

**Time and Date**

11.00 am on Thursday, 26 September, 2024

**Place**

Diamond Rooms 1 and 2 - Council House

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1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)
  - a) To agree the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 June, 2024.
  - b) Any matters arising
4. **Ending Abuse in Public Life - Council's Self Assessment and Toolkit** (Pages 7 - 12)

Report of the Director of Law and Governance
5. **Six Monthly Review of Members' Gifts and Hospitality** (Pages 13 - 32)

Report of the Director of Law and Governance
6. **Six Monthly Review of Officers' Gifts and Hospitality** (Pages 33 - 40)

Report of the Director of Law and Governance
7. **Code of Conduct Update** (Pages 41 - 50)

Report of the Director of Law and Governance
8. **Ethics Committee Work Programme 2024-25** (Pages 51 - 56)

Report of the Director of Law and Governance
9. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

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Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House, Coventry

Wednesday, 18 September 2024

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services Email: [suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk)

Membership: Councillors N Akhtar, L Bigham, P Hetheron, S Nazir (Chair), E M Reeves,

Independent Persons: S Atkinson, R Wills, P Wiseman

**Public Access**

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**Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services**  
**Email: [suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk)**

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Ethics Committee held at 11.00 am on Thursday, 27**  
**June 2024**

Present:

Members: Councillor S Nazir (Chair)

Councillor L Bigham  
Councillor P Hetherton  
Councillor E M Reeves  
Councillor D Welsh

Independent Persons: S Atkinson  
P Wiseman

Employees (by Service Area):

Law and Governance: J Newman (Director of Law and Governance), S Bennett,  
S Manhertz

Apologies: R Wills

## **Public Business**

### **1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

### **2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March, 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

### **3. Local Code of Corporate Governance 2024-25**

The Ethics Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance, which had also been considered by the Audit and Procurement Committee (their Minute 4/24 refers), which detailed Local Code of Corporate Governance 2024/25.

The Local Code of Corporate Governance sets out the Council's arrangements for meeting the seven principles of good governance as defined in the CIPFA/Solace Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. The Framework recommended that Local Authorities developed and maintained a Local Code of governance as it provided a structure to help individual authorities with their approach to governance.

The Council adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance in 2017. The Code had recently been reviewed in the light of best practice and updated to reflect the current governance arrangements in place within the Council. An up to date and robust Local Code provided clarity over an authority's governance and supported the legal requirement to undertake an annual review of effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements and produce an Annual Governance Statement.

The CIPFA / Solace Framework defined governance as "the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders were defined and achieved." Coventry City Council had a range of measures in place to ensure that governance in the organisation was managed effectively and worked hard to ensure that those arrangements were robust and met best practice. This was achieved through a range of policies, plans, and procedures such as the Constitution (including codes of conduct for Members and employees), the One Coventry Plan, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and policies on whistle blowing, tackling fraud and corruption, and managing risk.

The Local Code of Corporate Governance, attached as an Appendix to the report, is a refresh of the previous Code with work undertaken with internal stakeholders to ensure it reflected the current position of the organisation and the Authority's One Coventry approach. The Local Code sets out the Council's specific arrangements for putting the principles of good governance into practice. It draws on examples provided in the Framework but also reflects systems and processes which are specific to the Council.

The Committee noted the legal requirement to undertake an annual review that the governance arrangements set out in the Local Code were effective and/or complied with and to produce an Annual Governance Statement, with any identified areas for improvement included in the Annual Governance Statement action plan.

RESOLVED that the Ethics Committee notes the Code of Corporate Governance 2024/25.

#### 4. **Annual Report of Ethics Committee 2023-24**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which set out the work of the Committee over the last Municipal Year. In particular, the report detailed:-

- Update on the Online Safety Bill (now enacted Online Safety Act 2023)
- The Committee's review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance
- Civility in Public Life, Intimidation in Public and Digital Citizenship
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report

The report also detailed other regular work of the Committee over the last year including receiving regular reports on ethical standards cases across the country; maintaining a watching brief on work being undertaken by the Committee on Standards in Public Life; and locally on supporting Members in dealing with challenges associated with public service, particularly in relation to intimidation

and abuse. The Committee has also received an update on Members training during 2023/24 and supported the continuing delivery of the Members Training and Development Strategy, including actions for 2024/25.

Details of the Work Programme for 2024/25 were also highlighted in the report and included:-

- Consideration of the self-assessment Toolkit to aid Councillors in dealing with abuse, harassment and intimidation as part of the Debate not Hate: Ending Abuse in Public Life Campaign.
- Maintaining a watching brief on any legislative changes arising from the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report and recommendations of January 2019.

The Ethics Committee approved the Annual Report for 2023/24.

