



## Standards Committee

11 October 2006

### Report from the Borough Solicitor

For Action

Wards Affected:  
ALL

### Report Title: Register of Gifts & Hospitality

#### 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides members of the committee with information on the Members' Register of Gifts and Hospitality and addresses the important issue of what gifts and hospitality should be accepted/declined, as highlighted by recent local press coverage.

#### 2.0 Recommendations:

It is recommended that the committee:

- 2.1 Note the items entered on the register of gifts and hospitality for the period commencing May 2005,
- 2.2 Agree that the Monitoring Officer will, in the future, provide an annual report on the Members' Register of Gifts and Hospitality, to be included in the annual report from the Monitoring Officer,
- 2.3 Request the Monitoring Officer to provide further advice to members about accepting gifts and hospitality,
- 2.4 Agree that the Register of Gifts and Hospitality should be made publicly available on the Council's website.

#### 3.0 Detail

##### 3.1 Entries in the Register

Following an audit of the Register as part of the 2004-2005 internal audit plan it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would provide six-monthly reports to

the Standards Committee listing members and details of the gifts and hospitality that they have declared over the previous period. I now consider that given the relatively small number of declarations that we usually receive it would be more appropriate to report annually. This will also give members a clearer perspective of the range of gifts and hospitality registered. The list below shows all declarations since May 2005.

| Councillor           | Date of Gift            | Received From   | Est. Value | Item   |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---|------------|--|
| Cllr Ann John        | 07/11/2005              | Dinner at Meridian Hotel, New Delhi   | £25        | Dr IP Patel, Trustee, Neasden Temple         |
| Cllr Ramesh Patel    | 07/11/2005              | Dinner at Meridian Hotel, New Delhi   | £25        | Dr IP Patel, Trustee, Neasden Temple         |
| Cllr Ann John        | 08/11/2005 - 09/11/2005 | Taxi & Driver for two days transport to and from the Swaminarayam Temple at Akshardham, New Delhi | £25        | Swaminarayam Temple at Akshardham, New Delhi |
| Cllr Ramesh Patel    | 08/11/2005 - 09/11/2005 | Taxi & Driver for two days transport to and from the Swaminarayam Temple at Akshardham, New Delhi | £25        | Swaminarayam Temple at Akshardham, New Delhi |
| Cllr Colum Moloney   | 02/04/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £30        | Tickets to Depeche Mode concert              |
| Cllr Ann John        | 02/04/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £50        | Two tickets to Depeche Mode concert          |
| Cllr Ann John        | 18/06/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £150       | Tickets to Eagles concert                    |
| Cllr Bob Blackman    | 18/06/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £200       | Two concert tickets                          |
| Cllr Reg Colwill     | 01/08/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £160       | Ticket                                       |
| Cllr Suresh Kansagra | 01/08/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £320       | Two concert tickets                          |
| Cllr Uma Fernandes   | 01/08/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £160       | Concert ticket                               |
| Cllr Bob Blackman    | 01/08/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £320       | Two concert tickets                          |
| Cllr Atiq Malik      | 01/08/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £160       | Concert ticket                               |
| Cllr Alan Mendoza    | 01/08/2006              | Quintain Estates  | £320       | Two tickets to Madonna concert               |
| Cllr Bertha Joseph   | 04/08/2006              | Delegation from Shanghai Government   | £25        | Silk scarf                                   |

Note that the stated value is as estimated by the member in question, so some discrepancies may arise.

### 3.2 Recent Issues Regarding Gifts and Hospitality

Members of the committee may be aware of some recent local media attention regarding gifts and hospitality at Brent. It was reported in the press that a number of members accepted gifts of concert tickets from Quintain Estates and Development, a company with significant land holdings in the borough and which is interested in a proposed casino development.

This media interest highlighted the fact that while the Code of Conduct requires members to declare any gift they receive, it provides no guidance as to when it may or may not be appropriate to accept a gift in the first place.

Like most things in the area of member conduct this is, fundamentally, a matter for the judgement of individual Councillors. However, it is recommended that the Monitoring Officer provide further guidance to members on this issue by way of a Monitoring Officer's Advice Note. Previous advice notes on the subject (No's 1 and 13) are attached for information.

### **3.3 Proposed Website for Members' Gifts and Hospitality**

In order to further enhance the transparency and accountability of the Council it is proposed to provide public access to the Register of Gifts and Hospitality within the Council's website. The website already includes information about the Register of Members' Interests.

### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 Any costs associated with the establishment and running of the new section of the website (which are not likely to be significant) will be covered within existing budgets.

### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 This report has been prepared by the Borough Solicitor, and legal issues have been addressed as they arise within the report.

### **6.0 Diversity Implications**

6.1 There are no specific diversity implications in this report.

### **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications**

7.1 Any additional staffing resources associated with the establishment and running of the new section of the website will be covered within the existing workload of officers.

### **Background Papers**

Brent Register of Gifts and Hospitality

### **Contact Officers**

Any person wishing to inspect the papers in connection with this report should contact Graham Beever at the Town Hall Annexe, Forty Lane, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 9HD, telephone 020 8937 1368.

TERRY OSBORNE  
**BOROUGH SOLICITOR**

## **Appendix: Extracts from Previous Advice Notes regarding the Register of Gifts and Hospitality**

### **Issue 1, 22 July 2004**

#### **Register of Gifts and Hospitality**

In addition to registering your registerable interests as set out above, there is also a Register of Gifts and Hospitality you should complete. You must take care to declare any gift or hospitality received by you in your role as Councillor which is valued over £25. The Democratic Services Manager will provide you with necessary forms to complete for this register. Gifts and hospitality traditionally includes dinners, books, alcohol and free tickets to events (if valued over £25). The Head of Audit and Investigation is currently undertaking a review of the Register of Gifts and Hospitality and his report will be submitted to the Standards Committee in due course.

### **Issue 13, 24 January 2005**

*The issue of members' declarations of gifts and hospitality was flagged in Advice Note 1 sent in July of last year. The recent audit report recommended that members be reminded again. This Advice Note reminds members of some of the requirements of the Brent Code of Conduct.*

Members are reminded that they must, within 28 days of receiving any gift or hospitality over the value of £25, provide a written notification to the Monitoring Officer of the existence and nature of that gift or hospitality. (Brent Code of Conduct paragraph 17).

The under £25 form which has been used previously is to be abolished.

Members are reminded that trivial gifts and hospitality need not be declared. If you are in any doubt, please consult the Monitoring Officer.

I will be reporting to the Standards Committee at six monthly intervals on the details of members' declarations of gifts and hospitality. Please ensure your record is up to date.