

**Joint Standards Committee**

**5 September 2018**

## **Report of the Monitoring Officer**

### **Civic Gifts and Hospitality**

#### **Summary**

1. This report seeks Members' views on proposed guidance to the Civic Party in respect of gifts and hospitality.

#### **Background**

2. At the meeting of the Committee held on 18 April 2018 Members considered current guidance contained within the Civic Guide in respect of code of conduct issues together with guidance issued by the National Association of Civic Officers in respect of the acceptance of gifts and hospitality. A decision was made to consult former Lord Mayors and Groups.
3. Before consulting with the former Lord Mayors, the current Lord Mayor was provided with a draft and his comments were reflected in a second draft shared with five former Lord Mayors. Their comments are supportive of the need for the guidance with one former Lord Mayor making specific reference to the need to offer firm advice to incoming members of civic parties who are not councillors and may, therefore, have less of an awareness of the appropriateness of accepting gifts and hospitality than those who have served as councillors.
4. The content of the document has generally been welcomed. Some minor amendments have been made to the draft in response to comments made. A small number of comments though seem to be worthy of discussion by the Committee.
5. In relation to a paragraph in the draft which read:

“There are a number of functions each year which Lord Mayor and/or members of the Civic party will traditionally attend and at

which hospitality, including formal dinners, will be offered. The Civic Office will be able to advise on which events fall into this category. Accepting such hospitality is likely to be acceptable.”

Comment was that we should be careful about referring to ‘traditional’ functions. Events become traditional when the invitations come in fairly regularly - much of what is seen to be traditional has only been so for a few years. Also new traditions can evolve as Lord Mayors become more inclusive and reach out to wider sections of the community, and this means that hospitality may be offered from more sources.

6. In part, in response to that comment, reference has been included to Guild dinners as an example of the “traditional” functions. Members may wish to consider whether this goes far enough.

7. An amendment has also been suggested as follows:

The acceptance of more substantial hospitality when not linked to one of the traditional functions is more likely to be acceptable, **for example**, where it is clearly linked to the promotion of the City and where the attendance of a member of the Civic party has been requested ~~by the Leader, Council Officers or a key partner of the Council.~~

8. This suggestion raises two questions which Members may wish to discuss:

a) Does the addition of the words: “for example” open the door too far? It was not of course wholly closed to other circumstances by the original wording.

b) By deleting the final words the judgment on acceptability would be left wholly with the Civic party; is that sufficient?

### **Recommendations**

10. Members are recommended to consider the draft guidance and the questions raised above and approve guidance for inclusion within the Civic guide.

Reason: To ensure that members of the Civic party are supported to make proper decisions about accepting gifts and hospitality.

**Contact Details**

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**Report  
Approved**

**Date** 24/08/2018

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Annexes:**

Annex 1- draft guidance on civic gifts and hospitality

**Background Papers: None**