

ANNEX A**ADMINISTRATION ESTIMATE****HOSPITALITY, ACCEPTING GIFTS AND OFFICIAL ENTERTAINMENT**

(see Staff Handbook 5.19 for additional guidance)

Introduction

1. The main principle underpinning the acceptance and provision of hospitality, gifts, and official entertainment is to make sure that your personal judgement and integrity cannot reasonably be seen to be compromised.
2. Staff of the House must be, and seen to be, above reproach in everything they do. Gifts, hospitality, and inducements that appear to be innocuous may be offered from time to time. However, great care should be taken in such circumstances as the acceptance of such items might be later misinterpreted. The following rules have been drawn up to help protect staff.
3. A book to record instances of hospitality and details of gifts received should be held by each department, and staff made aware of its existence and location..

Hospitality

4. Hospitality from suppliers et al should generally be avoided unless it arises during the course of a meeting or visit to the company's premises. All forms of hospitality should be avoided if a company is known to be in dispute or in breach of contract with the House.
5. Expensive lunches are becoming a less common feature of procurement exercises. If asked what kind of lunch should be provided during a visit, then it is advisable to suggest something modest like sandwiches or a buffet. In no other circumstances should hospitality be accepted from a company tendering or likely to tender for House of Commons business, as this might appear to give them an unfair advantage.
6. Some companies hold annual events (e.g. receptions at interesting venues, sporting events) for clients and/or customers. Such events can be useful in building a relationship and meeting other customers, but discretion should be used when accepting such an invitation. Do not feel under pressure to accept and if in any doubt, decline the invitation. Any hospitality received should be recorded in the hospitality book. Staff may also wish to note details of any hospitality declined.

Official entertainment

7. Staff may sometimes have to entertain official visitors at the expense of the House. Departmental budgets are limited and such expenditure must be agreed in advance with Departmental Finance Officers. Discretion about where such entertainment takes place should be exercised, and the details of any such occasion recorded in the hospitality book.
8. A distinction should be drawn between entertaining officials from other parliamentary assemblies and colleagues from other departments on the one hand, and other private sector people (or service providers) on the other. With the aim of fostering working relationships, reciprocating modest hospitality to the former group may be encouraged.

Gifts

9. Small gifts from foreign visitors should be accepted graciously. If the gift (e.g. books) is of use to the department, or another department, then they should be passed to the appropriate contact. Other gifts may be kept for personal use, but the Finance Director should be consulted as soon as possible if the gift seems excessive.
10. Gifts from suppliers should not be encouraged. If offered they should be accepted only if the value is likely to be less than £25. Diaries, calendars, pens, and similar gifts are likely to be acceptable.
11. A benefit-in-kind may be offered when no fee is sought. A modest gift such as a bottle of wine may be accepted if the circumstances are such that it would be difficult to refuse without appearing ungracious. Anything more substantial should be refused or returned with appropriate thanks and a suitable note of explanation. Such gifts should not be accepted on behalf of the House or the department.

Public speaking engagements

12. Guidance on accepting invitations to undertake public speaking engagements on departmental matters at functions or lectures organised by outside bodies must be followed (see Staff Handbook 5.20). Permission is required from the Departmental Establishment Officer before accepting any such invitation.
13. The general policy is to charge a fee for the services given where the engagement is in connection with official duties. The Finance Director has agreed that such payments may be used to support departmental staff functions. Cheques should be made payable to 'House of Commons Administration'. Alternative arrangements may be acceptable where the acceptance of an invitation can be shown to further the objectives of the House service or otherwise be of benefit to a Department (e.g. because the outside body is providing a service which might otherwise fall to the Department to provide).