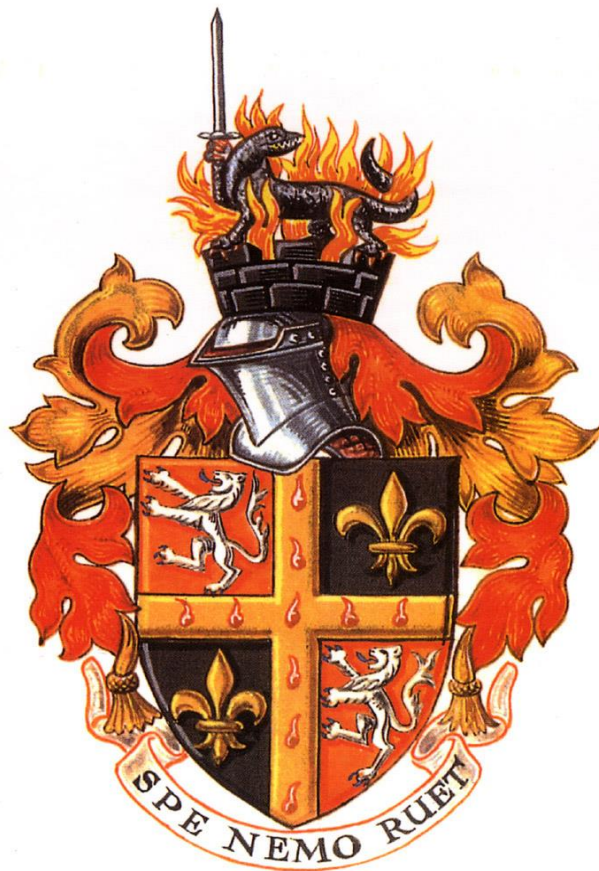


SPENNYMOOR TOWN COUNCIL



GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

Author of Policy:	Town Clerk
Date Effective From:	24 th May 2022
Policy Review: When & By Whom	12 th May 2022 Constitution Working Group
Next Review:	Sept 2025
Version Control:	V4

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this document will be posted on the Council's Website www.spennymoor-tc.gov.uk and copies of this document will be available for inspection on deposit in the Council Offices, Town Hall, Spennymoor. Costs are as per the publication scheme.

Gifts and Hospitality

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Code of Practice has been drawn up to assist Members and Officers in the carrying out of their duties and responsibilities. Should there be any doubt as to its interpretation, please contact the Town Clerk for clarification.

2. Accepting Gifts and Hospitality

- 2.1 Members and Officers are required to notify the Town Clerk of offers or receipt of gifts and hospitality of more than £50. Councillors and Officers should complete form STC1 and return it to the Town Clerk, within 28 days of receipt of gifts and/or hospitality, who shall keep a permanent record thereof.

- 2.2 Such record shall include:

- The name of the sponsor;
- Details of the offer of sponsorship, hospitality or gift and the estimated value and location thereof; and,
- Details of any 'permission' or work the sponsor is interested in securing.

- 2.4 In particular the record will contain details of:

- Gifts (other than "token" ones) received and how dealt with;
- "Acceptable" hospitality given and received; and,
- Offers of "unacceptable" hospitality or gifts refused.

3. Gifts and Hospitality Offered By the Council

- 3.1 Council Members and Officers must be mindful that the value of all gifts and hospitality offered by the Council are sourced from public funding, and the expectation is that such funding will be used for legitimate purposes.

It may be appropriate for the Council to provide a gift of up to £50.00 in value, for example:

- A Civic Award e.g. Scroll of Honour
- An award to a long serving member of staff
- A bouquet of flowers to a resident(s) celebrating a special event i.e. Golden Wedding Anniversary
- To cover the cost of a place at a Civic event e.g. Annual Civic Dinner
- A nominal donation in the memory of a former member, partner of a member, or other person of community notability at their funeral service, at the discretion of the Town Clerk.

3.2 Form STC2 should be completed, within 28 days of the offer of a gift and/or hospitality, and returned to the Town Clerk who shall keep a permanent record thereof.

3.3 Such record shall include:

- The name of the recipient;
- Details of the sponsorship, hospitality or gift and the estimated value thereof; and,
- Reason the above has been given.

3.4 A single spreadsheet will also be kept at the Town Hall, listing all offers or receipt of gifts and hospitality.

3.5 This information will also be published on the Town Council Website.

4. General Rules – Gifts

4.1 The general rule is:

- Do not accept any gift offered to you from people you deal with or might deal with in future as part of your work or membership of the Council. Even outside of Council business beware of accepting gifts if there is a possibility that the giver might think the gift will help in dealing with the Council. Think about the impressions given. The same applies to gifts offered to your family. Remember that a “gift” can be offered in different ways.

- 4.2. The only exceptions to this rule are:
- “token” gifts of a nominal value such as calendars, diaries, pens which are marked with a company name, and which might be sent as advertisements; or,
 - circumstances where to refuse would cause embarrassment and annoyance (e.g. the official opening of new premises where all those present receive a modest gift to commemorate the occasion.)
- 4.3 It is important to recognise that a gift should not be accepted under any circumstances if its value is of a scale which would cause embarrassment to either the giver or the receiver should it become public knowledge.
- 4.4 If there is any doubt in your mind about whether to accept, politely refuse. Acceptance could be seen as “improper”, even if the motives are not. Remember that to accept a gift in some circumstances could mean you are committing a crime.
- 4.5 If you get anything “out of the blue” other than the “token” items mentioned, report it to the Town Clerk who will decide whether the gift should be returned or forwarded to some charity or other deserving cause.

5. General Rules – Hospitality

- 5.1 Guidance has to be general, because for Members and Senior Officers, attending social events can be part of the job or arise from membership of the Council. To refuse hospitality would sometimes cause offence and could be against the interests or image of the Council.
- 5.2 The main consideration is whether or not any impression or improper influence would be created.
- 5.3 The following are examples of when hospitality might be accepted, and when it should be refused.
- 5.4 Acceptable
A reasonable level of hospitality which is offered:
- by a person or organisation to an Officer or Member attending a pre-arranged formal meeting together with other Officers and/or members where there is no suggestion of improper influence;
 - by another Council or Government body; or,

- by way of a working lunch to continue a business meeting, so long as the hospitality is not one of the “unacceptable” types listed below as part of a formal function where an Officer/Member is representing the Council in an official capacity.

5.5 Unacceptable:

- hospitality offered to an individual Officer/Member by a person or organisation seeking business or a decision from the Council;
- personal invitations from representatives of companies seeking or having business with the Council;
- offers of holidays, accommodation, or entertainment to individual Officers or Members; or,
- extravagant hospitality inappropriate to the occasion.

5.6 The impression of improper influence can also arise if Officers provide hospitality, especially to organisations seeking business. Any hospitality given should be appropriate and justified in the public interest.

6. Code Review and Revision

6.1 The operation of the Code will be monitored by the Town Clerk and will be reviewed and revised by them as they see fit in order to safeguard the interests of the Council, Members and Officers.