

Corporate and Individual Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship Process

Introduction

In accordance with West Oxfordshire District Council's ('the Council's') Employees Code of Conduct and the Local Government Act 1972, employees shall not "under colour of his office or employment accept any fee or reward other than their proper remuneration (i.e. salary/ pay)". As such, you must not accept any fee or reward for the work you do other than your pay and allowances as set out in your contract of employment without seeking prior approval.

Information is collected to support compliance with The Bribery Act 2010, Data Protection Legislation and the Council Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policies. It is an offence under the Bribery Act 2010 to accept gifts, loans, fees or rewards as an inducement to act in a certain way in your official capacity.

Information provided will be managed by the Business Manager, Governance in Publica and access will be restricted and may only be viewed by authorised officers (those who can authorise the acceptance of gifts, hospitality & sponsorship) and the attendees of the Council Governance Group which includes the Monitoring Officer, Audit, and Counter-Fraud. The Governance Group will monitor compliance as a standard agenda item. The Council may choose to publish information and will have to comply with any requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and deal with requests from other bodies such as the police and regulatory agencies, in those circumstances.

This process sets out what you as an employee are required to do if you are offered a gift, hospitality, or sponsorship in the capacity of your office or employment, whether you intend to accept or not.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Council at West Oxfordshire District Council. This process should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and Council constitution.

Definitions

Definitions of corporate hospitality, gifts, hospitality or sponsorship can include a wide range of benefits, below are some examples of what would be covered under this process.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Gift

Any item of cash or goods, or any service, which is provided for personal benefit, free of charge or at less than its commercial value. Examples could include flowers, alcohol, chocolates, vouchers, discounts, or cash. Employees are often given branded / promotional gifts from suppliers, such as notebooks, calendars and pens. As these have a nominal value, these can be accepted without declaration.

Individual Hospitality

Offers of meals, beverages, travel, accommodation, and other expenses in relation to attendance at meetings, events, conferences, award nights, education, and training etc. Typical examples could include business meals, client trips, free invites to conferences, seminars, cultural and sporting events.

Corporate Hospitality

Offers of gifts and / or hospitality to all employees of the Council. This is likely to be something that would be a one-off offer to all employees, and typical examples would include free tickets to sporting events, and local events taking place in our District.

Sponsorship

Support (financial or otherwise) of Council activities by an external body.

What should you do if you are offered any of the above?

Accepting a gift and / or hospitality

- Individuals should not accept gifts and / or hospitality that may affect or be seen to affect their professional judgement. This overarching principle should apply in all circumstances.
- As a Public Body, it is essential that members of the public have confidence in the integrity, impartiality, and honesty of employees. Any gifts, hospitality and sponsorship arrangements should ensure this position is not jeopardised.
- Individuals should not accept payment, gift and / or hospitality from a third party that is known to be, or suspected to have been, offered with the expectation that it will obtain a business or any other advantage for them from the Council. Employees should be aware that it is a criminal offence under the Bribery Act 2010 to accept a bribe.
- Gifts from organisations involved in an active tender process must never be accepted.
- Under no circumstances are individuals allowed to accept personal gifts of cash or cash equivalents e.g., gift vouchers, or token offers of remuneration to attend meetings whilst in a capacity of working for or representing the Council, whatever their value and whatever their source.
- Modest gifts and / or hospitality of a value of £25 or under, may be accepted, however they must be declared on the gifts, hospitality, and sponsorship register. A common-sense approach should be applied to the valuing of gifts (using an actual amount, if known, or an estimate that a reasonable person would make as to its value).
- Individuals should not ask for any gifts or hospitality.

Constitution of West Oxfordshire District Council

- Employees are advised to consult with the Monitoring Officer or with the Business Manager for Governance, if they are unsure as to whether to accept any offers of gifts and / or hospitality.
- If the gift and / or hospitality is also offered to a family member, such as an invite to you and your partner to attend an event, you must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer / Business Manager for Governance.
- Gifts and / or hospitality at a value of over £25 should be treated with caution and only accepted on behalf of the Council and not in a personal capacity. Acceptance of a gift over £25 must be approved. Please see approval below.
- Multiple gifts and / or hospitality from the same source over a 12-month period should be treated in the same way as single gifts over £25 where the cumulative value exceeds £25.
- Whether a gift and / or hospitality is accepted or not, it must be declared on the gifts, hospitality, and sponsorship register.

To complete the register in relation to gifts and /or hospitality with a value of £25 or under – click [here](#)

Approval Process for Gifts and / or Hospitality

For any gifts and / or hospitality over £25, approval must be obtained prior to acceptance. In the first instance, your request should be emailed to employee.gifts@publicagroup.uk detailing the following information:

- Your name
- Job Title
- Place of work
- Detail of the gift and / or hospitality offered, by whom, the reason why this has been offered / context of offer, estimated value and why you wish to accept the offer.

The Business Manager, Governance will then seek the required authorisation from the Council. Authorisation can be provided by:

Councils: Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer or Monitoring Officer

If one of the Management who is an authorising officer has been offered gifts and / hospitality, authorisation can be provided by another authorising officer. For example, where the request is from the Chief Executive, authorisation can be given by the Monitoring Officer and / or Section 151 Officer of the Council.

Once approval has been obtained, you will be notified and must complete the register in relation to gifts and /or hospitality – click [here](#).

Corporate Hospitality

If a company and / or individual offers Corporate Hospitality or gifts, before this is offered to employees, it must be approved by the Management Team.

