

The Westminster Audit and Performance Committee

Date:	29 September 2021
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Gifts and Hospitality Received by Employees - Policy Review
Wards Affected:	All
City for All Summary	The Gifts and Hospitality policy contributes to City for All by ensuring full transparency and compliance with legislation
Financial Summary:	N/A
Report of:	Lee Witham, Director of People Services
Author:	Natalie Monaghan, Strategic Wellbeing and Reward Lead Contact Details: nmonaghan@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on our recent review of the Council's Policy on the receipt of Gifts & Hospitality (G&H) by Council employees.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

The Committee is asked to consider and note the contents of this report.

3. Background

The Council, along with a number of other Councils, have over the last two years received Freedom of Information requests (FOIs), requesting historic information on Gifts and Hospitality (G&H) received by Council employees.

In response to the FOIs, the Chief Executive committed to publishing details of G&H offered to employees on the Council's external website to ensure full transparency. The Chief Executive also commissioned a review of the Council's policy on employees acceptance of G&H which highlighted the need for additional

clarity on what should and should not be accepted and how or what entries should be recorded on the G&H register.

The review of the G&H policy also offered the opportunity to incorporate the Council's commitment to full transparency and publication of the register online twice a year.

4. Policy Review

Following engagement and consultation with the Executive Leadership Team, the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader and Unions, a new Gifts & Hospitality policy has been created to ensure clarity of what could be and should not be accepted by employees, and to allow for full transparency. The new policy was created in collaboration with Audit and Legal Services.

The key principles of the new G&H policy are:

- Employees may not accept any fee or reward whatsoever other than their proper contractual pay and benefits.
- Employees cannot accept or give gifts, unless in accordance with the limited exceptions set out in the policy, such as small token value gifts (i.e. pens, diaries etc).
- Hospitality which needs to be recorded, both accepted or declined, is defined as drinks, meals, events, entertainment, overnight accommodation and travel with an estimated value of £25 or more.
- It may be appropriate in very limited circumstances to accept offers to modestly priced ticketed events but only if they are taking place within the City of Westminster and if acceptance would not be viewed as an attempt to influence that employee's part in a council decision making process.
- We have removed managerial sign-off and shifted the ultimate responsibility onto the individual being offered the gifts and/or hospitality.
- If employees have any doubts as to whether it would be appropriate to accept G&H, then they should not accept it.
- We have committed to publishing the G&H register entries on our external website twice yearly for transparency.

The new Gift & Hospitality policy for officers was launched July 2021, and the register entries for 2020 have been published on our external transparency page, [here](#).

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - WCC Gift & Hospitality Policy