

<b>Report title:</b> Members Gifts and Hospitality Register 2021-22	
<b>Report to:</b> Audit, Governance and Standards Committee	
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<b>Date:</b> 27 June 2022	<b>For:</b> Discussion
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> 'All Essex'	

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform members of the outcome of the review of the 2021-22 Member Gifts and Hospitality register.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members of the Committee are asked to note the findings of the review and make any recommendations they may have.

## **3. Summary of issue**

- 3.1 All Members must, within 28 days of receipt, notify the Authority's Monitoring Officer in writing of any gift, benefit or hospitality with a value in excess of £25 which they have accepted as a Member from any person or body other than the Authority. The Monitoring Officer places the notification on a public register of gifts and hospitality. This duty to notify the Monitoring Officer does not apply where the gift, benefit or hospitality comes within any description approved by the Authority for this purpose. This is set out in part 5 of the Constitution. Members are not required to register the value of the hospitality.
- 3.2 In the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 there were 10 instances of gifts or hospitality declared and these were logged on register of gifts and hospitality and published on the individual Councillor's profile on the Committee Management System. In the period 1 April 2020 to 31 May 2021 there were 2 instances. 68 Members did not declare any gifts or hospitality in comparison to 73 in 2020-21.
- 3.3 An examination does not reveal any particular concerns relating to the acceptance of significant hospitality from ECC contractors or those seeking funding from ECC. The register does not demonstrate any trends in terms of those offering the gifts and hospitality. Nonetheless members may wish to

consider whether or not they wish to express any view on any of the hospitality accepted.

3.4 It should be noted that the rules around registration changed with effect from 1 June 2022 as a result of the Council's decision on 10 May 2022 to adopt the LGA model code of conduct. There are two main changes:

- In future it is only gifts and hospitality over £50 that is registrable (rather than £25. This was the first time that the threshold has been changed since 2001 and will bring the ECC threshold into line with others.
- In future gifts and hospitality offered but rejected will need to be registered.

#### **4. Financial implications**

4.1 This report has no financial implications

#### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 Registration of gifts and hospitality is required by the ECC Code of Conduct.

#### **6. Equality and Diversity implications**

6.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

6.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

6.3 This report simply presents the register of gifts and hospitality to the Committee.

#### **7. List of appendices**

Member gifts and hospitality register 2021-22.