

# GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY & PROCEDURE

## Policy Statement

### Our Approach

Our vision is for Warwickshire County Council to be a great place to work where diverse and talented people are enabled to be their best. We are committed to ensuring that Council business is conducted free from influence and that the conduct of our people does not lead to anyone questioning their interests or thinking that they have been influenced by gifts and hospitality.

This is important because your reputation and that of the Council could be seriously affected if you inappropriately accept a gift or hospitality. It is a criminal offence to accept a gift or reward in return for allowing yourself to be influenced as a local government employee.

This policy is relevant to all workers (including agency workers) of Warwickshire County Council and is supported by a flowchart providing a visual overview of the procedure.

### What is a gift, and what is hospitality?

A gift is any item or service that you receive free of charge. It includes anything you personally are offered at a discounted rate or on terms not available to the public. It does not include staff offers/discounts which are negotiated corporately. Common gifts include pens, diaries, books, flowers, bottles of wine, chocolates, and other business stationery.

Hospitality is the offer of food, drink, accommodation or entertainment, or the opportunity to attend any cultural or sporting events on terms not available to the public. Common hospitality includes meals, drinks, and tickets for events.

### General principles

You should treat any offer of gift or hospitality made to you personally with caution. Think about whether there is a benefit to the Council in you accepting, the scale, amount, frequency and source of the offer, the timing of the offer in relation to forthcoming Council decisions and whether accepting could be misinterpreted. What would the public's perception be if you decided to accept?

If you are unsure of what to do, always speak to your Director before acting. It is your responsibility to comply with the Council's policy on gifts and hospitality and follow the Council's guidance and any gift or hospitality you accept you must be able to justify.

### What gifts and hospitality can be accepted without any approval?

You can accept gifts and hospitality which are small gestures and have only a nominal value without the approval of your Director, Executive Director, or Chief Executive. Gifts and hospitality of this nature do not need to be recorded.

- **Gifts** which can be accepted include – calendars, diaries, mugs, small gifts given at the end of a courtesy visit e.g., to a factory, gifts presented to you by visitors where refusal would be regarded as inappropriate.
- **Hospitality** which can be accepted includes – invitation to events where you are representing the Council (e.g. opening ceremonies, trade shows, events where you are invited to speak, events hosted/sponsored by the Council) working lunches provided to enable the parties to continue to discuss business, refreshments offered in connection with any meeting you are attending on behalf of the Council, meals or refreshments funded by other public sector partners as part of joint working/collaboration, meals or refreshments provided as part of a ceremony or event to launch a project or initiative supported by the Council.

## What gifts or hospitality need approval from your Director or above?

Any gift or hospitality which is more than just a token should be politely refused or returned. In exceptional circumstances such gifts and hospitality may be accepted, however, you must have the prior written approval of your Director if you decide to accept something which has more than a nominal value. If you or your Director have any concerns about the public perception of accepting any gift or hospitality, then you must refer it to your Executive Director.

In the case of Directors, approval must be obtained from your relevant Executive Director. For any gifts or hospitality offered to an Executive Director, approval must be obtained from the Chief Executive of the Council and for any gifts or hospitality offered to the Chief Executive of the Council, approval must be obtained from the Leader of the Council.

An example of a gift or hospitality that might be appropriate to be approved would be items won in free prize draws and raffles at sponsored events/conferences.

## What gifts or hospitality should never be accepted?

- **Cash or monetary gifts.** The rules dealing with gifts and legacies from service users can be found in the [Employer and Employee Responsibilities document](#).
- Gifts or hospitality **offered to your husband, wife, partner, family, or friends** that are offered in connection or as a result of your work for the Council.
- Gifts or hospitality **from a tenderer in the immediate period before tenders** are invited or during the tender process. If you are carrying out day long site visits as part of the tender process, you can accept the offer of lunch provided it is proportionate and not extravagant.
- **Lavish or extravagant gifts or hospitality** unconnected to your work such as holidays, overnight stays, air or rail travel, use of a company's own holiday accommodation, after dinner speaker celebrity events, expensive meals where work is not discussed, sporting or cultural events (e.g., theatre tickets, football match, golfing event). This applies even if done in your own time.

# Our Procedure

## What should I do if I get offered a gift or hospitality?

You must make sure that **all offers** you receive which are more than just a token are recorded, even if you do not accept them. There are two ways offers are recorded, depending on whether you are on Your HR:

### Your HR

If you are on Your HR, you should go to the gifts and hospitalities section and record the details there. This generates an automatic email to your line manager who then **must** expressly forward your submission on to your Director for approval or refusal of the gift or hospitality. These details are recorded in the electronic system.

### Not on Your HR

If you are not on Your HR, you should record the same details onto the gifts and hospitality declaration form, accessible in the Useful Links section at the end of this procedure. Following approval or otherwise by your Director, your manager will need to upload the form to your HRER file. If you do not have a HRER file then your manager should send the form to the [HR Service Desk](#) (please flag that it relates to gifts and hospitalities), so that there is a centrally held record.

For more information on the recording of offers of gifts or hospitality, please refer to the Gifts and Hospitalities intranet page and the Procedure Flowchart available in the Useful Links section at the end of this procedure.

## What would happen to me if I didn't follow the guidance?

The Council may take disciplinary action against you if you failed to follow the guidance, and this could lead to a disciplinary sanction up to and including summary dismissal. It is also a criminal offence to demand or accept a gift or reward in return for allowing yourself to be influenced as a local government employee. This means your conduct could be investigated by the Police and you could receive a criminal record.

## Useful Links

Gifts and Hospitalities Supporting Documents including <https://warwickshiregovuk.sharepoint.com/SitePages/HR/Conduct/Gifts-and-hospitality.aspx>:

- Gifts and Hospitalities Declaration Form
- Gifts and Hospitalities Procedure Flowchart

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