

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Standards Committee – 15 June 2023

Subject: The Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members

Report of: The City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Summary

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.
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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 June 2022. That report considered the efficacy and operation of the Guidance up until the 12 May 2022.
- 1.2 This report covers the period from 13 May 2022 to 18 May 2023 when the report was written.
- 1.3 The Guidance was last considered at the review of the Council's Constitution carried out in November 2022 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 email reminders were sent on 17 May 2022 and 9 January 2023
- 2.3 The Committee is advised that six members updated their Register of Interests form in connection with entries relating to gifts and hospitality during the period 13 May 2022 and 18 May 2023. The first entry concerned complimentary tickets for the Halle Concert Society received by the member concerned as part of their role as a Board Member. The relevant entry on the Member's form states as part of their role it is expected that they attend various concerts over the year. Part of their role is also to bring new audiences to the Halle, and this involves passing on complimentary tickets. No estimated value of these tickets was provided. The second concerned a donation of £100 received as a donation for a campaign to which the member is a beneficiary. The relevant entry on the Member's form states "Crowd Justice campaign as one of 4 beneficiaries. Maximum donation from one individual was £100 collected on our behalf but paid direct to the solicitors Rahman Lowe Total amount raised £4075." The third relates to 6 complimentary tickets for

Manchester City Football Club in December 2021 and 2 additional complimentary tickets for the same Football club in March 2022. No estimated value of the tickets was provided. The entries concern events which took place outside the period to which this report relates but were made by a councillor who was only elected in May 2022. The fourth Register of Interests form which was updated contained reference to a week-long residential course in Durham 2017 by Unite Political School and a week-end residential course in 2018 by Unite Future. No specific or estimated value of these courses was provided. It would appear that strictly speaking these two entries are no longer required on the Member in question's register, however they were still provided on their latest update made on 18 May 2022. The fifth entry concerned a donation of £100 from Field Consulting, this was donated to a charity of which the member concerned is a trustee. The final entry relates to 2 complimentary tickets including a meal for a football match between Watford and Preston North End. No specific or estimated value of the tickets was provided. The Monitoring Officer continues to be of the view that 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.

- 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 13 May 2022 and 18 May 2023.
- 2.5 Whilst the Lord Mayor is of course subject to the terms of the Code specific provision is also made in the 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.
The Committee will note that an assessment by the Curatorial Manager of gifts numbered 30-46 on the spreadsheet was scheduled to take place during the week commencing 22 May 2023. However, the assessment did not take place as planned and was rescheduled for 7 June. As this was the deadline for publication of this report it was not possible to update the spreadsheet. Any gifts that the Lord Mayor received as a ward councillor will be on their Register of Interests.
- 2.7 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.

- 2.8 As things currently stand the Monitoring Officer does not consider that any amendment of the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance for Members is required. However, Members of the Committee are advised that a report on the Adoption of the Local Government Association Code for Members will be considered at a future meeting and any consequential changes which are required following that report will be picked up then.

3.0 Recommendations

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