

Gifts and/or hospitality guidance - Offer of Benefit(s)

1. As a general rule any offer of benefit(s) with the exception of those described at 3. which are of a very modest kind, must be politely but firmly refused. Public confidence and that of the Council would be seriously damaged if the least suspicion were to arise of actual or perceived impropriety by an employee of the Council.
2. Accordingly, employees must not accept gifts, entertainment, hospitality or any benefit either for themselves or others to avoid any suspicion of actual/perceived improper conduct. Should gifts be received through the post, they must be returned immediately to the donor with a suitably worded covering letter.

Examples of benefit(s) (not exhaustive) which must not be accepted:

- offers of cash, vouchers, credit/debit/store cards
 - Offers of Corporate/VIP hospitality, entertainment, travel (including travel tickets, car hire, taxi/VIP transport), accommodation, holidays, use of facilities (e.g. gyms, equipment etc.)
 - offers of presents/gifts e.g. concert/festival tickets, food, drink, hampers, jewellery, watches, accessories, clothing
3. Refusing such offers will mitigate against any suggestion of improper conduct, corruption or bribery.

Examples of benefit(s) (not exhaustive) which are considered of a “modest kind” include:

- **Modest gifts;** only where a gift is of a modest kind and is for example under £25:00 retail value may it be accepted. Examples include; calendar, diary, pen or other inexpensive item of office equipment and which can be regarded as in the nature of advertising matter can be accepted. Such gifts must bear the name or insignia of the organisation concerned. Chocolates/biscuits/cakes/flowers/plants given as a general thank you for example at Christmas time/end of term.
 - **Modest offers of hospitality/meals/refreshments;** only where appropriate in the conduct of normal/necessary part of business in hand and which are immediately and directly connected with and wholly incidental to Council business may it be accepted. For example working lunches with sandwiches, desserts, tea, coffee, soft drinks. In exceptional circumstances, other offers of hospitality maybe approved by the Executive Director/Chief Executive if this is considered to facilitate the Council’s interest.
 - However, wherever possible the employee should pay for him/herself, or if practical, should be paid for by the Council.
 - **Modest offers of travel;** only where practically un-avoidable and wholly incidental to the business in hand may any offer(s) of travel be accepted, for example, a lift for a short distance to a site where the employee concerned has no other means of transport.
4. Visits to inspect land, buildings, machinery, goods or services where the Council bear the expense and the Executive Director (Chief Executive as appropriate) has given prior approval are acceptable.
 5. Meals and refreshments as are connected with a public or semi- public occasion, such as an opening ceremony associated with new premises in which the Council have an interest such as owners or partners in the scheme and where the employee attends in an official capacity as a representative of the Council is acceptable where the employee has obtained prior authorisation by the appropriate Executive Director (Chief Executive as appropriate).
 6. In respect of Evening Social Functions/Invitations by External Companies/Evening BMBC Organised Business Events – Employees may partake of alcohol at social functions or as an invited guest of external companies e.g. award functions, network events, business dinners, conferences, etc. However, at such occasions employees are expected to show responsible behaviour, consider the mode of transport after the event and limit the level of alcohol consumption. Employees also have a responsibility to make themselves familiar and comply with the Councils Drugs and Alcohol Testing Policy.