

Committee:	Standards Committee	Agenda Item No.:	8.
Date:	13 <sup>th</sup> August 2013	Category	*
Subject:	Review of Gifts and Hospitality Registers.	Status	Open
Report by:	Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer.		
Other Officers involved:	Legal Support Officer		
Director	Chief Executive Officer		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	N/A		

### **RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS**

COMMUNITY SAFETY – Ensuring that communities are safe and secure  
CUSTOMER FOCUSED SERVICES – Providing excellent customer focused services

ENVIRONMENT – Promoting and enhancing a clean and sustainable environment

REGENERATION – Developing healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities

SOCIAL INCLUSION – Promoting fairness, equality and lifelong learning.

STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Continually improving our organisation.

The appropriate use of the Gifts and Hospitality Registers contributes to ensuring that the Corporate Aims remain the focus of the Council's work rather than the behaviour of officers and members.

### **TARGETS**

The subject matter does not contribute to any targets specified in the Corporate Plan.

### **VALUE FOR MONEY**

The report does not relate to the expenditure of money.

### **THE REPORT**

Once a year the Gifts and Hospitality Registers of the Council are checked by the Monitoring Officer and the Legal Support Officer to ensure that they are being used and used correctly and that they have the correct guidance on the Registers.

This year sees a change to the inspection process as this will be the last year that the Environmental Health Services Gifts and Hospitality Register will be examined by Bolsover. As this is now a North East Derbyshire District Council department, it will be for that Council to carry out the review in future.

The results of the review are contained on the attached spreadsheet. Where appropriate this includes comment as to the future changes. There has been no great use of the Registers.

In terms of the guidance, this has been reviewed and it is not proposed that any substantive changes should be made. However some minor changes reflecting changes in titles and similar are suggested. The draft is attached.

As this is the first year that the review has been carried out at the Arc, it is also a suitable time to review arrangements for the keeping of these Registers. I don't consider it necessary to retain the current register per department arrangement in view of the open plan office space now occupied and the technological solutions available in the Arc and with the satellite premises.

The proposal is for an electronic register for the departmental registers, with the Members' Register remaining in hard copy as at present unless Members decide to run their register in the same way.

This would work as follows:-

- The form would be signed and counter signed (for acceptance of any gift or hospitality) as now.
- The signed form would then be scanned and forwarded to Legal where the Legal Support Officer would electronically file the forms.
- The original form would then be forwarded, in due course, also to the Legal Support Officer who would also file the hard copies. It would be part of the assessment of whether it is necessary to keep the hard copies as to whether this creates any problems or discrepancies with the electronic forms when the annual check is carried out.

I have consulted colleagues and the responses are in favour of change and particularly an electronic version of the Register.

Members would continue to have a separate Register unless they also decide to change to this system. The rules applying to members are slightly different – for example the limit for registration is £100 or above, whereas for employees it is anything received.

I have attached the draft forms for Members' information.

## **ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

The outcome of the review as shown on the spreadsheet attached and the options suggested above.

An item will be placed on the Weekly Bulletin for all staff when the change has been made.

Members will be reminded of the need to register gifts and hospitality through a letter being sent to each Member.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Financial: None

Legal: It is good governance to check these registers once a year to ensure they exist and are being used appropriately. It is an appropriate time for a review of the procedure now that the Council has moved its main office to the Arc.

Human Resources: None

## **RECOMMENDATION(S) that**

- 1. Members consider the outcome of the review of the use of the Gifts and Hospitality Registers.**
- 2. Members' approve the draft guidance attached.**
- 3. Members note the move to an electronic Gifts and Hospitality Register as described in the report.**
- 4. An item be put on the weekly bulletin and a briefing be given to those without computers explaining the changes and reinforcing the need to make declarations.**
- 5. A further briefing or reminder be sent to all Members about the use of the Gifts and Hospitality Register and the limit of £100.**

ATTACHMENT: **Y – Review of Gifts and Hospitality**

FILE REFERENCE: **None**

SOURCE DOCUMENT: ***Gifts and Hospitality Registers***