

**Committee: Standards and General Purposes Committee**

**Date: 08 November 22**

**Subject: Gifts and Hospitality – Officers**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Mike Brunt, Chair, Standard and General Purposes Committee**

**Lead officer: Louise Round, Interim Executive Director for Innovation and Change and Monitoring Officer**

**Contact officer: Fabiola Hickson, Head of Law, Procurement and Information SLLP**

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**Recommendations:**

- A. That Committee notes the report
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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report is the yearly update on the registration by officers of gifts and hospitality.
- 1.2 A copy of the register accompanies this report at Appendix 1.

**2. DETAILS**

2.1 The Code of Conduct for Employees requires that:

- All offers of gifts must be reported to managers;
- Significant gifts (over £25) must be registered on the departmental register.
- Acceptance of gifts should only occur in very limited circumstances and approved in advance by the manager;
- All offers of hospitality must be reported to managers;
- The hospitality (no minimum value) must be registered on the departmental register;
- There are limited circumstances where acceptance of hospitality may be acceptable
- Hospitality received in the course of business meetings and at free training does not need to be registered, but managerial approval is required.

2.2 The inspection by the Monitoring Officer of the register shows that:

- The departmental registers continue to be maintained electronically in the adopted corporate manner in all departments.
- Notifications and registrations have taken place in the departments as follows:

## Registrations

Chief Executive's	2
Children Schools and Families	0
Community and Housing	1
Corporate Services	0
Environment & Regeneration	1

- The entries no longer include tennis tickets from the AELTC managed under the staff ballot. This is because the staff ballot is a centrally managed process and a record is kept of staff who have been successful so it was not considered necessary for individual staff to make declarations. The same approach will be taken to other offers which have Council wide application – for instance to the offer of tickets to the AFC Wimbledon event to mark the passing of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II earlier this year. A similar approach was adopted by this Committee in relation to members at its meeting in November 2021.
- The declarations are in accordance with requirements made up of entries where the gifts and hospitality accepted were for officers networking or representing the Council. The entries for the past year do not show that any low value gifts were received, from the public.
- These continuing low figures and the nature of gifts and hospitality may be a result of a genuine decline in gifts and hospitality being offered or it may be due to officers failing to enter these onto the register. In order to ensure that it is not the latter, managers should ensure that officers are aware of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct for Employees to complete declarations and to give reasons, if gifts and hospitality are being recorded as having been accepted. Managers have been reminded of the need to ensure officers are aware that where the offeror is a contractor, prospective contractor or an applicant for planning permission extra care should be exercised in deciding whether to accept the gift or hospitality and the default position normally would be to decline the offer. Finally, it should be noted that 2 of the entries have failed to provide reasons for accepting the gift and managers should ensure that all officers are aware of the necessity for doing so.
- The impact of covid may also have played a part in the low numbers declared in the past year, especially in relation to low value gifts from members of the public. As life returns to a new normal, managers should ensure that officers are reminded of officers' responsibilities with regards this type of gift.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Committee could decide not to have this information reported to it, though this would not be compatible with its role as the proactive promoter and monitor of ethical standards.

### **4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1 None save referred to within the report.

### **5. TIMETABLE**

The next annual report will be presented to CMT in October 2023

### **6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None.

### **7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The receipt or gift of any reward or advantage for an act or omission that suggests favour to any person in their official capacity may constitute a criminal offence under the Bribery Act 2010.

### **8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION**

- 8.1 None.

### **9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None.

### **10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Failure by officers to address their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action by the Council. Failure of the Council to monitor and promote the observance of the Code could result in an unnoticed lack of compliance by managers which might result in complaints, damage to the reputation of the Council, possible adverse impacts upon the quality of the Council's decision making processes and legal challenges to Council actions.

**11. APPENDIX – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT FORMS PART OF THE REPORT**

Appendix 1: Details of the Registers held by Directors for the period 01.11.21-30.09.22

**12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.