

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

Policy Number	Version	Owner	Date Adopted	Review Date
023	Adopted	Council	15-11-2023	November 2026

1. Under the Portland Town Council Code of Conduct Councillors and co-optees must declare any gift or hospitality which is offered in their capacity as Members of the Council, Mayor, or Deputy Mayor in any civic year. This includes offers that are not accepted. And applies to all gifts and hospitality over £50.00.
2. This policy also applies to staff of Portland Town Council.
3. The appropriateness of acceptance should always be considered beforehand. It should also be noted that if a gift or hospitality is valued at under £50,00 it does not necessarily mean that it is appropriate to accept it.
4. Any monetary gifts or donations, or cheque payments or bank transfers made on behalf of the Mayor's Charities, either in person or through the Town Council, will be paid into the Charities and Good Causes Bank Account held within the Council's financial accounting system.

Process

5. Your registration must be made within 28 days of the date you received it, by completing and sending the appropriate form, (Annexe A attached), to Clerk@portlandtowncouncil.gov.uk .
6. You must declare the value and details of the gift or hospitality received on the form, as well as whether the donor of the gift has or has had in the past or is likely to have in the future, dealings with the Council. If the gift or hospitality has been accepted you must state the reason for that acceptance. The form must be signed by you personally; they should not be signed by support staff for you.
7. You should register any offer of gift and/or hospitality over £50.00 which you have declined, since this protects both your position and that of the Council.
8. Where the value of any gift or hospitality is under £50.00 you may wish to declare receiving it.
9. However, in order to be transparent, if you receive a series of related gifts in connection with your role as a Councillor which are all under £50.00, but together total above £50.00, then you should register them if they are from the same person. If the small gifts received from different persons are connected in some way, it is good practice to register them.
10. Even if all Councillors or employees, or a large number of them, received the same gift or were invited to the same event, they must each make individual notifications.
11. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor is likely to be offered hospitality and even gifts/souvenirs from engagements more frequently than councillors and whilst the same principle applies, it might be beneficial to specifically record the nature of the hospitality/gift as there is the likelihood of many over the year.
12. The Register of Gifts and Hospitality is maintained by the Town Clerk.

What is the value of the gift / hospitality?

13. You may have to estimate how much a gift or some hospitality is worth. The form requires you to give an estimate of the value. It is suggested that you take a common sense approach, and consider how much you reasonably think it would cost a member of the

public to buy the gift, or provide the hospitality in question. If as a result you estimate that the value is greater than £50.00, then you should declare receipt.

14. Where hospitality is concerned, you can disregard catering on-costs and other overheads, e.g., staff and room hire. If the sandwiches or your meal, including drinks and alcohol, would cost £50.00 in a comparable establishment providing food of comparable quality, please register it.
15. If you are not certain whether the value is under £50.00, the safest course is to register it and give an approximate value.

Will the register be open to the public?

16. The press and public have the right to inspect your gift and hospitality declaration in the same way as the register of disclosable pecuniary interests. It is open for inspection and also available on the Council's web site at www.portlandtowncouncil.gov.uk.

What happens if I do not register a gift or hospitality?

17. Failure to notify the Town Clerk of the receipt of a gift or hospitality is a breach of this policy and consequently also a breach of the Code of Conduct, or for staff could constitute gross misconduct. An alleged breach of the Code can be the subject of a complaint to the Monitoring Officer at Dorset Council who can decide whether there should be an investigation into the allegation. Alleged gross misconduct will be dealt with under the Council's HR policies.

Should I accept gifts and hospitality?

18. Registering gifts or hospitality received under the Code does not automatically mean it is appropriate or sensible to accept them in the first place.
19. Particular care should be taken in relation to gifts and hospitality offered by current or potential contractors for the Council. In certain cases the acceptance of a gift or hospitality from these sources could constitute a criminal offence, even if declared. If there is any suspicion that any offer is intended as an inducement then the matter should be reported in accordance with established procedures.
20. The Bribery Act 2010, which came into force on 1 July 2011, creates offences of "bribing another person" (active bribery) and of "being bribed" (passive bribery). The offences consist of "promising, offering or giving" or "requesting, agreeing to receive or accepting an advantage (financial or otherwise)" in circumstances involving the improper performance of a relevant function or activity. In the context of the Council the relevant function or activity means a public activity which a reasonable person would expect to be performed in good faith, impartially or in a particular way by a person performing it in a position of trust. There is a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment or an unlimited fine for these offences. In considering whether to accept gifts or hospitality Members should have regard to the following general principles:
21. Never accept a gift or hospitality as an inducement or reward for anything which you do as a Councillor. Only accept a gift if there is a commensurate benefit to the Council; Never accept a gift or hospitality which might be open to misinterpretation; Never accept a gift or hospitality which puts you under an improper obligation; and never solicit a gift or hospitality.



Register of Gifts and Hospitality

I,

(Insert full name)

as a Councillor of Portland Town Council, wish to register a gift or hospitality of the estimated value of £50 or more on any one occasion, which was received in connection with an official duty as a Portland Town Council member as required by the Council's Code of Conduct.

Or

As an employee of Portland Town Council, wish to register a gift or hospitality of the estimated value of £50 or more on any one occasion, which was received in connection with an official duty as a Portland Town Council staff member

Please enter the details of the gift or hospitality (including from whom this was received) below:

Signed:

Date: