

GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS ON GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

What should I register?

The Members' Code of Conduct requires that a Member must, within 28 days of accepting any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £100, notify the Monitoring Officer of the existence and nature of that gift or hospitality.

Gifts and hospitality include the receipt of goods or services, meals, drinks, accommodation or entertainment which is offered free or at a heavily discounted rate not generally available to the public. Gifts and/or hospitality are only relevant if they are offered to Members in their capacity as county councillors - not gifts received from friends or family on a personal basis.

How do I register my gifts and hospitality?

A form is available on request from business support within Democratic Services or to download on the [Members' Portal](#). Once completed, notification forms should be sent to the Democratic Services Lead Manager by email or hard copy. If a form is submitted in hard copy, it must be signed and dated. If the notification is submitted by email, the date should be entered on the form and a copy of the covering email will be attached to the form to act as the signature.

What happens to the information once I register a gift or hospitality?

All notification forms received will be added to the central file, held in room 122 (Democratic Services), and will be open to inspection by the public upon request. The details will also be transferred to a central electronic version of the gifts and hospitality register, held within Democratic Services on behalf of the Monitoring Officer.

At present, there are no plans to publish the gifts and hospitality register online.

Once I have registered a gift or hospitality received, do I have to do anything else?

Yes. You must declare the acceptance of any gifts or hospitality where you are involved in any discussion of, vote on, or discharge of any functions relating to the donor. Should you consider that a member of the public, knowing about the gift or hospitality, might reasonably conclude that this would be likely to prejudice your decision making in relation to the donor, you should declare an interest, not participate in the matter and leave any relevant meeting for the duration of the item. Your consideration should take into account the role you are playing in relation to the matter and the significance of the gift or hospitality,

Is there any guidance on what I can accept as a gift or hospitality?

The requirement to declare gifts and hospitality that have been offered is in addition to the principles of public life to which Members are required to adhere. As regards the appropriateness of Members receiving any particular gifts or hospitality, consideration will always need to be given to these general principles, particularly the requirement for Members not to place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity might be questioned. You should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour. It is a criminal offence to solicit or receive any gift, reward or advantage as an inducement to doing or forbearing to do anything in respect of any transaction involving the Council. In considering whether it is appropriate to accept offers of a gift or hospitality Members will need to take account of the Council's requirement that you do not 'place yourself under a financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties'.

The following examples of gifts or hospitality are generally acceptable, but if they appear to be worth £100 or more **must** be registered, declared and disclosed at relevant meetings in line with the advice above. Judgment should always be carefully exercised to avoid any concerns about extravagant provision. :

- (a) attendance in an official capacity at functions to which invitations have also been sent to Members of other local authorities or at official occasions relating to County Council functions, e.g. official opening ceremonies.
- (b) attendance in an official capacity at functions arranged by other public bodies.
- (c) an invitation to take part in a company jubilee or other anniversary celebration.
- (d) a working lunch provided to allow the parties to discuss ongoing business.
- (e) attendance at an awards ceremony representing the County Council.
- (f) an invitation to participate in learning or development activities provided free of charge or for a nominal sum

In all circumstances, care should be taken when the gift or hospitality is offered by a provider who has a contract with the Council.

Any of the following facilities provided by companies or others who do business with the Council, or may wish to do so, are considered to be unacceptable offers of hospitality or gifts:

- (a) any hospitality or gift offered by a potential contractor/consultant during any tendering process - there is a need for Members to be vigilant as they may not ordinarily be aware of what potential tendering processes are going on across the Council.
- (b) any hospitality or gift offered by an applicant for planning consent.

- (c) any hospitality or gift offered by a current contractor with the Council where an arbitration or similar process is ongoing.
- (d) any hospitality or gift that could reasonably be regarded as excessive or extravagant.

Where can I go for further advice?

The Monitoring Officer, the Deputy Monitoring Officers, and the Democratic Services Lead Manager are always happy to give advice on any of these issues and you are urged to seek advice if you are unclear about whether to accept or declare any gift or hospitality received.

This page is intentionally left blank