

Members' Gifts and Hospitality

Local Protocol

This document is intended as a guide to assist Members in determining the correct course of action with regard to acceptance and declaration of gifts and hospitality offered to you in your capacity as a Member of the Fire Authority (or which might impact upon that role).

The guide sets out a recommended approach in dealing with gifts etc., depending on their nature and value. A decision in respect of the gifts and hospitality rests with you, although guidance can be obtained from the officers set out below.

Acceptance of gifts or hospitality could bring you or the Authority into disrepute if it creates the impression that someone may be seeking, or have already received, special treatment or is seeking to influence decisions. In deciding whether to accept any gifts or hospitality, regardless of the value, you should consider whether a member of the public, knowing the facts, would reasonably think that you might have been influenced by the gift or hospitality received.

The Authority has decided that any gifts or hospitality worth more than **£15** should be recorded.

Gifts

There is no need to declare a gift worth less than **£15**.

Where you accept any gift in your capacity as a Member of the Fire Authority (or which is likely to impact upon your role worth more than **£15** you must record the details in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. The Register is kept in the Committee and Members' Services Section at Service headquarters.

The more valuable a gift, the greater the degree of caution required. As a general guide, you should think carefully before accepting any gift which you know or believe to be worth more than **£25**. If you accept such a gift, you must inform the Monitoring Officer as well as recording the details in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

You should also record in the register any gifts that you have declined.

Hospitality

In general attendance in an official capacity at a function organised by a public authority or local non-profit-making organisation or is acceptable. Offers of hospitality from individuals or profit making organisations should be treated with care. An offer should be declined if you believe that it could have been made to exert influence, or to improve the standing of an individual or organisation, in relation to current or future dealings with the Authority.

If you accept an offer of hospitality and subsequently discover that the reason behind it was to exert undue influence, then you should, as soon as is practically possible, write to Monitoring Officer, giving details. For your own protection, you should advise the Monitoring Officer of any situation where you are concerned over the underlying intention behind the offer of hospitality, even where such an offer has been refused.

The table overleaf sets out examples of hospitality and the recommended course of action.

Example of Hospitality	Action
Light refreshments prior to site meetings; presentations etc.	No need to record
Lunch/evening meal provided as part of an event by another public authority	No need to record
Reception or meal sponsored by private sector organisation as part of wider public sector/professional conference	No need to record
Lunch provided as part of a private sector sponsored conference or promotional event	Record in Register
Evening meals and overnight accommodation as part of a private sector sponsored conference or promotional event	Caution advised: If possible, decline the offer
Lunch/evening meal provided by a voluntary body at a meeting or AGM	No need to record
Lunch/evening meal provided by a voluntary body, at a meeting for the specific purpose of fund raising/lobbying	Caution is advised; consideration should be given to the underlying motives. If accepted, it should be recorded in the Register.