



REPORT TO: AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 19 JUNE 2019

SUBJECT: GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (CORPORATE SERVICES)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the receipt of gifts and hospitality to officers across Council services valued above £30 in 2018/19.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (I) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to ensuring that the highest standards of probity and public accountability are demonstrated.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- i) notes the number and level of the gifts and hospitality received; and
- ii) agrees that the current system of notification and recording is appropriate.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The issue of Gifts and Hospitality received by employees of the Council is covered within the Code of Conduct. The following is an extract from the code relevant to this issue:-

Gifts and Hospitality

You may occasionally be placed in a position where you have to decide whether or not to accept offers of gifts or hospitality from organisations or businesses associated with the Council. It is essential that any suggestion of improper influence should be avoided.

The general rule should be to refuse, tactfully, offers of gifts from businesses, organisations, or individuals who are associated with, or wish to be associated with the Council commercially. Gifts should also be refused from organisations or individuals seeking, or at some stage in the near future may be expected to seek, a particular decision or action from the Council. The receipt of repeated gifts or hospitality should be considered carefully.

In certain circumstances, hospitality or gifts not exceeding £30 in value may be accepted. You should seek permission from your line manager before accepting any gift or hospitality exceeding £30 in value.

All offers of gifts and hospitality should be notified to your line manager/supervisor where the value is in excess of £30 and written notification of these must be forwarded to the Principal Committee Services Officer for recording in a register of gifts and hospitality. This recording mechanism will enable the Council to respond to any queries on such issues.

If you are making a visit to inspect equipment, vehicles, land or property you must ensure that the Council pays for the cost of these visits.

- 3.2 The extract above, states that written notification of received gifts and hospitality should be notified to the Principal Committee Services Officer (now titled Democratic Services Manager) for recording in a register. This is being updated to reflect that written notification must now be forwarded to the relevant Head of Service as per changes agreed to Section 11.6 of the Financial Regulations in January 2019. The information contained within **Appendix 1** details the receipt of gifts and hospitality as described above for the period from 2018/19. Discussion with Heads of Service across the Authority indicates that this is a comprehensive list.
- 3.3 **Appendix 1** shows that no gifts in excess of £30 have been received, and that the hospitality mostly relates to the promotion of local businesses and initiatives with a wider community benefit by the Chief Executive and Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure). Attendance at events is generally outside of work time and undertaken in the officer's own time.
- 3.4 Given the low number and level of the gifts and hospitality received the current system of notification and recording is considered appropriate with no requirement for publishing on the Council's website. This would be consistent with the arrangements of neighbouring local authorities.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This report provides information relating to the Council's obligation to ensure transparency and accountability as part of the normal conduct of Council business.

(b) Policy and Legal:

None.

(c) Financial implications:

None.

(d) Risk Implications:

None.

(e) Staffing Implications:

None.

(f) Property:

None.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact:

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because there is no anticipated impact on protected groups.

(h) Consultations

Consultation with all Heads of Services and the Democratic Services Manager took place as part of the preparation of the report. Any comments received have been considered in writing the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 A record of gifts and hospitality received by Council officers is maintained and updated in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for employees.

5.2 From the information presented within this report it can be seen that the receipt of gifts and hospitality is generally confined to members of the Corporate Management Team and is associated with the promotion of local businesses and initiatives with a wider community benefit.

Author of Report: Grant Cruickshank, HR Manager
Background Papers:
Ref: