

# CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL



## HOSPITALITY AND GIFTS POLICY

Civic & Administrative Offices

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ACCOUNTABLE DIRECTOR: DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION  
& COMMUNITY SERVICES

POLICY AUTHOR : ADMINISTRATION MANAGER  
/DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION &  
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# Hospitality and Gifts Policy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a Local Government Authority, Castlereagh Borough Council has a responsibility to ensure integrity and probity in its relationship with potential or present suppliers, contractors and service providers and users. In its simplest form, hospitality should be viewed as a common courtesy. More formal or extensive provision may potentially be misconstrued as being able to inappropriately influence relationships between parties concerned, and therefore must be open to scrutiny and audit.

### 1.1 Scope

The policy applies to all staff, including those with temporary contracts, or students.

This does not cover Civic events approved by committee /council, which is the subject of another policy.

## 2. PURPOSE

There is no definitive guidance in the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 governing the provision and receipt of hospitality. The purpose of this policy therefore is to provide guidance to all members of Castlereagh Borough Council when considering whether to accept gifts or hospitality from individuals or organisations.

## 3. DEFINITION

The Local Government Auditor has recommended that hospitality should refer to “refreshments and entertainment of any type provided out of public/private funds to anyone, be they public servant or official, representative of a public or private body organisation or private individual”. He also states that the “acceptance of hospitality requires careful judgement on behalf of the intended recipient. Each individual case needs to be determined on its merits before a decision is made as to whether or not to accept an offer of hospitality”.

Where officers are in doubt about a specific instance, they should approach their Line Manager or ultimately, the Section Director for guidance.

## 4. GENERAL GUIDANCE

### 4.1 Gifts Offered to Employees

The general rule must always be for Employees to refuse, tactfully, all such offers from organisations or persons who do, or might provide work, goods or services to the Council, or who might require policy decisions to be taken by the Council on matters affecting them personally. Exceptions from this general rule would be promotional items for example Calendars, diaries, key rings, umbrellas, desk organisers, mugs, stationery, coasters, commemorative books, mouse mats, badges, ties/scarves, baseball caps, cups of tea and informal/low key business related lunches.

It is not possible to be precise as what constitutes an “acceptable” as opposed to “unacceptable” gift. Most gifts received of this type will have a modest pecuniary value and may, indeed, have no significant pecuniary value to another party.

Gifts of alcohol should not be accepted under any circumstances from private individuals or organisations, who provide services or goods to the Council. Where necessary these must be returned with a tactfully worded covering letter.

Trade or discount cards, which permit employees to **personally** purchase goods or services at reduced cost, are also classified as gifts, and should therefore be refused and/or returned.

Where there is any doubt as to whether a gift should be accepted or not, approval must be sought from the relevant head of department. The final arbitrator is the Chief Executive. It should be noted that registering a gift or hospitality does not legitimise it.

#### **4.2 Hospitality Offered To Employees**

The acceptance of hospitality is largely a matter of judgement for each individual Employee. In the course of business there will be occasions when it may be appropriate to accept or provide hospitality, but in all cases, where it is accepted, it must be registered. (See no. 6 over)

Modest working lunches are regarded as acceptable practice and do not require formal approval to attend.

More formal lunches or dinners by prior invitation, must be approved by the relevant Director/Chief Executive, to ensure that they do not fall within “suspicion of a conflict of interest”.

A meal provided by the Mayor after attending a public engagement is deemed reasonable.

### **5. HOSPITALITY AND GIFTS REGISTER**

A Hospitality and Gifts Register is maintained in the office of the Chief Executive. The Register is aimed at recording more formal gifts and hospitality that have been accepted on behalf of the Council, where it would be clearly inappropriate to decline, for example, where diplomatic sensitivities or protocol would be offended. These items will be recorded in the Register and remain the custody of Castlreagh Borough Council.

The Register will also record small gifts given to individuals or departments as a result of work carried out on behalf of the Council. Officials who fail to declare to the Register the acceptance of the gifts or hospitality may be subject to further disciplinary action depending on the circumstances involved. (Appendix C)

### **6. OFFICIAL ENTERTAINMENT OFFERED BY COUNCIL**

Official hospitality, entertainment or gifts should only be provided when it is appropriate to do so, and should be restricted to the minimum appropriate for the occasion. The quality and extent of any official hospitality, entertainment or gifts being provided should therefore depend on the status and numbers of those being provided for:

Official hospitality, entertainment and gifts should be contained within the approved budgets. When considering the need to provide official entertainment or hospitality, Council staff are responsible for satisfying themselves that:-

- The nature of what is to be provided is suitable and appropriate.
- The likely costs are reasonable.
- The budget holder has confirmed that funds are available and they have obtained proper approval either from the Head of Department or Committee, where fiscal limits dictate.
- Inserted appropriate entry in Hospitality Register.

***Normal fiscal and procurement policies will apply to any such purchases***

6.1 Entertainment and official hospitality offered by the Council has been divided into two categories:

- Minor catering (tea, coffee, biscuits, soft drinks, bottled water) – these do not have to be disclosed, but approval should be sought from Head of Department.
- Major catering (sit-down meals, buffets etc ‘in house’ or in other establishments) - these must be disclosed, and a minute obtained before any arrangements can proceed. Normal fiscal and procurement policies will apply.

6.2 Entertainment and official hospitality offered by Council Employees

Where an employee of the Council has approval to hold a hospitality budget for entertainment purposes, any such entertainment given must be detailed in the register held in the Chief Executive’s Office and the expenditure claimed in accordance with Council fiscal procedures.

6.3 Official Gifts

Modest gifts may be given to individuals who have performed some sort of service for the Council, e.g. minor items of crystal for conference or away day speakers, pens for students on work experience etc.

A small selection of items to promote the Borough of Castlreagh are available for staff and elected members who are welcoming guests to the civic centre or visiting other Council’s or organisations on business. These items are maintained in the Mayor’s Office and can be obtained by completing the relevant requisition form available from the Mayor’s Secretary (Appendix A).

## **7. REGISTRATION**

The Form at Appendix B will be used in all cases. Completed forms will be submitted to the Chief Executive’s personal Assistant who will enter the relevant details into the hospitality register.

**Appendix A**

**BOROUGH PROMOTION ITEMS  
REQUISITION FORM – COUNCIL  
EMPLOYEES**

<b>Name of Person making request:</b>	
<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Promotional items required inc quantity:</b>	
<b>Reason for Request:</b>	
<b>Name of Person handing the items over:</b>	
<b>Any special requirements (letter from Mayor):</b>	
<b>Date on which Promotional Items required:</b>	
<b>Chief Executive/Directors Signature:</b>	
<b>Dated:</b>	
<b>Date received by Mayor's Secretary:</b>	
<b>Decision Taken: Approve/Reject</b>	
<b>Mayor's Signature</b>	
<b>Dated:</b>	
<b>Promotional Items Forwarded to:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

Please note that requests for Promotional Items will **only** be considered when a minimum of 48 hours notice is provided.

**Appendix B**

**Castlereaugh Borough Council:**      Disclosure of Hospitality/Gifts

*Please insert details in capital letters:*

<b>NAME</b>	<b>JOB TITLE</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>LOCATION OF WORK</b>

**Please complete the relevant questions below:**

<p><b>Date received:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Nature of Hospitality/Gift:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Provided by:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Reason for Acceptance:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Director's Signature:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>
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<b>EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:</b>		<b>DATE:</b>	
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*(Please return this form to the Chief Executive's office)*