MIDDLETON STONEY PARISH COUNCIL

Gifts and Hospitality Policy

Introduction
This policy provides guidance for members of the Parish Council on accepting gifts and hospitality in their roles as Councillors. It also provides guidance for employees of the Parish Council.

General Caution
Treat with extreme caution any offer of a gift, favour or hospitality that is made to you personally, which may possibly be perceived to be in connection with your position as a Parish Councillor.

Your personal reputation and that of the Parish Council can be seriously jeopardised by the inappropriate acceptance by you of a gift or hospitality.

The acceptance of favours, gifts and hospitality that might be offered to you, is not always unlawful or inappropriate, but you must have regard to how it might be perceived.

Criminal Law
It is a criminal offence corruptly to solicit or receive any gift, reward, or advantage as an inducement of doing or forbearing to do anything, in respect of any transaction involving the Parish Council.

The onus would be on you to disprove corruption in relation to a gift from a person holding or seeking to obtain a contract from the Parish Council.

Limits of Guidance
This policy does not apply to the acceptance of facilities or hospitality provided to the Parish Council, or gifts given to the Parish Council that you accept on behalf of the Parish Council and are retained by the Parish Council.

Meaning of Gifts and Hospitality
Gifts and hospitality include but are not limited to: -

a. the gift of any goods or service.
b. the opportunity to acquire any goods at a discount or terms not available to the public.
c. the offer of food, drink, accommodation or entertainment or the opportunity to attend any cultural or sporting event.
d. Offer of favours, or the promise or implied promise of future favours, gifts or hospitality.
e. Use of a free car.

Common gifts include pens, diaries, calendars, and other business stationery; articles of clothing; books; flowers and bouquets. You should, however, be cautious when purchasing anything, when additional services, privileges or advantages are offered, which might be related to your position as a member of the Parish Council.

Appropriate Gifts and Hospitality

There are some circumstances where you may accept gifts and hospitality as being in the normal course of your duties as a member, for example: -

- small low value gifts (below £50 in value);
- drinks and modest refreshment in connection with a meeting or socialising in the course of your work as a Parish Council member;
- civic hospitality provided by another public authority;
- normal and modest refreshment in connection with any meeting in the course of your work as a Parish Council member (e.g. tea, coffee, and other normal beverages and biscuits);
- tickets for sporting, cultural and entertainment events which are sponsored or promoted by the Parish Council or bodies to which you have been appointed by the Parish Council, and the tickets are offered in relation to that sponsorship or promotion;
- modest meals provided as a matter of courtesy in the office or meeting place of a person with whom the Parish Council has a business connection;
- souvenirs and gifts from other public bodies intended as personal gifts (e.g. arising from twin-town and other civic events).

Principles to apply in relation to Gifts and Hospitality

Do not accept a gift or hospitality as an inducement or reward for anything you do as a Parish Council member.

Do not accept a gift or hospitality of significant value or whose value is excessive in the circumstances.

Do not accept a gift or hospitality if acceptance might be open to interpretation, e.g. from applicants for planning permission; from parties involved in competitive tendering; from applicants for grants; or from parties in legal proceedings with the Council.

Do not accept a gift or hospitality if you believe it will put you under any obligation to the provider as a consequence.

Do not solicit any gift or hospitality and avoid giving any perception of so doing.

Registration of Gifts and Hospitality

Any member of the Parish Council must, within 28 days of receiving any gift or hospitality over the value of £50, provide written notice to the Monitoring Officer via the Clerk, of the existence and nature of that gift or hospitality.

Whilst the notification requirement is limited to goods over £50 in value, Councillors are encouraged to give notification of any significant gift or hospitality they receive.

Councillors must complete the *Notification of Gifts and Hospitality* Form for all receipts.

Reporting of Inappropriate Gifts and Hospitality Offered
It is a criminal offence for a person to offer any gift, reward or advantage as an inducement or reward to you as a Parish Council member.

You must immediately report to the Monitoring Officer, via the Clerk, any circumstances where an inappropriate gift or hospitality has been offered to you.