

Report to: Audit & Governance Committee Meeting: 1 February 2023

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Report Summary	
<b>Report Title</b>	Gifts and Hospitality Protocol and Policy
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To review of the Council’s policies for Members and Officers (employees) for consistency and to ensure they are fit for purpose.
<b>Recommendations</b>	That the report be noted and that the Committee includes an annual review of the operation of the Council’s Gifts and Hospitality arrangements in the Committee’s work plan
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	To progress an action included in the Council’s Annual Governance Statement for 2022/3

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 A Protocol for Members on Hospitality and Gifts is included in the Council’s Constitution and is reproduced at **Appendix 1** of this report for reference. There is separate provision relating to gifts and hospitality in the Code of Conduct for Members which was fully updated and adopted by Full Council on 13 July 2021.
- 1.2 Members are required to register gifts and hospitality over a certain value (even if declined) with the Monitoring Officer, via Democratic Services. These details are then published on the relevant Members’ web page together with their register of interests, attendance record and so on.
- 1.3 There is a separate Gifts and Hospitality Policy for Officers which is available on the staff intranet and as **Appendix 2** to this report. This is referenced in induction materials for all new starters via the Officer Code of Conduct.
- 1.4 Officers are required to register gifts and hospitality over a certain value (even if declined) with Administrative Services. These details are then published on the Council’s website.
- 1.5 In October 2022 all Members were issued with a reminder from the Chairman of this Committee and the Monitoring Officer, about the importance of registering and

declaring interests, managing conflicts of interest, and registering gifts and hospitality. A similar reminder was issued to all Business Managers by email in October and published in the staff newsletter in November 2022.

- 1.6 The Council made a commitment in its Annual Governance Statement to review the Gifts and Hospitality Policy and Protocol.

## **2.0 Minor amendments to the Protocol and Policy**

- 2.1 The Protocol for Members on Hospitality and Gifts is supplementary to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Members. On review, there is a minor inconsistency; the Code required all gifts or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 to be publicly registered while the Protocol gives a figure of £100. It seems the Protocol was not updated when the revised Code of Conduct was adopted in 2021, and therefore the proposal is for the Monitoring Officer to make this correction as a consequential amendment, reporting it for completeness to Full Council. No further amendments are proposed at this time.

- 2.2 The Policy & Guidance on Gifts and Hospitality for Officers requires some minor updates in terminology (Senior Leadership Team instead of Corporate Management Team) and one correction in the 'Legal Position' section. No further amendments are proposed at this time.

## **3.0 Proposals/Options Considered**

- 3.1 Gifts and hospitality requirements will be included as part of the new Member induction programme after the May 2023 elections.
- 3.2 A reminder will be circulated for all staff in October/November 2023 and diarised annually thereafter.
- 3.3 Members are asked to consider whether there would be merit in the Committee receiving summary reports in future regarding the nature of gifts and hospitality offered and accepted or declined, or whether the publication of details is sufficient.

## **Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations' officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- The Protocol for Members on Hospitality and Gifts is published in the [Council's Constitution](#) – page F19

- The Code of Conduct for Members is published in the [Council's Constitution](#) – Gifts and Hospitality are referenced on page F8
- The Officer Register of Gifts and Hospitality is published on the Council's [website](#)
- Individual Member web pages are published on the Council's [website](#)