

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Standards Committee - 4 November 2021

Subject: The Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members

Report of: City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Summary

This report considers the operation and efficacy of the Guidance for Members.

Recommendations

That the Standards Committee:

1. Notes the Monitoring Officer's views on the efficacy and operation of the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members.
 2. Provide comments as necessary on the Monitoring Officer's views regarding the efficacy and operation of the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members.
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Wards Affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Background

- 1.1 As the Committee will be aware the Council's Constitution contains a section relating to the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members ('the Guidance'). The Committee last received a report about the Guidance at its meeting in March 2021. That report considered the efficacy and operation of the Guidance up until the 31 December 2020.
- 1.2 This report covers the period from 1 January 2021 to 30 September 2021 when the report was written. However, in relation to gifts specifically received by the Lord Mayors' who were in office the report covers a longer period from May 2020 to 30 September 2021.
- 1.3 The Guidance was also considered at the most recent review of the Council's Constitution in February 2021 and no substantive changes were made.
- 1.4 The current version of the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.0 Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members

- 2.1 The Council's Code of Conduct for Members ('the Code') requires Members to register any gifts and hospitality received with an estimated value of at least £100. This figure dates from the 2013 revision to the Code following the changes implemented by the Localism Act 2011. The Council's form for the Registration of Interests makes provision for gifts and hospitality to be recorded where applicable.
- 2.2 The Committee will be aware that whilst officers do provide advice to Councillors, if asked, on Members' Interests including gifts and hospitality it is the responsibility of individual Members to comply with the requirements of the Code. Reminders to Members regarding updating their Register of Interests and registering any gifts and hospitality are contained in the Ethical Governance Updates sent to all Members and in email reminders sent to Members during the course of the Municipal Year. For the period to which the report relates an email reminder was sent on 8 June 2021.
- 2.3 The Committee is advised that two new entries relating to gifts and hospitality have been recorded during the period 1 January 2021 and 30 September 2021. The first of these related to the use of 2 local businesses premises, equipment and time for an evening to host a Member's fundraising for the 2021 local elections. It is doubtful whether this needed to be entered on the Member's Register of Interests form given that the event was held in their capacity as a candidate rather than as a Member of the Council. The second concerned 2 complimentary tickets for the Manchester International Festival and 2 complimentary tickets for the Home Cinema respectively. In both cases the entry stated that the estimated value was less than £100. The view of the Monitoring Officer is that bearing in mind the Covid lockdown and accompanying restrictions the level of new entries is unsurprising. It is also the view of the Monitoring Officer that there is no indication that Members are

unaware of the requirement to register gifts and hospitality as set out in the Guidance.

- 2.4 The Committee is further advised that there have been no refusals to accept gifts which have been notified to the Monitoring Officer during the period 1 January 2021 and 31 August 2021.
- 2.5 Whilst the Lord Mayor is of course subject to the terms of the Code specific provision is also made in guidelines for the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor which confirms that official gifts received by the Lord Mayor whilst in office belong to the City. However small personal gifts such as a scarf or diary may be retained by the Lord Mayor. The guidance also advises that whilst undertaking engagements care must be taken by the Lord Mayor to guard against being seen to solicit gifts. The Lord Mayor's Office has advised that with respect to gifts there is an agreed process in place where the Curatorial Manager of the Our Town Hall Project assesses the gifts received by the Lord Mayor approximately every 3-6 months to decide which gifts should be retained in the 'Town Hall Collection' and which gifts can be retained by the Lord Mayor.
- 2.6 There was no Mayor Making in May 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the incumbent Lord Mayor, Councillor Abid Latif Chohan stayed on for an extra 6 months. Councillor Chohan received no gifts between May 2020 and 27 October 2020, with the exception of two gifts presented on his last full day in office. As only two gifts were received, they are detailed below within the body of the report.

Date: 27 October 2020.

Person/Organisation: Enna Park, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Gift Description: Decorative box of tea - Osulloc Secret Tea Story - value £30 - Lord Mayor kept gift.

Gift Description: Book - The King at the Palace: Joseon Royal Court Culture at the National Palace Museum of Korea - value £12.50 - Lord Mayor donated gift to Library collection.

- 2.7 The current Lord Mayor was installed on 28 October 2020. A copy of the Register of Interests for the current Lord Mayor since he took office until 30 September 2021 is attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendations appear at the top of this report.