TAKELEY PARISH COUNCIL

Gifts and Hospitality Policy

1. Introduction

The Council needs to ensure that its decisions and operations are open, accountable and in line with recognised ethical standards. It is essential that the public can be confident that decisions are made for good and proper reasons and are not influenced inappropriately by the interests of individual employees, their relatives or friends. Therefore, employees should not compromise their position as public service workers by accepting gifts or hospitality that might be perceived as having influenced any such decision. In delivering its objectives the council maintains a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption, whether it is attempted from outside the council (the public, clients, partners, contractors, suppliers or other organisations) or within (Members and employees). Employees should exercise caution concerning the acceptance of gifts or hospitality and should refer to the Clerk for further information. In support of these objectives this policy details the Council's expectations of employees and those working on behalf of the Council regarding the acceptance of gifts and hospitality in relation to their role in the Council.

2. Application

The policy applies to all Takeley Parish Council employees. It applies to agency workers, and contractors and their staff whilst working for or on behalf of the Council.

Basic principles

- All officers of Takeley Parish Council and those working on behalf of Takeley Parish Council are expected to refuse the offer of inappropriate and disproportionate hospitality and gifts made in relation to their role in the Council unless there are compelling reasons or exceptional circumstances for doing so.
- Accepting a gift or hospitality that does not comply with this policy will breach the code of conduct and may result in disciplinary action.
- Individuals are responsible for deciding whether an offer of a gift or hospitality is "inappropriate and disproportionate and could have the potential to be interpreted as recompense, inducement or endorsement.
- Gifts or hospitality must not be accepted where it might be perceived to influence a decision in respect of purchasing goods or services, awarding contracts, or in the discharge of any other aspect of the Council's business. It is your responsibility to refuse such offers and to report any possible conflict of interest and in cases where you believe that the Council may be compromised.
- It is a criminal offence for officers or those working on behalf of the council to corruptly receive any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing anything, or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity. In

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no circumstances should any statement ever be made in return for a personal gift, or money.

- It is expressly prohibited for an officer to accept any gift or hospitality from an organisation if the officer is actively involved in a tender process with the organisation on behalf of the Council. This prohibition commences at the point that an invitation to tender is published and extends to a period of three months after a contract has been awarded.
- For reasons of integrity and transparency, the principle of receipt of gifts or hospitality extends to the spouse, partner or immediate family of the officer.
- Officers must follow the policy and procedure for the registration and approval of offers of gifts and hospitality. If there is any doubt about the acceptance of a gift or offer of hospitality, the officer is responsible for discussing this with their manager.

3. Registration and Approval of Gifts and Hospitality

The requirements for the registration and approval of gifts and hospitality are outlined below. Offers of gifts and hospitality with a value of £25 or less do not need manager approval or to be recorded in the register unless it is considered that there are good reasons for doing so.

Employees should speak to their manager if there is any doubt whether an item falls within the definition of a gift or hospitality and/or is acceptable.

a) Any gifts and hospitality with a value of £25 or more that have been offered, whether accepted, declined or accepted and passed on to charity, must be registered in writing to the Clerk.
b) Acceptance of gifts or hospitality with a value of £25 or more must be approved by the Clerk.
c) Acceptance of gifts and hospitality with a value of £25 or more must be authorised and recorded in advance of receipt. Where this is not possible, it should be recorded and authorised within seven days of the receipt.
d) Where an officer receives a series of gifts or hospitality from the same individual or organisation in one year with a cumulative value of £100 or over, these too must be registered.
e) No officer of the Council should continue to accept gifts or hospitality after the cumulative value of items reached in a single financial year reaches £200 or more.
f) In such circumstances the officer must register that the gift or hospitality has been declined for this reason and advise the Clerk
g) Items where a value is not known should be assumed to be worth a notional cost of £50 and be recorded on this basis in calculating the cumulative total received over the financial year.
h) Monetary gifts - an employee must never accept monetary gifts of any kind, whether in the form of cash or cheques.

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i) However, vouchers from service users may be acceptable depending on the circumstances but should be treated with caution.

j) Tokens of goodwill Officers may receive tokens of goodwill when attending conferences or similar events and on occasion, minor articles such as diaries, pens and calendars issued for advertisement that have a value of less than £25. These can be accepted and do not need to be registered, unless it is considered there are good reasons for doing so.

k) The Clerk is accountable for ensuring that staff are aware of the arrangements for the registering and approval of gifts and hospitality and how to register it/those.

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