

Benchmarking - Council Gifts and Hospitality Policies

Scope

General Guidance on Gifts and Hospitality is found within Councils' Codes of Conduct. There may be further internal policies or specific guidance at Directorate/Service level.

- This benchmarking looks at Officer's Code of Conducts for a number of Councils within the region of South East England.
- It seeks to identify the threshold amounts for Gifts.
- Hospitality is not within the scope of this benchmarking exercise.
- The Member's Code of Conduct is a separate policy (see Note 1*).

Monetary Amount for gifts specified within Officer's Code of Conducts – Gifts and Hospitality Sections

Council	Source	Monetary Amount given for Gifts	Monetary Amount
Surrey	Surrey County Council Officers' Code of Conduct Surrey County Council Gifts and Hospitality Policy	<p>Any gift beyond a small token of goodwill should be politely declined. Gifts should only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear justification for doing so and where this has been formally approved in advance. However, context is important, so where, in a social care setting or school, refusal may offend or distress the giver, you can accept the gift, where it is not of significant value, and let your line manager know.</p> <p>Examples of small token of goodwill could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional stationery such as pens, cups and diaries • Small box of chocolates, bunch of flowers <p>It is important not to accept monetary gifts of any kind, whether in the form of cash or cheques</p>	Token

West Sussex	West Sussex Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy	<p>5.4. If you receive any unexpected gifts they must be returned with a polite refusal letter to the sender, which makes it clear that County Council employees are not permitted to accept any gifts, other than those set out in sections 5.6 and 5.7.</p> <p>5.5. All gifts offered including, but not limited to, inducements such as air miles, trading discounts, vouchers, or offers of hospitality, must be declared (See Declaration of Gift or Hospitality Form at Appendix 3).</p> <p>5.6. Minor articles such as diaries, calendars, mugs, office items and the like will not be regarded as a gift. If you have any doubt as to whether an item falls within the definition of a gift and / or is acceptable, you are expected to raise this with your manager at the earliest opportunity.</p>	Token
East Sussex	East Sussex Code of Conduct	<p>5. Gifts, bequests and legacies</p> <p>5.4. If you receive any unexpected gifts they must be returned with a polite refusal letter to the sender, which makes it clear that County Council employees are not permitted to accept any gifts, other than those set out in sections 5.6 and 5.7.</p> <p>5.5. All gifts offered including, but not limited to, inducements such as air miles, trading discounts, vouchers, or offers of hospitality, must be declared</p> <p>...</p> <p>5.6. Minor articles such as diaries, calendars, mugs, office items and the like will not be regarded as a gift. If you have any doubt as to whether an item falls within the definition of a gift and / or is acceptable, you are expected to raise this with your manager at the earliest opportunity.</p>	Token
Brighton and Hove	Brighton and Hove Code of Conduct	16. Gifts	Nominal value of £25 or less

		<p>(a) If the gift is of a nominal value of £25 or less, you have discretion as to whether or not to record the gift. Thus, for example, you would not normally record being given gifts mentioned in category (a) in paragraph 13.2 below, but it would probably be appropriate to record gifts in categories (b) and (c) even if worth less than £25.</p> <p>(b) If the gift is of a nominal value of more than £25 you must record it.</p> <p>Note 1: If your department or team has special rules about accepting / refusing gifts, you must also comply with those rules.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>16.2 Gifts may only be accepted if they are:</p> <p>(a) small and of modest value or of a promotional or advertising nature, e.g. calendars, diaries, pens and other similar articles (see also below)</p> <p>(b) small gifts offered during official authorised hospitality, e.g. gifts on the conclusion of any courtesy visit of a type normally given by that organisation</p> <p>(c) small gifts given by service users or clients. Where appropriate, such gifts should be shared between teams.</p> <p>16.3 Gifts that are not acceptable must be declined or returned.</p> <p>16.4 It is very important that any gifts or other promotional material (pens, calendars, diaries) which carry names or logos should not be used or displayed in public areas. This is to avoid unintentional promotion or endorsement of such products or services.</p>	<p>dependent on category</p>
<p>Hampshire</p>	<p>Hampshire County Council Code of Conduct Part 4</p>	<p>12.3. Employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers, although the</p>	<p>Token</p>

