

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Standards Advisory Committee</b></p> <p>Wednesday, 15 February 2023</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Open (Unrestricted)</p>
<p><b>Register of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Quarterly Update</b></p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services Patricia Attawia, Democratic Services Team Leader (Civic and Members)
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards

### **Executive Summary**

This report updates the Committee on the Members' Register of Interests and declarations of gifts and hospitality submitted by Members since the previous report to the committee on 22 September 2022.

Standards Advisory Committee is receiving this report as it monitors compliance with the requirement in the Council Code of Conduct for Members to register and disclose their interests, and to declare any offer of a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25.

### **Recommendations:**

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Review, comment and note the report.

### **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The Council is required by statute to adopt a Code of Conduct for Members. For the purpose of the Code, a Member includes the Mayor, elected Councillors and Co-opted Members of the Authority.
- 1.2 A Member is required under the Council's Code of Conduct (paragraph 50) to register and disclose their interests. This must be done within 28 days of becoming a member or being re-elected to office.

- 1.3 Members must ensure their register of interests is kept up to date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
- 1.4 A Member is also required under the Council's Code of Conduct (paragraph 59) to register the offer of any gift or hospitality, whether accepted or not, with an estimated value of at least £25. They must include the person from whom it is received.
- 1.5 Repeated smaller gifts and hospitality which, when combined, would likely exceed £25 within any three-month period should also be declared.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 This is a noting report.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

### **Register of Interests**

- 3.1 To support Members in meeting their obligations under the Code of Conduct, Democratic Services send periodic reminders to Members of the need to review and update their Register of Interests.
- 3.2 This is done quarterly via an article in the Members' Bulletin, and twice a year is followed up by a more detailed email to each Member, asking them to review their current declaration and confirm that it is up to date.
- 3.3 Should Democratic Services become aware of changes taking place outside of these times, such as appointments being made to outside bodies, additional reminders will be sent to those Members affected asking them to ensure they update their Register of Interests.
- 3.4 Scheduled reminders were included in the 18 November 2022 and 6 January 2023 Members' Bulletins.
- 3.5 An email was sent to each Member in January with a link to their current declaration on the Council's website, asking them to review it and either notify us of any changes or respond to confirm that there were none.
- 3.6 Co-opted Members were also sent an email in January with the same request.
- 3.7 Newly co-opted Members who completed declarations in the last few months were not included in the group who were sent reminders.
- 3.8 At the time of writing 42 responses had been received from councillors and from the 9 Co-opted Members who were sent reminders, 3 responses had been received.

3.9 The management of Members' Interests is currently the subject of an internal audit, reviewing the processes for managing and monitoring Members' declarations of interests. The outcome will be reported to the committee once it has been completed.

3.10 A number of areas were looked at, not only the register of interests, but also declarations at committee meetings and related party transactions declarations.

3.11 Finance do not currently report to this committee on the progress made by Members in completing the annual Related Party Transactions declaration, but it may be recommended that this form part of the Standards Advisory Committee Annual Work Plan going forward, potentially as part of this report.

### Gifts and Hospitality

3.12 During the period 1 September 2022 – 31 January 2023, 18 declarations were received. The details are set out in Table 1 below.

