

River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board

Gifts and Hospitality Policy

The following paragraphs are given as guidance to Board members and employees who may be offered gifts or hospitality. Boards are required to have in place a policy on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality, and as a public sector organisation, the Board has a duty to ensure that its resources are utilised effectively. The arrangements outlined within this policy apply to all members and staff employed by the Board and for those carrying out work on behalf of or at the request of the Board.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Board members and staff on the action that can, or should, be taken in the event that they are offered gifts and/or hospitality. There is a limited set of exceptions and this policy sets out the standards and procedures that Board members and staff should follow to protect both themselves and the Board. Further reference should be made to the Board's Financial Regulations. In any case of doubt or uncertainty they should consult the Clerk & Engineer of the Board.

- Employees and Board members should treat with extreme caution any offer of a gift, favour or hospitality that is made to them personally. The person or organisation making the offer may be doing or seeking to do business with the Board or may be applying to the Board for some decision to be taken in his favour or someone with whom he is connected.
- There are no hard and fast rules about the acceptance or refusal of hospitality or tokens of goodwill. For example, working lunches may be an appropriate way of doing business provided they are approved by the Clerk & Engineer of the Board and provided no extravagance is involved. In the same way it may be reasonable for staff to represent the Board at a social function or sporting event organised by outside persons or bodies. Persons attending such functions or events as part of an official Board delegation are exempt from the above registration requirement, providing their attendance has been approved by the Clerk & Engineer of the Board.
- Each Board member or employee is personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance or offer of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding risk of damage to public confidence. The receipt and detail of gifts and hospitality should always be reported to the Clerk & Engineer of the Board.
- When hospitality has to be declined, those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operated by the Board and told why hospitality cannot be accepted.
- Board members and employees should not accept significant personal gifts, although the Board will allow Board members and employees to keep insignificant items of token value such as pens, calendars and diaries. These insignificant items do not require recording in the Gifts and Hospitality Register. Under no circumstances may cash be accepted as a gift.
- Acceptance by Board members and employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal and where the Board member or employee is satisfied that any purchasing decisions will not be compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, supplies or services are required, employees and members should ensure that the Board meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.
- If you receive a gift or hospitality in connection with your work for the Board which has an estimated value of at least £25.00, this must be reported to the Clerk & Engineer of the Board and entered in the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

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