

5. Review of Gifts and Hospitality

Councillor Colwill reiterated his declaration of a personal interest in this item; namely that he had submitted an entry to the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. The Borough Solicitor advised Councillor Colwill that this constituted a personal and not a prejudicial interest and consequently he remained in the room and took part in the discussion.

Graham Beever introduced the report on behalf of the Borough Solicitor and highlighted the intention to provide an annual report in future, in place of the six-monthly report. It was recognised by all that the Members' Code of Conduct would be enhanced by the provision of additional guidance regarding members' acceptance of gifts, and the Borough Solicitor advised that this would be provided for members' information at the next meeting, following its publication.

Members welcomed the news that further guidance on this issue would be forthcoming. It was also noted that the Register of Gifts and Hospitality would be published on the internet in the near future to aid transparency and members expressed their support for this proposal.

There was some discussion regarding the £25 threshold and the Borough Solicitor advised that this was taken from the National Code, which had not been revised since 2001. Some members expressed the view that this threshold was too low, whilst others commented that £25 allowed members to accept token gifts whilst being committed to a declaration of any gift of substance.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the items entered on the Register of Gifts and Hospitality for the period commencing May 2005 be noted;
- (ii) that it be agreed that the Monitoring Officer provide an annual report on the Members' Register of Gifts and Hospitality, to be included in the Monitoring Officer's annual report;
- (iii) that the Monitoring Officer provide further advice to members about acceptance of gifts and hospitality;
- (iv) that it be agreed that the Register of Gifts and Hospitality be published on the Council's website.

6. Twinning

Graham Beever introduced the report, which provided an update to members regarding a recent visit to South Dublin at the conclusion of the previous municipal year. It was noted that financial resources from within the budget held by the Mayor's Office had been allocated to meet the costs of future twinning visits. It was recognised that a response from South Dublin to the new protocol was still awaited.

It was suggested that there should be some degree of political balance in the selection of councillors to take part in twinning visits. It was also suggested that councillors who had not been to Dublin before should have an opportunity to do so. The Borough Solicitor explained that the twinning protocol contained advice regarding the question of how the selection of members to take part in any visit was made. This would depend upon the invitation received, the roles of the members and the objectives of the visit. Whether or not a member had been to Dublin before was not a relevant consideration in terms of this advice. There was further discussion regarding the role members might take on for the purposes of twinning, and the potential for learning from another borough which faced similar social and economic issues to those in Brent.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 17th January 2007.

8. Any other urgent business

Networking Event - November

The Borough Solicitor referred to the work programme, which detailed the possibility for a networking event during November and advised that unfortunately the planned speaker was now unable to attend. Due to the nature of the timescale involved, it would not be possible to secure an alternative representative; it was therefore planned to secure the desired speaker for the planned event date in March 2007 instead.

Next Meeting

The Vice-Chair gave her apologies for absence for the meeting scheduled for 17th January 2007.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

J MANN
Chair

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