

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE:	31ST JULY 2012
REPORT NO.	CFO/110/12
REPORTING OFFICER:	THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY
CONTACT OFFICER:	JANET HENSHAW CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY EXT 4301
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	KIERAN TIMMINS DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SUBJECT:	OFFERS OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY MADE TO EMPLOYEES

APPENDIX	A	TITLE	Service Instruction: Guidance for employees
	B		Offers Form Part A
	C		Offers Form Part B

ATTACHED – HARD COPY

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members approve the recommendations of this report relating to a new Service Instruction containing Guidance in respect of offers of gifts and hospitality made to employees of the Authority .

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a) Approve the Service Instruction relating to offers of gifts and hospitality and
 - b) Approve the revised forms in respect of this and the Code of Conduct to accompany the guidance and
 - c) Instruct the Clerk to the Authority and the Deputy Chief Executive to make arrangements for staff training in respect of both this guidance and the Employee Code of Conduct

Introduction & Background

3. Members may recall that an internal audit undertaken in early 2012 relating to some aspects of corporate governance recommended that ,whilst such offers are

made and accepted relatively infrequently improvements, could be made to recording of offers of gifts hospitality made to staff of the Authority

4. In particular it was noted that more detail could be given to the rationale for the acceptance of any such offers and that management approval sought as to the circumstances in which these should and should not be accepted
5. The Deputy Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer undertook to look in more detail at some specific recorded offers identified by the audit that had been accepted some dating back two or more years.
6. In two cases it was found that individual had since left the employment of the Authority so further information could not be ascertained . However the Monitoring Officer reviewed a number of other cases identified by internal audit
7. It is the clear conclusion of the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Chief Executive that some staff have not been aware of what they should do when a gift or some kind of hospitality is offered to them or of the potential risks to both the organisation and the individual in such circumstances. Whilst there is no conclusion of any wrongdoing, It is clear that there is a need for training and raised awareness in this area.
8. It was also concluded that although there is currently a form for staff to complete on the Authority intranet (Portal) this needs to give more information.
9. In June 2011 the Authority approved a revised employee Code of Conduct which outlines the approach to be taken when gifts and /or hospitality are offered. However it is considered that it may be helpful for staff to have some guidance to assist with this. Equally managers need to be involved in these decisions so that staff are supported in this respect. Consequently revised forms, a Service Instruction are proposed as attached to this report and it is further intended that staff training is arranged - again to ensure that staff are fully informed and supported.

Equality & Diversity Implications

10. This Code of Conduct along with guidance and training for staff should ensure that no discrimination occurs and that all staff are protected and supported in their day to day work

Staff Implications

11. It is imperative that the Authority ensures that all its employees are fully informed of the expectations of them in respect of offers of gifts and hospitality and that they are supported in dealing with such offers by training and guidance

Legal Implications

12. The Local Government Act 1972 requires that officers should not accept fees or rewards other than proper remuneration. In addition there are offences under the

Bribery Act. If staff accept inappropriate gifts and/or hospitality this could have far reaching implications both for them and the reputation of the Authority

Financial Implications & Value for Money

13. Any minor costs associated with training will be managed under existing budgets. .

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

14. There is a risk to the reputation of the Authority if employees accept gifts and/or hospitality inappropriately.

Contribution to Our Mission – To Achieve: “Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters”

15. The reputation of the Authority depends partly upon the integrity of its staff and it is important that the Authority gives its employees enough information and training to support them

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/069/11 Employee Code of Conduct