**RESOLVED that the City Council be recommended to:**

- 1. Note the Annual Report of the Ethics Committee for 2023/24**
- 2. Consider whether there is any work within the Committee's terms of reference that Council would wish the Committee to undertake**

## **5. Code of Conduct Update**

The Ethics Committee received a report of the Chief Legal Officer that provided an update on national issues in relation to the ethical behaviour of Elected Members and the local position in Coventry regarding Code of Conduct issues.

In relation to one of the national cases and the disqualification of a newly elected Councillor as they were employed by the Council as a teacher, the Committee noted that advice and guidance was provided by the Elections Team to prospective candidates in relation to disqualification for standing for office prior to elections.

The Committee also noted the position in relation to the local Parish Councils and their Codes of Conduct.

**RESOLVED that the Ethics Committee:-**

- 1. Notes the position with regard to matters concerning local authorities nationally.**
- 2. Notes the local position in relation to the operation of the Council's Code of Conduct and delegates any actions arising from these to the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee.**

3. **Requests that a copy of the report be forwarded to the local Parish Councils for their information.**

6. **Work Programme for the Ethics Committee 2024/25**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance, appended to which was the Committee's Work Programme for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

In particular, the Committee welcomed the proposed consideration of a Self Assessment and Toolkit – Ending Abuse in Public Life and noted and supported the on-going work in relation to this area of work, including the provision of personal safety training for Councillors.

**RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2024/25 be received and noted.**

7. **Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.30am)



## Public Report Ethics Committee

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Ethics Committee

26 September 2024

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

N/A - Ethics Committee

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Law and Governance

**Ward(s) affected:**

None

**Title: Ending Abuse in Public Life Council Self-Assessment Toolkit**

**Is this a key decision?**

No

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### Executive Summary

As part of the Debate Not Hate campaign the Local Government Association (LGA) have created a toolkit as a resource designed to aid local Councils in tackling and mitigating the impact and risks of abuse and intimidation that Councillors may encounter as part of their role, supporting them to be safe.

This report provides an overview of the toolkit and how it may be used by the City Council.

The first stage proposed by the toolkit is for an evidence gathering exercise to be undertaken that informs, as a second stage, the preparation of a summary and forward plan including the use of best practise examples provided within the toolkit.

### Recommendations:-

The Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Endorse the use of the toolkit by Coventry City Council and request that an evidence gathering exercise is undertaken (as recommended by the toolkit) to inform a summary and forward plan for the Committee's consideration.

**List of Appendices included**

None

**Other useful background papers**

Ending abuse in public life council self-assessment toolkit | Local Government Association

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No



## Report title: Ending Abuse in Public life Council Self-Assessment Toolkit

### 1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign aims to raise public awareness of the vital role Councillors play in local democracy, promote healthy debate, and improve responses to the challenges they encounter. It recognises that some Councillors can be subject of abuse and harassment.

The LGA note that whilst it's important to protect freedom of speech, the cumulative effect of derogatory and abusive comments can be personally and democratically harmful. Councillors may find themselves vulnerable to verbal, psychological, and even physical abuse due to their elected role.

In response to some of these challenges the LGA has produced a toolkit *“designed to aid local councils in tackling and mitigating the impact and risks of abuse and intimidation that councillors may encounter as part of their role, supporting them to be safe. The primary objective of this toolkit is to guide councils in assessing their role and efforts to prevent and respond to abuse and intimidation against councillors.”*

- 1.2 The toolkit was developed by a specialist abuse and harm reduction consultancy organisation who worked closely with the LGA, a sounding group of Council officers and consulted with several national police colleagues.
- 1.3 The toolkit is structured around five principles and offers practical approaches to implementing these principles:-

1. **Creating supportive and informed spaces:** This component focuses on establishing a supportive and inclusive environment within the council, ensuring that Councillors have access to essential information, advice, and support options. It aims to cultivate environments that empower Councillors with the necessary tools and resources to effectively navigate challenges and promote their well-being.
2. **Creating a risk-led approach:** This section highlights the importance of empowering individuals, including officers and Councillors, by adopting a comprehensive approach to understanding and mitigating risks. It advocates for proactive identification of risks through dynamic and periodic risk assessments, considering both the broader political landscape and the specific needs of individual Councillors.
3. **Creating an infrastructure:** This segment outlines the helpful structures within the Council itself, encompassing policies, processes, and designated responsible individuals. It emphasises the importance of clearly defining procedures for raising concerns and assigning support to Councillors.

4. **Creating connections:** This section considers how Councils collaborate with the police as a partner in protecting Councillors. This includes proactive efforts to develop strong alliances with local police to enhance coordination in addressing significant abuse affecting Councillors.
5. **Creating a culture of safety and respect:** This section aims to encourage a community culture that prioritises safety, respect, and constructive interaction, fostering an environment where all Councillors feel valued and heard.