Name	Date offered	Type	Accepted/ Declined	Date declared	On time	Provided by	Estimated value	Description
<b>Cllr Ana Miah</b>	02/10/22	Hospitality	Accepted	27/01/23	No	ARTA Awards Ltd	£150	Asian Restaurant & Takeaway (ARTA) Awards
<b>Cllr Asma Begum</b>	24/09/22	Gift	Accepted	11/10/22	Yes	Canary Wharf Group	£90	Canary Wharf Group dinner at Labour conference
<b>Cllr Asma Islam</b>	24/09/22	Gift	Accepted	11/10/22	Yes	Canary Wharf Group	£90	Canary Wharf Group dinner at Labour conference
<b>Cllr Kabir Ahmed</b>	22/12/22	Gift	Declined	23/01/23	No	Chinese Embassy in the UK	£20	Gift - beverage
<b>Cllr Kabir Hussain</b>	02/10/22	Hospitality	Accepted	03/10/22	Yes	ARTA Awards Ltd	£150	Asian Restaurant & Takeaway (ARTA) Awards
<b>Cllr Kamrul Hussain</b>	02/10/22	Hospitality	Accepted	03/10/22	Yes	ARTA Awards Ltd	£150	Asian Restaurant & Takeaway (ARTA) Awards
	03/12/22	Hospitality	Accepted	25/01/23	No	British Bangladeshi Fashion & Lifestyle Awards	£75	Awards event
<b>Cllr Maisha Begum</b>	24/09/22	Gift	Accepted	11/10/22	Yes	Canary Wharf Group	£90	Canary Wharf Group dinner at Labour conference

<b>Cllr Maium Talukdar</b>	02/10/22	Hospitality	Accepted	03/10/22	Yes	ARTA Awards Ltd	£150	Asian Restaurant & Takeaway (ARTA) Awards
	03/12/22	Hospitality	Accepted	24/01/23	No	British Bangladeshi Fashion & Lifestyle Awards	£65	Awards event with full course meal
<b>Cllr Mohammad Chowdhury</b>	16/10/22	Gift	Accepted	20/10/22	Yes	Mr M Ahmed Mr A Chowdhury Mr S Uddin Mr A Belal Mr M Mizan Mr M Uddin Mr S Alam Mr I Sipar	£200	Hamper includes perfumes, clothes, chocolates, wall frame
<b>Cllr Ohid Ahmed</b>	15/01/23	Hospitality	Accepted	23/01/23	Yes	Bangladeshi Welfare Association Milan	£120	Guest Speaker at their inaugural meeting. Dinner and hotel.
<b>Cllr Rachel Blake</b>	26/09/22	Hospitality	Accepted	05/10/22	Yes	City of London Corporation	£40	Dinner from City of London Corporation
	26/09/22	Hospitality	Accepted	05/10/22	Yes	The Hacked Off Campaign	£25	Evening reception from Hacked Off campaign group at Labour Party conference
<b>Cllr Sabina Akhtar</b>	24/09/22	Gift	Accepted	11/10/22	Yes	Canary Wharf Group	£90	Canary Wharf Group
<b>Cllr Shafi Ahmed</b>	22/12/22	Gift	Declined	17/01/23	Yes	Chinese Embassy in the UK	£26	Gift - beverage
<b>Cllr Shahaveer Shubo Hussain</b>	24/09/22	Gift	Accepted	11/10/22	Yes	Canary Wharf Group	£90	Canary Wharf Group
<b>Mayor Lutfur Rahman</b>	22/12/22	Gift	Accepted but not kept. Donated to staff.	22/12/22	Yes	Chinese Embassy in the UK	£52	Gift - beverage

Table 1

- 3.13 Of the 18 declarations received 14 were received within the 28 day deadline. Three of the 4 late declarations were made the month following the offer, one being late as a result of the councillor being out of the country when the gift was received in the office.
- 3.14 Members were reminded of the need to declare any offers of gifts and hospitality via articles in the Members' Bulletin on 18 November 2022 and 6 January 2023, making specific mention of the holiday season.
- 3.15 A request to Members to confirm that all declarations were up to date, or that they had nothing to declare was also included in the email sent in January.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None specific to this report.

#### **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

#### **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

7.1 Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 Act provides that the Council's Monitoring Officer must establish and maintain a register of interests of Members of the Authority.

7.2 Section 30 of the 2011 Act requires Members to register disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days. Otherwise it is for the Council to determine what is entered in the register of interests and as indicated in this report that includes gifts and hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25

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#### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

##### **Linked Report**

- NONE

##### **Appendices**

- NONE

**Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)**

**List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report**

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- NONE

**Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A