26

9 Background Papers

9.1 None.

10 Local Government Reorganisation

10.1 As we progress through Local Government Reorganisation, there will need to be an alignment of policies in relation to Gifts and Hospitality. A review of the policy in 2026/27 is likely to ensure best practice across the new authority. The Code of Practice currently remains fit for purpose.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by the Chief Financial Officer

Date:

Drafted by the Monitoring Officer