- 1.4 The first stage proposed by the toolkit is for an evidence gathering exercise to be undertaken to assess the Council's current position; which then informs as a second stage the preparation of a summary and forward plan including the use of best practise examples provided within the toolkit.

## 2. Options considered and recommended proposal

The Ethics Committee could decide not to proceed with using the toolkit and rely on the current resources available.

The Ethics Committee are recommended to endorse the use of the toolkit, as a basis for understanding the current position of the City Council against the 5 principles, and for a summary and forward plan to be prepared as proposed by the toolkit to inform any further actions that could be taken to help tackle abuse and intimidation against Councillors.

## 3. Results of consultation undertaken

Not applicable.

## 4. Timetable for implementing this decision

The evidence gathering stage should be undertaken to enable the summary and forward plan to be available for consideration at the next Ethics Committee meeting.

## 5. Comments from Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

### 5.1 Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

## **5.2 Legal Implications**

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

## **6. Other implications**

None.

### **6.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan**

Not applicable.

### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There is no direct risk to the organisation as a result of the contents of this report.

### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

No direct impact at this stage.

### **6.4 Equalities/ EIA**

There are no public sector equality duties which are of relevance at this stage.

### **6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

None

### **6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

None at this stage.

**Report author(s):**

**Name and job title:** Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance

**Directorate:** Law and Governance

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

<b>Contributor/approver name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Date doc sent out</b>	<b>Date response received or approved</b>
<b>Contributors:</b>				
Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	13/09/24	13/09/24
Shanita Manhertz	Trainee Solicitor	Law and Governance	02/09/24	02/09/24
<b>Names of approvers for submission:</b> (officers and members)				
Finance: Richard Shirley	Lead Accountant	Finance	16/09/24	16/09/24
Legal: Julie Newman	Director	Law and Governance	02/09/24	02/09/24
Councillor S Nazir	Chair of Ethics Committee		13/09/24	17/09/24

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## Public Report Ethics Committee

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Ethics Committee

26 September 2024

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

N/A - Ethics Committee

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Law and Governance

**Ward(s) affected:**

None

**Title:** Six Monthly Review of Members' Gifts and Hospitality

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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### Executive Summary

This report sets out details of declarations of gifts and hospitality made by Members for the period 1 January to 30 June 2024. The Committee reviewed the gifts and hospitality register entries received from 1 July to 31 December 2023 at its meeting on 21 March 2024. The Committee is asked to consider the most recent declarations.

### Recommendations: -

The Ethics Committee is recommended to consider the gifts and hospitality register entries received from 1 January to 30 June 2024 and to make any recommendations that it considers appropriate.

### List of Appendices included:

- Appendix 1: General Declarations of gifts and hospitality received between 1 January to 30 June 2024

### Other useful background papers:

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## **Report title: Six Monthly Review of Officers' Gifts and Hospitality**

### **1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 The Ethics Committee has, as part of its Work Programme, decided to review on a regular basis the declarations of gifts and hospitality made by Members. Appendix 1 contains copies of all declarations received from Members from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

### **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 The declarations received between 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024 are at Appendix 1 of this report. There were 8 forms received from 5 elected Members.
- 2.2 There have been no requests by members of the public to view the register during this time
- 2.3 The Committee is recommended to consider the declarations made in the first six months of 2024 and to make any recommendations that it considers appropriate.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 None.

### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

Any recommendations of the Committee will be implemented within an appropriate time frame.

### **5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law & Governance**

#### **5.1 Financial implications**

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

#### **5.2 Legal implications**

Members are required to declare Gifts and Hospitality under section 4 of the Code Conduct for Elected Members at Part 4 of the Council's Constitution. Whilst there is currently no statutory requirement for members to declare in this way, maintaining a process and register aids transparency and assists the Council in promoting and maintaining a process and register aids transparency and assists

the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of ethical behaviour as is required under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

## **6. Other implications**

None

### **6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the One Coventry Plan?**

Not applicable

### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There is no direct risk to the organisation as a result of the contents of this report, but a failure to implement and maintain a system of Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality can impact on the organisation's ethical behaviour and transparency.

### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

The routine declaration of gifts and hospitality received should assist in protecting Elected Members from unfounded allegations of bias and facilitate good and clear transparent decision making.

### **6.4 Equalities / EIA**

There are no public sector equality duties which are of relevance at this stage.

