


<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Standards Advisory Committee</b></p> <p>Thursday, 30 July 2020</p>	
<p><b>Report of:</b> Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Open (Unrestricted)</p>
<p><b>Register of Members' Gifts and Hospitality</b></p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion; Head of Democratic Services
<b>Wards affected</b>	(All Wards);

### Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the declarations of gifts and/or hospitality received from Members since the previous report to the Committee on 30 January 2020.

Standards (Advisory) Committee are receiving this report as it monitors compliance with the requirement in the Council Code of Conduct for Members to register and gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25.

### Recommendations:

The Standards (Advisory) Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and note the declarations of Gifts and/or Hospitality offered as reported in Appendix 1.

### 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 There is a statutory requirement for the Council 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 The Council's Code of Conduct (paragraph 3.6) requires a Member to register any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25 and the person from whom it is received.

### 2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 This is a noting report.

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

- 3.1 Appendix 1 provides a copy of the Register of Gifts and Hospitality declared from 1 January to 30 June 2020. A total of 3 declarations were made during this period, all by the Mayor and all were declared on time within the 28-day notification deadline. This is a significant reduction since previous reporting periods.
- 3.2 When reviewing the declarations, the Committee are encouraged to consider whether they think decisions around specific gifts, for example whether they were kept, refused or donated to the Speaker's Fund, were appropriate in those cases.

#### *The Impact of the Pandemic*

- 3.3 As would be expected, the current COVID-19 pandemic has much reduced the number of events and occasions that Members might attend and so also reduced the number of related declarations of gifts and hospitality.

#### *Iftar Parties*

- 3.4 One issue for discussion that has arisen recently was around Iftar Events during Ramadan. Councillors may, when attending, be given Iftar Packs to break their fast just as all other attendees were. The packs themselves were unlikely to cost over £25 and so did not need to be declared (although public perception could be considered) but there were also questions about what happens where a Councillor is handed a large number of boxes and asked to distribute them to others.
- 3.5 The discussions considered whether those receiving the boxes from the Members would perceive they were receiving a gift from the Member and therefore whether it was creating an advantage to that Member.
- 3.6 It was considered that it was likely recipients would simply view the Councillor as a local dignitary handing out the food but this did demonstrate the need for Members to be cautious in all situations and there would be circumstances where a declaration was useful to clarify a situation.

#### *Internal Audit on Corporate Governance*

- 3.7 Gifts and Hospitality is an area also being considered in a current audit on the Council's Corporate Governance. Issues it is likely to consider include:
- Total number of declarations
  - The value of individual gifts and whether higher value gifts should always be refused or donated (e.g. to the Speaker's Charity).
  - The role of the Standards Advisory Committee in scrutinising gifts and hospitality.

## *Communications*

- 3.8 In May reminder of the need to continue to declare gifts and hospitality was included in the Members Bulletin during the pandemic. In addition, the Chair of the Standards Advisory Committee has written to all Members highlighting the lack of declarations and ask all Members to think carefully about whether there are any declarations that may have been missed during the pandemic period.

## *Next Steps*

- 3.9 The next opportunity to highlight these issues to Members is likely to be the next Ethics and Probity Training which will be a required member development session for all Members. This is expected to take place in early September.

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no equalities implications arising from 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.

- 5.2 None arising from this report.

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

- 6.1 This report recommends that the Standards Advisory Committee note the declarations of Gifts and/or Hospitality offered as reported in Appendix 1. There are no direct financial implications arising from 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**

- Previous update reports to Standards (Advisory) Committee meetings.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Register of Gifts and Hospitality declared – 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020.

### **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