In the first instance, this should be sent to the Business Manager, Governance, who can coordinate the authorisation process and register this onto the gifts, hospitality, and sponsorship register.

Once approved, this can then be communicated to employees and should an employee wish to take up the offer e.g., a free ticket to a sporting event, they must declare this on the gifts, hospitality, and sponsorship register.

Sponsorship

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is asked to sponsor a Council activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts and / or hospitality apply. As a Public Body, it is essential that members of the public have confidence in the integrity, impartiality and honesty of employees. Any sponsorship arrangements should ensure this position is not jeopardised.

Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors (i.e. contractors who could bid for Council work). If you are unsure, please speak to the Procurement Team in relation to contractors.

Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service neither you nor any person connected with you must benefit personally from such sponsorship in any way. Employees should seek guidance and inform the Council if they are involved with any event or service that the Council proposes to sponsor.

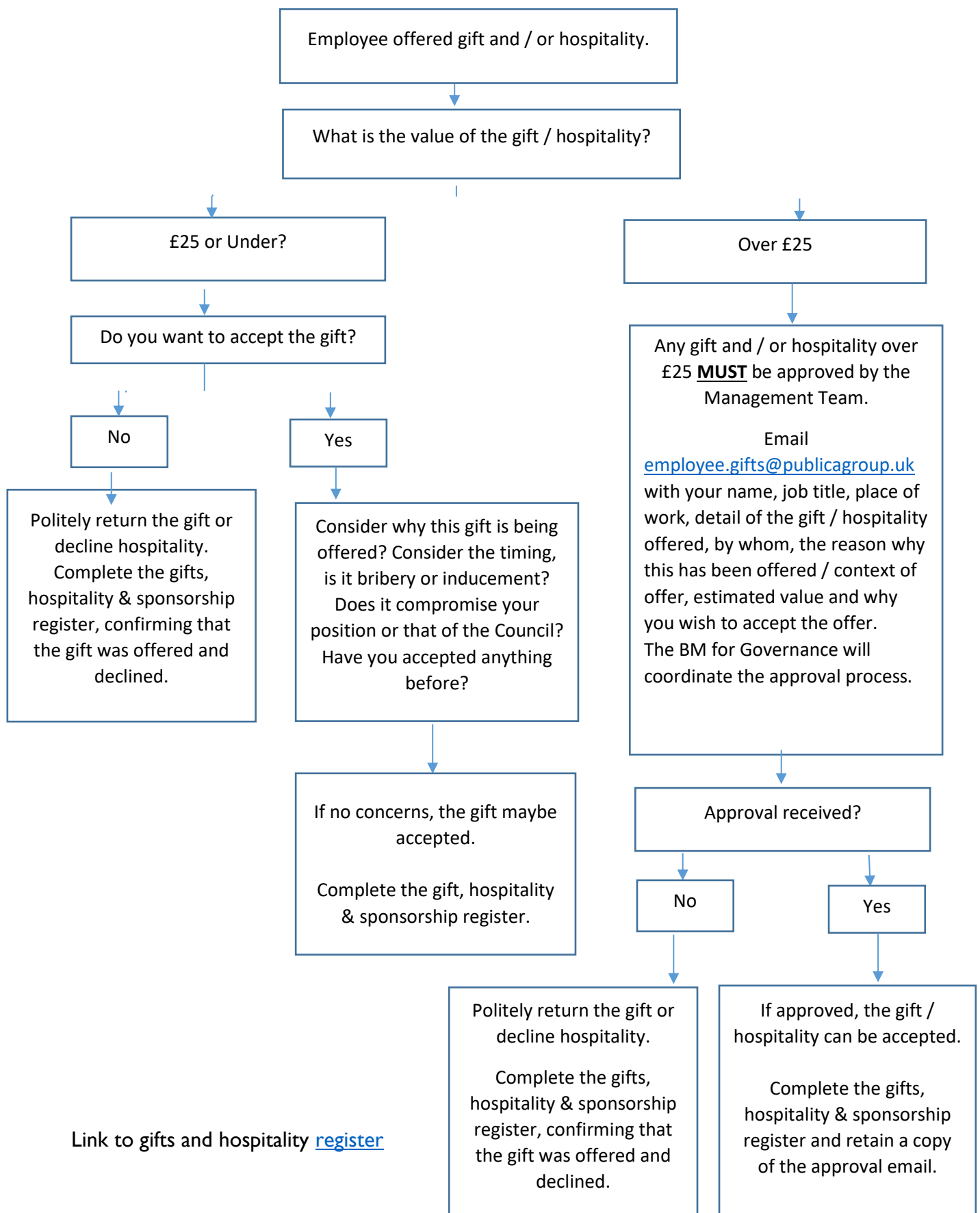
Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, you should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved with your work as an employee and any outside interests.

In all cases of sponsorship, there must be full disclosure of the proposed arrangements and consultation with the Management Team at an early stage. In each arrangement for sponsorship, care shall be given to recording the arrangement and the decision-making process so that there is a clear audit trail for the purposes of transparency and accountability and as well as a declaring this on the gifts, hospitality, and sponsorship register.

Remember

All sponsorship and offers of gifts and / or hospitality, regardless of whether it is accepted or not, or authorised or not, **must** be recorded using the Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship Approval Form. Failure to do this may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The acceptance of Gifts and / or Hospitality Flowchart



Link to gifts and hospitality [register](#)

