

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Standards Committee – 16 June 2022

**Subject:** The Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members

**Report of:** The City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

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**Purpose of the Report**

This report considers the operation and efficacy of the Gifts and Hospitality 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.
  3. Support the proposed change to the review date section of the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members to reflect the current practice of annual review of the same.
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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 November 2021. That report considered the efficacy and operation of the Guidance up until the 30 September 2021.
- 1.2 This report covers the period from 1 October 2021 to 12 May 2022 when the report was written. However, in relation to gifts specifically received by the Lord Mayor the report covers a slightly different period and commences from 25 September 2021
- 1.3 The Guidance was last considered at the review of the Council's Constitution carried out in February 2021 and no substantive changes were made. A further review of the Constitution will take place later this year.
- 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 20 January 2022.
- 2.3 The Committee is advised that two new entries relating to gifts and hospitality have been recorded during the period 1 October 2021 and 12 May 2022. Both entries were registered by the same member. The first concerned a gift card received from Northwards Housing in June 2021. The value of the gift card was £50 and therefore did not strictly need to be recorded. In this instance a sum of equivalent value was donated to charity by the member in question. The second concerned a pair of complimentary tickets for a New Order concert held in Heaton Park in September 2021. The tickets were provided by the organisers of the concert. No specific or estimated value of the tickets was provided. Both entries fall outside the period which the report covers because whilst the member updated their Register of Interests form by signing and dating it on 28 September 2021 the on-line version was not modified by

the team responsible for maintaining the Register until 22 October 2021. This was due to capacity/resource issues in that team at the time. Steps have been put in place with the aim of preventing delays of this nature occurring in the future. However, the delay which occurred in September 2021 meant neither entry showed at the time the previous report received by the Committee was written. The Monitoring Officer is of the view that bearing in mind the relatively short period the report covers as well as the continuing impact of Covid particularly at the end of last year and beginning of 2022 the level of new entries is unsurprising. It is also the Monitoring Officer's view that there is no indication that Members are unaware of the requirement to register gifts and hospitality as set out in the Guidance. Although the entry relating to June 2021 was recorded retrospectively it fell below the required threshold of an estimated value of at least £100 and therefore as stated above did not strictly need to be registered.

- 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 October 2021 and 12 May 2022.
- 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. 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. The guidance also advises that whilst undertaking engagements care must be taken by the Lord Mayor to guard against being seen to solicit gifts.
- 2.6 A copy of the List of Gifts and Hospitality received by the Lord Mayor who has held office during the period which the report covers is attached as Appendix
- 2.7 Any gifts that the Lord Mayor received as a ward councillor will be on their Register of Interests.
- 2.8 The Monitoring Officer is of the view that bearing in mind the number of events the Lord Mayor has to attend in their civic capacity the level of entries is again unsurprising. In deciding which gifts can be retained by the Lord Mayor or retained in the 'Town Hall Collection' care needs to be taken not to cause offence to the donor if they intended the gift to be for the Lord Mayor personally. In addition, gifts are sometimes engraved to personalise them or they may be given to specifically mark a particular occasion, event or visit carried out by the incumbent Lord Mayor. Gifts provided in these kinds of circumstances will either be added to the Town Hall Collection or, if the Curatorial Manager decides not to add them, dealt with in accordance with the agreed process mentioned in paragraph 2.5 above again having regard to the overarching principle of ensuring no offence is caused to the donor. The Committee is advised that the agreed process for assessing gifts is kept under review to ensure that it is appropriate and works well.

2.9 The Monitoring Officer does not consider that any amendment of the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members is required at this time other than to change the review date provision to reflect that the Guidance is reviewed annually.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

3.1 The recommendations appear at the top of this report.