

SEVERN STOKE AND CROOME D'ABITOT PARISH COUNCIL – WORCESTERSHIRE

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

Published by WCALC: N/A.

Adopted by Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council adopted in principle May 2024.

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the procedure Councillors must follow when giving or receiving gifts and hospitality.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors and those employed under a contract of service.

3. Policy Statement

You must declare all offers of gifts and hospitality, made to or by you, regardless of value, in your role as a Councillors or employee of the Council. All such offers must be declared whether accepted or declined. Offers of gifts and hospitality may include items ranging from diaries, wall charts, and boxes of chocolates, to free international travel and accommodation.

Declarations must be recorded on the Gifts and Hospitality Register (the register). The register is maintained by the Clerk and is publicly available.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are not placed in a position that risks, or appears to risk, compromising your role or the Council's public and statutory duties. You should not be seen to be securing valuable gifts and hospitality by virtue of your job. You should not accept or provide any gift or hospitality if acceptance/provision will give the impression that you have been influenced/are deemed to be influencing while acting in an "official capacity".

This Policy also applies to spouses, partners or other associates if it can be argued or perceived that the gift or hospitality is in fact for the benefit of the official.

In exercising judgement as to whether to accept a gift or hospitality the question should be asked what public perception would be if the information was published given your role and circumstances.

4. Receiving gifts

You may retain all gifts valued at £20.00 or under, whether given in recognition of presentations or otherwise.

For gifts exceeding a value of £20.00 the following options are suggested:

- share the gift with all councillors;
- raffle the gift for charity;
- donate the gift to charity; or
- make a donation to charity and keep the gift.

5. Accepting offers of hospitality – genuine business reasons

Hospitality offered should only be accepted where there is a direct link to working arrangements and a genuine business reason can be demonstrated, for example:

- attendance or speaking at a conference, which provides complimentary subsistence,
- travel and accommodation (this does not need to be declared on the register except where a gift was received);
- attending at a free training course; or
- attending a drinks reception to network.

It is recognised that, in the course of carrying out your duties, you will need on occasion to ensure good relationships with existing and future contractors and stakeholders and that this may involve for example, the receipt of modest working lunches and dinners. These are acceptable where there is a genuine business reason.

Hospitality invitations to events which are purely social events should be considered very carefully before accepting; in such circumstances it may be much more difficult to substantiate a genuine business reason. These invitations should be recorded in the register whether received or declined.

6. Gifts and Hospitality offered by the Council

Councillors must be mindful that the value of all gifts and hospitality offered by them are sourced from public funding, and the expectation is that such funding will be used for legitimate purposes and demonstrate value for money.

In exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate for the Council to provide a gift of up to £40.00 in value, for example:

- providing a bouquet of flowers to a seriously ill councillor (ANY TIER), or to a longstanding councillor (ANY TIER) who is retiring;

It is acceptable for the Council to provide modest hospitality in the way of working lunches and/or dinners to stakeholders subject to a genuine business reason.

It is the policy of this parish council to use funds ONLY gathered from bank account interest to provide a modest annual thank you gift not exceeding £20 to the parish Lengthsman. This is on the basis that the Lengthsman goes above and beyond his contract and is on call 24hrs a day in order to assist with the parish council Flood Emergency Action Plan, where that is not a requirement of his contract. Where bank interest does not cover this amount, a gift will not be offered.

7. Declaration

You should make your declaration as soon as possible after the offer or receipt of gifts or hospitality. All declarations are to go to the Clerk in the required format as shown below. The Clerk will record the declarations in the register. The register is an annual document and will be maintained on a calendar year basis and reported quarterly under the publication scheme. It is recommended that you make your declaration by email, and retain a copy for your personal records.

Your declaration will need to include the following information:

- date of offer of gift or hospitality, and date of event where relevant;
- name, job title and organisation of recipient / provider;
- nature and purpose of gift or hospitality received or declined;
- the name of any other organisation involved;
- estimated value.

You should consult the Clerk for any guidance required on this Policy. In general terms, if you have any doubt about whether an item should or should not be declared, you are advised to declare it.

8. Monitoring

The register will be reviewed quarterly by the Clerk and they will oversee the quarterly publication of the register in accordance with the Council's Publication Scheme. Councillors will be reminded periodically of their requirement to declare gifts and hospitality provided/accepted/declined in accordance with this Policy.

9. Policy breach

Councillors who fail to declare the acceptance/provision/decline of hospitality and gifts in accordance with this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

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Register of gifts and hospitality. As maintained by the Parish Clerk

Financial year 2024 -2025

- 1) 04/11/2024 invitation to all parish councillors and the lengthsman to an preview open evening at Croome National Trust, to which local residents have also received an invite. Declared in order to maintain transparency, in that a planning application is currently under inspection/consideration for Croome opening hours:
M/24/00913/FUL Croome Court, Croome D'abitot, Severn Stoke.

End of register.