



Report of the Monitoring Officer

Standards Committee – 22 March 2023

Gifts and Hospitality

Purpose:	To consider harmonisation of gifts and hospitality thresholds so as to ensure consistency across Wales.
Policy Framework:	Standards Committee Terms of Reference – Council Constitution.
Consultation:	Legal, Access to Services and Finance.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that the Standards Committee: 1) Consider the proposal that Local Authorities in Wales should voluntarily harmonise their thresholds for registrations of gifts and hospitality so as to ensure consistency across Wales.
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee includes the overview and monitoring of the Register of Members Interests.
- 1.2 The Members' Code of Conduct requires Members to register the receipt of any gifts, hospitality or other benefits where the value of the item or benefits exceeds a threshold determined by the Council from time to time. The threshold in Swansea is £25.
- 1.3 The Independent Review of the Ethical Standards Framework in Wales (Penn Review), noted that the Members' Code of Conduct does not specify a threshold for Members' declarations of gifts and hospitality. It noted that the threshold set by individual authorities across Wales varies from £21 to £100. The Report recommended that the Code should be amended to specify a threshold in order to ensure consistency across Wales.

- 1.4 A suggestion has been put forward by the Standards Committee of another Welsh authority that Welsh authorities should consider voluntarily aligning their thresholds for consistency. Welsh Government will shortly be consulting on the Penn Review and have indicated that they may look at legislative change. The proposals for harmonisation have been discussed between Monitoring Officers informally and the alignment is broadly supported.
- 1.5 Monitoring Officers have been asked to seek the views of their Standards Committees on whether a standard threshold value should be voluntarily agreed by all Welsh authorities, and if so, what the threshold should be. Attached at appendix A is a table showing the thresholds for a number of authorities. The Committee will note that the average threshold is £25 which accords with the Swansea threshold.
- 1.6 Any change to the threshold would need to be agreed by full council.

2. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 2.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 2.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 2.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 2.4 An IIA Screening Form is not required for this report.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications associated with the report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Table of Local Authority thresholds