### **6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

None

### **6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

None at this stage



**Report author(s):****Name and job title:** Shanita Manhertz, Trainee Solicitor**Directorate:** Law and Governance**Tel and email contact:** 024 7697 2350 [shanita.manhertz@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:shanita.manhertz@coventry.gov.uk)

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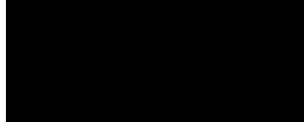
<b>Contributor/approver name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Date doc sent out</b>	<b>Date response received or approved</b>
<b>Contributors:</b>				
Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	02/09/24	04/09/24
Shanita Manhertz	Trainee Solicitor	Law and Governance	02/09/24	02/09/24
<b>Names of approvers for submission:</b> (officers and members)				
Finance: Richard Shirley	Lead Accountant	Finance	02/09/24	04/09/24
Legal: Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	Law and Governance	02/09/24	16/09/24
Councillor S Nazir	Chair of Ethics Committee		11/09/24	16/09/24

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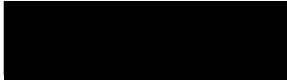
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**Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct**

Name of Elected Member	RAM P. LAKHA
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	CHAIR OF AUDIT & Procurement Comm. Hllc.
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	24th January 2024.
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	Rev. FRANK & Mrs Amulo ONWA
Full details of what was received	Over-Coat
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	£90
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	The couple made an appointment to see me and it was a surprise that they brought a Card for the good wishes for my birthday which was on 14th Jan. Because Mrs ONWA was unwell at that time and came today to offer Birthday wishes.
Signature of member:	
Date:	24/1/2024.

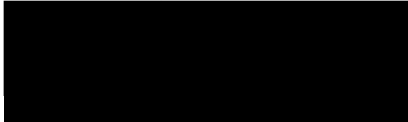


## Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct

Name of Elected Member	Councillor Maya Ali
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	Chair of Scrutiny Board 4 – Communities and Neighbourhoods
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	Offered 14 May and accepted 15 May 2024
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	Clive Benefield Three Spires Guildhall
Full details of what was received	Complimentary tickets x3
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	£20 per ticket x3 = £60.00
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	As Scrutiny Board 4 Chair
Signature of member:  Date:	 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2024

**Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct**


## Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct

Name of Elected Member	Councillor Ridley
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	Leader of the Conservative Group (Leader of the Opposition).
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	12.12.23
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	Invitation from Chris Smith, Founder and Managing Director of The New Midlands.org.uk
Full details of what was received	Invitation to Coventry Blaze vs Cardiff Devils 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 at Planet Ice. 2 x Tickets, Sky Lounge.
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	£35.00 per ticket – total £70.00
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	To represent the city at a key partners networking event and build links with other key regional stakeholders.
Signature of member:	
Date:	05.03.24

**Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct**




## Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct

Name of Elected Member	Councillor Ridley
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	Leader of the Conservative Group (Leader of the Opposition).
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	12.04.24
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	Invitation from Birmingham City Football Club Foundation
Full details of what was received	Birmingham City v Coventry City game on Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2024.
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	£250.00
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	To represent the city at a key partners networking event and build links with other key regional stakeholders.
Signature of member:	
Date:	17.04.24

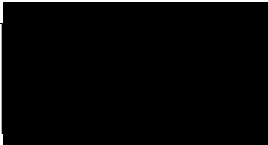
**Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct**

## Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct

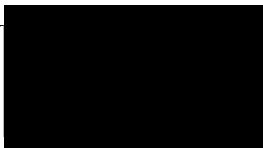
Name of Elected Member	Cllr George Duggins
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	Leader of Coventry City Council
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	Offered and accepted 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024. Received 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2024.
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	Doug King, Coventry City Football Club
Full details of what was received	Ticket to Coventry City vs Manchester United on 2 <sup>1st</sup> April 2024 at Wembley, plus hospitality.
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	The club advised:  <i>Re tickets in the Royal Box, they are given to the Club for free. There is no actual confirmed value attached to those tickets as they cannot be purchased so there is no market value. Having said that, if you need to declare a value, then as guidance, the FA have suggested using a value of £270 per ticket which represents the catering costs they incurred (per person) plus the value of a Category 1 ticket to attend the game.</i>
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	Representing the Council and City as the Leader supporting the city's football team, and developing the Council's relationship with a key partner.
Signature of member:	
Date:	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct**


## Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct

Name of Elected Member	Cllr George Duggins
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	Leader of Coventry City Council
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	Offered 10 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 and accepted 25 <sup>th</sup> January 2024.  Received 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024.
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	The offer was from Centre for the New Midlands.
Full details of what was received	2 tickets for Coventry Blaze vs Cardiff Devils plus complimentary bar.
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	Circa £35 per ticket- £70
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	Representing Coventry as the Leader of the Council whilst also strengthening links with the Centre for the New Midlands and members of the Reimagining the Region network.
Signature of member:	
Date:	7 <sup>th</sup> March 2024

## Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct

Name of Elected Member	Cllr George Duggins
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	Leader of Coventry City Council
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	Offered 31 <sup>st</sup> January, accepted 6 <sup>th</sup> February. Received 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	Jon Sharp, Executive Chairman of Coventry Rugby Ltd.
Full details of what was received	Ticket and hospitality for the Coventry Rugby v Ealing Trailfinders match on 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2024.
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	£70 (includes ticket cost and lunch)
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	Representing Coventry as the Leader of the Council and providing an opportunity to discuss future plans for the club.
Signature of member:	
Date:	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2024

## Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality under Members' Code of Conduct

Name of Elected Member	Cllr Gavin Lloyd
Position held e.g. cabinet member, shadow cabinet member, elected member etc.	Deputy Cabinet Member, City Services Sherbourne Ward Cllr
Date on which gift or hospitality was offered and received or accepted	Offered 31 <sup>st</sup> January, accepted 6 <sup>th</sup> February. Received 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Person or organisation offering or providing the gift or hospitality and link to the Council if appropriate	Jon Sharp, Executive Chairman of Coventry Rugby Ltd.
Full details of what was received	Ticket and hospitality for the Coventry Rugby v Ealing Trailfinders match on 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2024.
Actual cost or estimated cost e.g. face value of tickets, price of set menu at venue etc.	£70 (includes ticket cost and lunch)
Justification for accepting the gift or hospitality	Representing Coventry and providing an opportunity to discuss future plans for the club.
Signature of member:	
Date:	27 March 2024

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## Public Report Ethics Committee

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Ethics Committee

26 September 2024

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

N/A - Ethics Committee

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Law and Governance

**Ward(s) affected:**

None

**Title:** Six Monthly Review of Officers' Gifts and Hospitality

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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### Executive Summary

In its Work Programme, the Committee has decided to review entries in the Registers of Officers' Gifts and Hospitality every six months.

### Recommendations: -

The Ethics Committee is recommended to consider the entries of gifts and hospitality received by Officers from 1 January to 30 June 2024 and to make any recommendations that it considers appropriate.

### List of Appendices included:

- Appendix 1: Table of Gifts and Hospitality received by Officers 1 January to 31 June 2024

### Other useful background papers:

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## **Report title: Six Monthly Review of Officers' Gifts and Hospitality**

### **1. Context (or background)**

1.1 The Committee's Work Programme includes an item for this meeting to review entries on the registers of Officers' gifts and hospitality every six months.

1.2 The Code of Conduct for Employees sets out the requirements for employees when being offered or accepting gifts and hospitality, The basic rules are:

#### **(a) Gifts**

- Personal gifts should never be accepted unless they are modest and are of token value (less than £50). The manager's permission must be obtained.
- Items such as coffee mugs, diaries, calendars, pens or other promotional materials can be retained if they are in use in the office and can be considered to form part of the general mailings of a company.
- Where small gifts, such as chocolates, are given as thanks for a service provided, these can be accepted if they are shared within the Team or raffled for charity.
- Gifts worth more than £50 should be refused. If this is not possible, the manager should dispose of them to charity and record the fact in the register.

#### **(b) Hospitality**

- Hospitality consisting of light refreshments, working lunch or other meals which are part of a visit, conference, meeting or promotional exercise is acceptable.
- Invitations to social events offered as part of normal working life, or where the Council should be seen to be represented, may be accepted if authorised in advance by the appropriate Assistant Director.
- Invitations to other types of hospitality which are not directly linked to the City Council's functions should not be accepted.

The rules relating to gifts and hospitality were amended by the Committee in June 2016 and those changes were accepted by full Council in September 2016.

### **Options considered and recommended proposal**

1.3 The Directorates have been asked to provide details of gifts and hospitality received during the first six months of 2024. The position for each Directorate is set out in the Table in Appendix to this report.

## **2. Results of consultation undertaken**

Each Directorate was asked to provide details of their registers

## **3. Timetable for implementing this decision**

3.1 Not applicable

## **4. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law & Governance**

4.1 Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

4.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. However, reviewing the gifts and hospitality offered to employees on a regular basis will help to demonstrate that the Council continues to monitor and review ethical standards within the Council.

