

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Public confidence in the integrity of the Council would be undermined if there was the least suspicion, however ill founded, that those who work for the Council could be influenced in any way by improper motives. Employees should be protected against unjustified allegations or wrongdoing.
- 1.2 It is therefore important that employees should know the standards of conduct expected of them. Rules or Codes of Practice do not themselves create the standards but they are an indispensable factor in achieving the standards required.
- 1.3 This code of practice outlines the approach to take when employees are offered any gifts and hospitality.
- 1.4 It is impossible to cover every eventuality but this code is intended as a guide, which will assist employees. If an employee is in any doubt as to whether to accept or refuse an offer of a gift or hospitality they should seek advice from the Parish Administrator.
- 1.5 Any employee found to have accepted inappropriate gifts or hospitality without the consent of the Parish Administrator may be subject to disciplinary action.

2. Acceptance Of Gifts

- 2.1 There can be little doubt that the acceptance of gifts by employees from persons who have, or seek to have, dealings with the Parish could be viewed by the public with grave suspicion and would make the employee concerned and the Parish Council extremely vulnerable to criticism. Employees should, therefore, tactfully refuse any personal gift which is offered to him/her or to a member of his/her family by, or indirectly attributable to, any person or body who has, or may have, dealings of any kind whatsoever with the Parish or, who has applied, or may apply, to the Parish Council for any planning or other kind of decision. In all cases the employee should report the offer to the Parish Administrator.
- 2.2 There is a need to recognise and provide for modest gifts, which come into the workplace as a consequence of normal commercial practice or as a token of appreciation. These are normally items of a promotional nature which are given to a range of people and not personally to the employee. These gifts are usually given at Christmas time and include calendars, diaries and other minor articles to use in the office.
- 2.3 What constitutes a modest gift is obviously a matter of individual judgement, but it is considered that such gifts should not exceed the value of £10. For gifts over £10, advice should be sought from the Parish Administrator.
- 2.5 In all cases, it is wise to err on the side of caution. If a gift is simply delivered to either the workplace or home the Parish Administrator should be informed and the gift returned to the donor with a letter explaining the Council's policy on accepting gifts.

3. Acceptance of Hospitality

- 3.1 When an employee should accept hospitality as a result of their employment at the Council is very much a matter of judgement given the particular circumstances. It is difficult to give fixed guidelines to be followed on all occasions but this code outlines the principles to be followed. If any uncertainty remains advice should be sought from the Parish Administrator
- 3.2 It is important that any suggestion of improper influences is completely avoided. It must be apparent that no cause could reasonably arise for adverse criticism of the council or individual employees following the acceptance of any hospitality. In such instances where any suggestion of improper influence is even remotely possible, the offer of hospitality must be refused politely by the employee.
- 3.3 Hospitality, other than modest refreshments, should not be accepted from any person/organisation that is currently doing business or seeking business/awaiting a decision from the Parish, particularly where the offer is to an individual employee.
- 3.4 The extent of the hospitality will obviously be a factor as to its acceptability. Hospitality should only be accepted where it is on a scale appropriate to the circumstances, reasonably incidental to the occasion and not extravagant. Offers of hospitality that appear immodest or lavish should be refused and the offer reported to the Parish Administrator.
- 3.5 The following types of hospitality would generally be considered acceptable, providing it is of a modest nature:-
- offer of a drink, following a site visit;
 - a working lunch to allow the parties to continue to discuss business already started but employees should ensure that acceptance does not put their personal integrity, or that of the Parish Council, into question;
 - hospitality offered by other non-commercial bodies, provided that there is a general understanding that no indebtedness will result from the acceptance;
 - invitations to functions where the officer represents the Council in an official capacity eg when invited to speak , opening ceremonies , trade shows; or
 - hospitality of the "corporate entertaining" nature, eg at training events or conferences where many employees/organisations are being simultaneously entertained, is acceptable if there is a general understanding that no indebtedness will result from acceptance.

This is not an exhaustive list, each offer of hospitality must be considered individually and employees must use their own judgement.

- 3.6 Employees must only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Parish Council in the Community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should only be accepted when these are part of the life of the community or where the Parish should be represented or where specific permission has been granted by the Parish Administrator. In every case these should be duly authorised and recorded in the gifts and hospitality register. Employees should consider the public's perception of acceptance not just whether it is likely to influence the awarding of a contract.

- 3.7 Where the Parish Administrator approves the acceptance of hospitality then the employee does not need to take annual leave. If acceptance of the hospitality is questionable because it is a social occasion eg golfing days, then taking leave as a compromise is not acceptable – the hospitality should be refused.

4. Giving Hospitality

- 4.1 Hospitality given by employees of the Council should be able to be justified as being in the public interest. It should be on a scale appropriate to the occasion and should not be lavish or extravagant.
- 4.2 Hospitality should not be offered by employees of the Parish Council unless authorised to do so by the Parish Administrator and should not exceed budget provisions. The exception being the offer of modest hospitality, such as the provision of refreshments eg tea/coffee, to official visitors to Council premises.

5. Procedure to be Followed

- 5.1 Prior to the acceptance of any gifts and/or hospitality the employee must fill in a "Gifts and Hospitality" form, (see Appendix 1 for an example of a Gifts and Hospitality Form). The form should also be used to notify the Parish Administrator of any offers of gifts/hospitality which are rejected.
- 5.2 A form does not need to be completed for modest gifts as specified in 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4.

Notification by Member of Penkridge Parish Council: Register of Members' Acceptance of Gift[s]/Hospitality

I, (full name)

a Member of

- [i] You are required to notify the Parish Clerk of any gifts or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50. which you receive in your role as a Parish Councillor.
- [ii] You should inform the Parish Clerk of any such gifts or hospitality within 28 days of receiving them so that the details can be entered into the Register of Members Gifts and Hospitality.
- [iii] Please note that the £50 limit could be reached by one gift/hospitality event of the value or a number of smaller gifts/hospitality received from the same source over relatively a short period of time (e.g. at a conference).

GIVE NOTICE that I have received the following gift(s)/hospitality in my capacity as a Parish Councillor, with an estimated value of at least £50.00

Name	Nature of Gift/Hospitality and from whom received	Date of Receipt	Date Registered*	Initialed*

* to be completed by the Parish Administrator (or a person duly authorised by the Parish Administrator]

Signed Date