

Non-Executive Report of the:  <b>Standards Advisory Committee</b>  Thursday, 4 February 2021	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Divisional Director, Legal Services and Interim Monitoring Officer	<b>Classification:</b> Open (Unrestricted)
<b>Register of Gifts and Hospitality - Quarterly Update</b>	

<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 15 October 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 October 2020 to 31 December 2020. A total of 9 declarations were made during this period; only one wasn't declared on time within the 28-day notification period and that was only late by a couple of days. This is a small increase on the previous reporting period.

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.

#### *Ethics and Probity Training – Gifts and Hospitality*

3.4 The recent Ethics and Probity Training sessions attended by many Members were used as an opportunity to highlight the issue of gifts and hospitality and to remind Members of the various scenarios which could result in the need to make a declaration.

#### *Internal Audit on Corporate Governance*

3.5 As set out in the last report, Gifts and Hospitality is an area considered in a recent audit on the Council's Corporate Governance. Issues it considered included:

- 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.

#### *Regular prompt for Members to update their Registers of Interest*

3.6 The regular request to Members to review and update their Registers of Interest was circulated to all Members towards the end of 2020. This form includes a field to declare any gifts and hospitality that may not have been declared individually. For the first time this also includes a requirement to actively indicate that no gifts or hospitality were received rather than just leaving the field blank.

3.7 The meeting will be provided with an update on responses to this request.

### *Next Steps*

- 3.8 Officers will present the final results of the register of interests update to the Chair of the Committee to look at whether any particular messages or findings come out of the activity that should be circulated to Members. This can be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee.

## **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 October 2020 to 31 December 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

## Appendix 1

### Gifts and Hospitality Accepted 1 October 2020 – 31 December 2020

Name	Date offered /event	Type	Accepted / Declined	Date Declared	On Time?	Provided By	Value Estimate	Description
<b>Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain</b>	01.10.20	Gift	Accepted	14.10.20	Yes	Jami Khan	£20	Cake and flowers
<b>Councillor Puru Miah</b>	16.10.20	Gift	Accepted	16.10.20	Yes	London Society	£40	One year membership to the society
<b>Councillor Marc Francis</b>	02.11.20	Gift	Accepted	04.12.20	No	Alda Malkollori	£40	Picnic Hamper
<b>Councillor Kevin Brady</b>	11.11.20	Gift	Accepted	12.11.20	Yes	Tower Hamlets Community Housing	£20	Tea/biscuits hamper for virtual board awayday
<b>Councillor Tarik Khan</b>	15.12.20	Gift	Accepted	18.01.21	No	Tower Hamlets Homes	£50	Christmas Hamper
<b>Councillor John Pierce</b>	16.12.20	Gift	Accepted	13.01.21	Yes	Tower Hamlets Homes	£50	Festive gift
<b>Mayor John Biggs</b>	17.12.20	Gift	Accepted – donated to Speaker's Charity	17.12.20	Yes	Chinese Embassy	£50	2 bottles of wine
<b>Mayor John Biggs</b>	17.12.20	Gift	Accepted	17.12.20	Yes	London Community Agency	£200	Book 'London's Mayor at 20'
<b>Councillor Asma Begum</b>	21.12.20	Gift	Accepted	13.01.21	Yes	Tower Hamlets Homes	£50	Gift Hamper