

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

1. GENERAL

- 1.1 Local Government employees must, at all times, be seen to be acting fairly and impartially. The acceptance of gifts and hospitality is a sensitive area where your actions can easily be misconstrued. There are always dangers in accepting a gift or hospitality. Much of what is acceptable practice in the private sector is not acceptable in local government employment. Unlike private industry, actions of Council Officers are totally open to public scrutiny. Actions should be such that employees would not be embarrassed to explain them to anyone. These guidelines will help judge what sort of gift, and what level of hospitality, is acceptable.
- 1.2 There are some general rules that apply –
- (i) always say no if you think the giver has an ulterior motive.
 - (ii) be sensitive to the possibility that the giver may think that even small gifts or humble hospitality will elicit prompt service or preferential treatment.
 - (iii) never accept a gift or hospitality from anyone who is, or may be in the foreseeable future, tendering for any contract with the Council, seeking planning consent, or in dispute with the Council, even if you are not directly involved in that service area.
 - iv) always refuse expensive gifts. As a gauge, a bottle of wine or spirits would not normally be considered acceptable.

2. GIFTS

- 2.1 Small items like diaries, pens or modest office equipment may be accepted, provided the gift is inexpensive and given freely to a variety of the donor's customers and provided they do not conflict with the general rules.

3. HOSPITALITY

- 3.1 A gauge of what is acceptable is whether this Council would offer a similar level of hospitality in similar circumstances.
- 3.2 Working lunches are generally acceptable as a way of doing business.

- 3.3 Invitations to corporate hospitality events must each be judged on their merit. Provided the general rules do not apply, it may be acceptable to join other company/organisation guests at sponsored cultural and sporting events, or other public performances, as a representative of the Council. It may also be acceptable to join other guests at company/organisation special events, such as jubilee celebrations. Acceptability depends on the appropriateness of the invitation, in terms of the level of hospitality and the status of the invited employee. In all such cases, the employee's Head of Service must be consulted.
- 3.4 Paid holidays or concessionary travel rates are not acceptable. Neither are offers of hotel accommodation or the use of company flats.
- 3.5 When visiting a company to view equipment the Council is considering buying, try to make sure that, as far as possible, the expenses of the trip are paid by this Council. Refreshments and a working lunch may be accepted, but be careful to ensure that the Council's purchasing and/or tendering procedures are not compromised.
- 3.6 Acceptance of sponsored hospitality built into the official programme of conferences and seminars related to the employee's work is acceptable.
- 3.7 Offers to speak at corporate dinners and social gatherings, or events organised by, for example, a professional body, where there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council may be accepted. It is acceptable for a spouse/partner to be included in this sort of invitation.
- 3.8 Any invitation should be to you in your professional/working capacity.

4. REGISTER

- 4.1 Except for the small acceptable items described, all gifts and hospitality received should be entered into the register held in Legal and Democratic Services.

5. EMPLOYEE'S DUTY

- 5.1 If in any doubt about the acceptability of any gift or offer of hospitality, it is the employee's responsibility to consult their Head of Service.