## **5. Other implications**

None

5.1 **How will this contribute to achievement of the One Coventry Plan?**

Not applicable

5.2 **How is risk being managed?**

Not applicable

5.3 **What is the impact on the organisation?**

Keeping matters such as this under review help to promote high standards amongst elected members and employees in accordance with the Localism Act

5.4 **Equalities / EIA**

There are no public sector equality duties which are of relevance

5.5 **Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

None

## 5.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None at this stage

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Shanita Manhertz	Trainee Solicitor	Law and Governance	02/09/24	02/09/24
<b>Names of approvers for submission:</b> (officers and members)				
Finance: Richard Shirley	Lead Accountant	Finance	02/09/24	04/09/24
Legal: Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	Law and Governance	02/09/24	16/09/24
Councillor S Nazir	Chair of Ethics Committee		11/09/24	16/09/24

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**Appendix 1: REGISTER OF OFFICER GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY 1 JANAUARY 2024 TO 30 JUNE 2024**

<b>Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>G or H?</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>Provided by</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Any conflict or future tender?</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Approved Date</b>
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing	04.03.24	Dinner at Scarman House, Warwick Conferences Car parking	H	£62	The Warwick Institute of Translational Medicine	Networking with academic, clinical and industry partners to discuss cardiology, women's health, infectious disease, mental health and innovation.	No	Director of Partnerships and Performance	02.04.24
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing	17.01.24 and 18.01.24	17-01-24 and 18-01-24 overnight (B&B) at Premier Inn, Belgrade Plaza 18-01-24 dinner at Turtle Bay	H	£239	Inclusive Cities (part of the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity at the University of Oxford)	Networking with colleagues and fellow panellists representing diverse health sector backgrounds – explore how city planning can improve refugee and asylum seekers health outcomes and share best practice. Insight gathered will contribute to the DpH annual report focusing on refugees, asylum seeker and migrant health.	No	Director Partnerships and Performance	06.02.24
Director of City Services and Commercial	21.04.24	Ticket to Coventry City vs Manchester United on 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2024 at Wembley	H	£270 per ticket which represents the catering	CBS Arena	Representing the Council as a Director by supporting the city's football team and developing the Council's relationship with a key partner.	No	Chief Executive	08.05.24

		Stadium, plus hospitality in an executive box.		costs they incurred (per person) plus the value of a Category 1 ticket to attend the game.					
Principal Officer	11.03.24	<p>Invitation to DW Windsor technical event aimed at Local Authorities – PFI Street lighting team.</p> <p>Accommodation and Dinner provided as event is over 2 days</p>	H	Unknown	DW Windsor	Event is aimed at local authorities to understand lighting in the public realm and energy management of lighting	No	Strategic Lead – Policy and Innovation	13.03.24





## Public Report Ethics Committee

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Ethics Committee

26 September 2024

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

N/A - Ethics Committee

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Law and Governance

**Ward(s) affected:**

None

**Title:** Code of Conduct Update

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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### Executive Summary

The report updates the Ethics Committee on any national issues in relation to the ethical behaviour of elected Members and the local position in Coventry with regard to Code of Conduct issues.

### Recommendations:-

The Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the position with regard to matter concerning local authorities nationally;  
and
2. Note the local position relating to the operation of the Council's Code of Conduct and to delegate any actions arising from these to the Director of Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair of Ethics Committee.

**List of Appendices included**

None

**Other useful background papers**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## **Report title: Code of Conduct Update**

### **1. Context (or background)**

**1.1** The Council's Ethics Committee has agreed that the Director of Law and Governance will provide a regular update on cases relating to the Members' Code of Conduct on a national basis. This is to facilitate the Ethics Committee's role in assisting the Council with its duties under Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of Members' conduct.

### **1.2 The National Picture**

#### **1.2.1 Councillor B, Cheshire West and Chester Council**

Councillor B of Cheshire West and Chester Council has been convicted in a Magistrates' Court of using threatening and abusive language with intent to cause distress.

The conviction was a result of an incident which occurred in a street. Councillor B, believing another Member was trying to "smear" them confronted them. As part of the language used, the Councillor is said to have referred to their fellow Councillor as a "scumbag".

Councillor B was sentenced by way of a fine in the amount of £415 and ordered to pay costs.

#### **1.2.2 Councillor G, Councillor H and Councillor M, Warwickshire County Council**

An independent investigation into 3 Councillors of Warwickshire County Council has concluded that there were not in breach of the Code of Conduct, following complaints about their comments made about children with special educational needs.

The investigation into Councillor H found that in asking "Why are there so many people now jumping out with these needs? Where were they in the past when I was at school?", Councillor H was not in breach of the Code of Conduct. Instead, the Councillor's language was deemed to be "disrespectful and showed a lack of care and sensitivity" and caused "reputational damage to the Councillor and the Council". The comments made during the debate did not constitute a breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct.

Councillor M asked whether children put forward for assessment were "just really badly behaved" and in need of "some form of strict correction". It was determined that whilst Councillor M's words were "disrespectful, not courteous, and showed a lack of care and sensitivity" they were not in breach of the Code of Conduct.

The findings in the decision notices for Councillor H and Councillor M were “by virtue of the enhanced protections afforded by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to freedom of speech) during political debate”. It was also recommended that the Local Authority’s Chief Executive consider ways for Councillors to be supported to engage in debate “whilst ensuring that the language used is respectful, courteous, and sensitive to the matter concerned”.

