SEVERN STOKE AND CROOME D'ABITOT PARISH COUNCIL – WORCESTERSHIRE

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

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Adopted by Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council May 2024. Updated Nov 2025.

1. Purpose

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

2. Scope

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

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Councillors must declare all offers of gifts and hospitality, made to or by themselves, regardless of value, in their role as a Councillors or employee of the Council. All such offers must be declared whether accepted or declined.

3.2 Offers of gifts and hospitality may include items ranging from diaries, wall charts, and boxes of chocolates, to free international travel and accommodation.

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

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

3.5 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.

3.6 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 each role and circumstances.

Continued overleaf

4. Receiving gifts

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

4.2 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

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 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

6.1 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. The Chair's Allowance (£50p.a) may be used for this purpose.

6.2 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.

7. Declaration

7.1 Councillors should make their 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.

7.2 The register is an annual document and will be maintained on a calendar year basis and reported quarterly under the publication scheme – see appendix to this Policy. It is recommended that Councillors make a declaration by email, and retain a copy for their personal records.

7.2 A 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.

7.3 Councillors should consult the Clerk for any guidance required on this Policy. In general terms, if an individual has any doubt about whether an item should or should not be declared, they are advised to declare it.

8. Monitoring

8.1 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

9.1 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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Appendix 1 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 a 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.

Financial year 2025-2026

1) 25/10/2025 invitation to all parish councillors and the lengthsman to a 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 Park.

Financial year 2026-2027

1) 23/10/2026 invitation to all parish councillors and the lengthsman to a preview open evening at Croome National Trust, to which local residents have also received an invite. Declared in order to maintain transparency, in that multiple planning applications are currently under inspection/consideration for Croome Court and Park.

End of register.