		County Council may wish to allow employees to keep insignificant items of token value such as pens, diaries, etc.	
Hertfordshire	https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/About-the-council/Legal/Code of Conduct	Offers of personal gifts should be refused with the exception of small gifts of a promotional nature. Offers of hospitality should be treated with caution and you should be guided by the county council conventions on gifts and hospitality which are contained under the Code of Conduct.	Token
Essex County Council	Contents Code of Conduct Gifts & Hospitality	The Policy outlines that officers can accept small token gifts or offers of hospitality, but urge caution particularly where the cost might be above £25.	£25 Threshold
Portsmouth	Portsmouth Council Code of Conduct	7.4 You are strongly advised to refuse or return any gifts, hospitality or other favours from persons inside or outside the Council as any such acceptance could well put you in a compromising position. ... 7.6 There may be occasions where refusal of personal hospitality or a small token gift (e.g. at Christmas or another notable religious occasion) would clearly cause offence or be impracticable for cost or other reasons. Where the refusal of an unsolicited gift may cause offence, the gift may be donated to the Lord Mayor's official charity and the donor informed accordingly in writing.	Token
Wiltshire	Wiltshire Council Code of Conduct	35. You must not accept any fee or reward for work done other than your pay and allowances as set out in your contract of employment except as set out in paragraphs 37 and 38 below. 36. It is a criminal offence to accept gifts, loans, fees or rewards as an inducement to act in a certain way in your official capacity.	Guideline of £25

		<p>37. You may accept small items (e.g. inexpensive pens, diaries, flowers, chocolates) but they must be registered.</p> <p>38. You may only accept an offer of a more significant gift (as a guide worth more than £25) or hospitality (e.g. visits, meals, sporting events etc.) if there is a genuine need to do so in order to represent the council in the community.</p> <p>39. Gifts, benefits and hospitality offered to you or members of your family as a consequence of your employment must be declared using the online form or in writing to your manager whether accepted or not.</p> <p>40. You should never accept significant gifts or hospitality from service users, actual or potential contractors or outside suppliers.</p> <p>41. If an external organisation wishes, or is sought, to sponsor a council activity the rules concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors. Your corporate director must be involved in any decision.</p> <p>42. Where the council wishes to sponsor an event or service no employee or member of their family must benefit unless full disclosure of interest has been made to the relevant corporate director. All sponsorship must be recorded.</p>	
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Comments

1. Charitable donations

As per Portsmouth Council – a nominated charity might be specified.

2. Role/Service Context

Our Gifts and Hospitality Policy states: 'However, context is important, so where, in a social care setting or school, refusal may offend or distress the giver, you can accept the gift, where it is not of significant value, and let your line manager know.'

In relation to monetary thresholds; there is possible need for further guidance as per special consideration for type of role/service:

- Social Work
[Professional standards - Social Work England](#) Standard 5.4 [Professional standards guidance - Social Work England](#)
- Planning Committees
[Planning Committee Protocols | Local Government Association](#)
- Schools
Our Code of Conduct states that further guidance is given for schools in the Surrey Education Service hub under HR Resources – I do not have access to this portal.
[NGA](#)

Notes

*Note 1:

[Surrey County Council's Member's Code of Conduct](#) advises to register any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 as per the LGA Model Members Code of Conduct.

*Note 2:

Gifts and Hospitality references the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

This is a cursory internet review – expansion of the benchmarking would be contacting Councils to confirm that referenced Code of Conducts are current, their Gift and Hospitality Policies and related guidance ie hospitality, bequests/ legacies and sponsorship, special guidance for services, and any published figures etc.

CMcL 25/07/2024

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