Councillor G commented that "families are swapping tips on how to get their children diagnosed" on social media pages. It was determined that there was “insufficient evidence” to determine a breach of the standard relating to bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination and there was “no evidence that Councillor G acted in the way they did because of any protected characteristics”. It was noted that if the findings were different, the Councillor would have been afforded the enhanced protections of Article 10 also.

All three of the Councillors personally apologised for their comments.

### **1.2.3 Councillors C and Councillor D, West Suffolk Council**

Two Councillors for West Suffolk Council have been found to have breached six rules of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct each.

Councillor C was found to have breached rules relating to treating the public and other Councillor’s with respect in addition to harassment.

Councillor D broke rules concerning discrimination and not respecting Council employees and volunteers or partner organisations. Both Councillors broke rules in relation to disclosing confidential information, using their role to the advantage or disadvantage of themselves or another, bullying and bringing their role or the local authority into disrepute.

At the Council meeting, Councillor C when asked to apologise maintained that he had nothing to say. Councillor D expressed a desire to apologise but their speech was forced to be cut short avoid the revelation of private information.

The Councillors were sanctioned, which included writing letters of apology to the complainants. Both Councillor D and Councillor C were also removed from the various appointments of which they had seats.

### **1.2.4 National Association for Local Councils submission to Committee for Standards in Public Life Consultation on accountability within public bodies.**

The Committee for Standards in Public Life carried out a consultation on accountability within public bodies and the importance of acting on early

warning signs. The consultation which ran earlier this year focused on "how organisations build and maintain systems of internal accountability that enable timely decision making, supporting proper scrutiny of their decision making".

The National Association for Local Councils (NALC) in its submission to the Committee said "the current standards regime not only lacks effective sanctions, but in many cases the 'regulators' (i.e. monitoring officers and standards committees) lack the organisational capacity to promote, monitor and maintain ethical standards".

The NALC also said, "Councils are frustrated that there is nothing they can do to change the actions or attitudes of certain persons be they councillors, council staff or members of the public."

Among its submissions, the organisation suggested more basic training of Councillors and staff on the standards regime.

A push was also made for Committee report on Local Government Ethical Standards from 2019 to be implemented.

#### **1.2.5 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales reports increase in code of conduct complaints**

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales annual report and accounts for 2023/24 revealed that it had received 518 code of conduct complaints which was an increase by 16% on the previous year.

Since 2019 the Ombudsman has seen a 37% increase in complaints received about public services and the behaviour of local councillors.

The Welsh Ombudsman refers the most serious concerns to the Adjudication Panel for Wales or the relevant local authority's standards committee. Of the 21 referrals of this nature regarding breaches of the code 85% were upheld.

### **1.3 The Local Picture**

#### Complaints under the Code of Conduct

- 1.3.1** The Ethics Committee has requested that the Director of Law and Governance reports regularly on any complaints received relating to Members of Coventry City Council.
- 1.3.2** The Director of Law and Governance has received 6 complaints in total since the date of the last meeting (27 June 2024) at the time this report was written. No further action has been taken on 5 of those complaints.
- 1.3.1** Since the last meeting 2 complaints against a Councillor, that were received in April 2024 and February 2024 has now been resolved but in line with the complaint's process is now being reported to the Committee as they were considered at Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure.

The first complaint related to the behaviour of the Councillor in reporting parking contraventions to the parking enforcement team to intimidate the complainant.

The second complaint relates to posts by the Councillor on Facebook that stated the Councillor had received threats of physical harm towards an individual but did not warn the individual or inform the police.

These two separate allegations were referred to an independent investigator for consideration. The independent investigator considered that there had been no breach in respect of both allegations.

In respect of the first allegation the independent investigator found that the motivation in reporting the parking violations was because of the Councillor's observations as to how the cars in the area were parked and from complaints by residents.

In respect of the second complaint the independent investigator found that the comments on Facebook by the Councillor were "political expression commenting on local issue" and that there was no requirement for the Councillor to refer the comments to the police (although the Councillor had subsequently done so).

- 1.3.2** The Director of Law and Governance will update the Committee on any further complaints received before the meeting and progress on those already received.
- 1.3.3** All complaints are handled in accordance with the agreed Complaints Protocol. No findings have been made by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to Members of Coventry City Council.

## **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

The Ethics Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the position with regard to matters concerning local authorities nationally; and
2. Note the local position relating to the operation of Council's Code of Conduct and to delegate any actions arising from these to the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee.

## **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

Not applicable.

## **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

Not applicable

## **5. Comments from Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The issues referred to in this report will assist the Council in complying with its obligations under Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

## **6. Other implications**

None.

### **6.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan**

Not applicable.

### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There is no direct risk to the organisation as a result of the contents of this report.

### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

No direct impact at this stage.

**6.4 Equalities/ EIA**

There are no public sector equality duties which are of relevance at this stage.

**6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

None

**6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

None at this stage.



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Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	02/09/24	04/09/24
Shanita Manhertz	Trainee Solicitor	Law and Governance	02/09/24	02/09/24
<b>Names of approvers for submission:</b> (officers and members)				
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Legal: Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	Law and Governance	02/09/24	16/09/24
Councillor S Nazir	Chair of Ethics Committee		13/09/24	16/09/24

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Ethics Committee

26 September, 2024

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

N/A- Ethics Committee

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Law and Governance

**Ward(s) affected:**

Not applicable

**Title:**

Work Programme for the Ethics Committee 2024/25

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

This report proposes areas of work for the Ethics Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25. The Committee is asked to consider the proposed Work Programme and make any suggestions for additional or alternative reports.

**Recommendations:**

The Ethics Committee is recommended to review the proposed Work Programme attached as Appendix 1 and make any changes or amendments the Committee considers appropriate.

**List of Appendices included:**

Appendix 1 - Proposed Work Programme

**Other useful background papers:**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## **Report title: Work Programme for the Ethics Committee 2024/25**

### **1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 The Committee's Terms of Reference are set out in the Council's Constitution and include the consideration of matters which are relevant to the ethical governance of the Council, its Members or employees. This report attaches a proposed programme of work for the Committee, designed to assist the Committee to meet its objectives set out in the Terms of Reference, and to ensure that the Council complies with its obligations under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst elected and co-opted members.
- 1.2 The Committee's proposed Work Programme takes account of the need to promote standards and addresses this in a number of ways. It is a draft Work Programme and is flexible in terms of suggestions from members of the Ethics Committee as to additional or substitute areas which they would want to consider and receive reports on.

### **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 The Work Programme includes regular items on:
  - Code of Conduct/ Monitoring Officer Update
  - Declarations of gifts and hospitality by Members and Officers
  - Annual report to full Council
  - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Report
- 2.2 In addition, the Ethics Committee factor into the Work Programme a number of matters where work is being, or about to be, undertaken across the Council. This includes continuing work on Civility in Public Life and the provision of training for Members.
- 2.3 The Committee is asked to consider whether there are any other matters that they would want to consider during the year.

#### **2.4 Recommendation**

The Ethics Committee is recommended to review the proposed Work Programme attached as Appendix 1 and make any changes or amendments the Committee considers appropriate.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

None

### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 Not applicable

**5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance**

**5.1 Financial implications**

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

**5.2 Legal implications**

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, as there is no statutory obligation on the Committee to adopt a Work Programme. However, the Council must comply with its obligations under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 and the continuation of a clear programme of work would assist in compliance for the Council as a whole, in its duty to promote high standards of ethical conduct.

**6. Other implications**

None

**6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the One Coventry Plan?**

Not applicable.

**6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There is no direct risk to the organisation as a result of the contents of this report.

**6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

If implemented, the Work Programme will facilitate the promotion of high standards amongst elected members in accordance with the Localism Act.

**6.4 Equalities / EIA**

There are no public sector equality duties which are of relevance at this stage.

**6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

None

**6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

None at this stage

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Finance: Richard Shipley	Lead Accountant	Finance	16.09.24	16.09.24
Cllr S Nazir	Chair: Ethics Committee		16.09.24	16.09.24

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## Appendix 1

### Proposed Work Programme for the Ethics Committee - Municipal Year 2024/25

<b>Ethics Committee Meeting and date</b>	<b>Topics</b>
<b>2024/5</b>	
<b>1. 27 June, 2024</b>	
	Monitoring Officer/Code of Conduct/ Members Complaints Update
	Annual Report of the Committee
	Work Programme 2024/25
	Local Code of Corporate Governance
<b>2. 26 September 2024</b>	
	Monitoring Officer/Code of Conduct/ Members Complaints Update
	Officers Gifts and Hospitality -Inspection of Registers for first 6 months of 2024
	Members Gifts and Hospitality -Declarations for first 6 months of 2024
	Ending Abuse in Public Life – Council's Self Assessment and Toolkit
	Work Programme 2024/25
<b>3. 12 December 2024</b>	
	Ending Abuse in Public Life Council Self-Assessment Toolkit – Outcome of Evidence Gathering Exercise
	Monitoring Officer/Code of Conduct/ Members Complaints Update
	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report
	Work Programme 2024/25
<b>4. 20 March 2025</b>	
	Monitoring Officer/Code of Conduct/ Members Complaints Update.
	Update on Members Training
	Officers Gifts and Hospitality -Inspection of Registers for last 6 months of 2024
	Work Programme 2024/25