

Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority

Interim Gifts and Hospitality Code

Chair and Members

1. INTRODUCTION

This Code sets a framework for IPSA's Chair and Members and encompasses Hospitality (including working lunches and refreshments), Entertainment and Gifts.

Comment [B1]: An Interim Code. It will need to be reviewed in light of final decisions on the Expenses Scheme.

This Code has been developed in line with IPSA's values of independence, openness, honesty, accountability and fairness. Value for money will also always be considered when claims are made.

Due to the nature of IPSA's work it is unlikely that expenses to meet the costs of hospitality will be granted unless in exceptional circumstances.

The IPSA's Chair and Members must carry out their roles in accordance with IPSA's Code of Conduct and at all times seek to ensure that they do not put themselves in a position where they may be said to be acting improperly.

2. SCOPE

This Code applies to Hospitality, Entertainment and Gifts received or receivable by the Chair and members in respect of their association with IPSA and not in respect of any non-IPSA role or post held. If it is not clear whether any Hospitality, Entertainment or Gift is solely in respect of any non-IPSA role or post, this Code should be applied.

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3. MONETARY LIMITS

In respect of all matters covered in this code, the decision to offer/accept hospitality, entertainment or gifts is to be made bearing in mind all relevant circumstances. Value will inevitably be an important factor and the sum of £30 per person/per instance or occasion is to be used as a guide when deciding if amount of money involved is acceptable. In principle nothing over £30 should be offered or accepted. Where the amount involved exceeds £30, the matter will be referred to the IPSA's Chief Executive for guidance

4. RECORDING AND REPORTING

IPSA's Chair and Members are responsible for completing a **Gifts and Hospitality Form**. Details in the form will be collated by IPSA's Secretariat and added to the **Gifts and Hospitality Register**.

The **Gifts and Hospitality Register** will detail all gifts/hospitality given/received, will be maintained by the Secretariat and will be published quarterly on IPSA's Website.

5. HOSPITALITY

Hospitality includes the provision of lunches, dinners, and tickets to sporting/social or leisure events. These examples are not exhaustive.

IPSA's Chair and Members will not ask or encourage [Members of Parliament or their staff](#), individual business contacts, representative bodies, companies or other organisations, to provide hospitality to them or indirectly to other colleagues, friends or relatives

45.1 Accepting offers of hospitality

When deciding whether to accept hospitality, each offer must be considered on its merits within the principles set out in this policy.

It may be considered appropriate to accept an offer of hospitality (e.g. a working lunch) if it is:

- not lavish in nature,
- offered in the course of an official visit,
- not a regular occurrence; and
- there is no suspicion of a conflict of interest,

If IPSA's Chair and Members are at all unsure about whether accepting hospitality would give rise to a conflict of interest, they should refuse the hospitality.

Due to the nature of IPSA's work, any offers of hospitality from any parties giving or receiving services directly from IPSA should be refused.

Should IPSA's Chair and Members accept hospitality in good faith, and subsequently discover that concerns might be raised, they must inform the Chief Executive and make an appropriate entry in the "Gifts and Hospitality Register" (see paragraph 3)

The Chair and Members must undertake to complete a gift and hospitality form along with any supporting documentation so that an entry can be made in the "Gifts and Hospitality Register", whenever hospitality other than of a notional value is accepted.

45.2 Providing hospitality

It is permissible to provide hospitality in the form of refreshments (non-alcoholic beverages) and/or working meals for internal and external participants (where value for money in the pursuance of IPSA's objectives can be demonstrated).

The Chair and Members must ensure that value for money in the pursuance of IPSA's objectives can be demonstrated before making their decision in each case:

It is not necessary to record the provision of routine hospitality in the "Gifts and Hospitality Register". However, if the hospitality could be seen as exceptional for example large numbers of people when the total cost is significant, or the cost per head is higher than appropriate given the context, then it must be recorded.

56. ENTERTAINMENT

Generally, the conduct of IPSA's affairs should not require the offering or receiving of entertainment. IPSA's Chair and Members should always err on the side of caution. The criterion is whether the entertainment provided or received could be justified by reference to IPSA's statutory role.

IPSA's Chair and Members may on occasions be expected to entertain official visitors, such as senior officials from foreign countries. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate to provide entertainment in the form, for example of dinner in a restaurant. At such an occasion, it would be improper to invite other staff at public expense (unless their presence is essential, eg to support the Chair or Members)

IPSA's Chair and Members will ensure that the costs of such functions are kept to a reasonable level, commensurate with demonstrating honesty and value for money in the use of public funds.

It is not appropriate for entertainment to be provided at public expense for IPSA's staff, such as a leaving party for employees.

The details of any entertainment offered or received must be recorded in the "Gifts and Hospitality Register" (see paragraph 3) and published quarterly on the IPSA Website.

67. GIFTS

A gift is defined as "something which is voluntarily given without the expectation of receiving anything in return". Gifts can include gift vouchers and similar items, such as entitlement air miles.

This section sets out IPSA's policy towards the giving and receiving of gifts.

67.1 Principles

The general principles for the acceptance of gifts are set out below:

- the gift must be of a nominal or notional value and not in excess of any previously advised value (see point 2)
- the gift must be given for an appropriate reason
- the gift must be given at an appropriate time (i.e. not in advance of an award or contract),
- the gift must be of a one-off or irregular nature (i.e. that could not be viewed as a regular source of income by HM Revenue & Customs).

If in doubt, the question whether to accept a gift must be referred to the Chief Executive.

67.2 Receiving gifts

Control over the acceptance of gifts must be stringent for obvious reasons. IPSA's Chair and Members must be seen to act with honesty and integrity, and must not put themselves in a position where they could be said to be acting improperly. The acceptance of gifts from interested parties could create a conflict of interest that might arguably compromise the impartiality of the Chair and Members in the decisions that they are required to make.

Due to the nature of IPSA's work, any offers of gifts from any parties giving or receiving services directly from IPSA should be refused.

Any offer of a gift, whether accepted or not, to the Chair or Members must be noted on a Gift and Hospitality form, together with any supporting documents, and an entry made in the "Gifts and Hospitality Register" (see paragraph 3).

If the Chair or Members suspect that a gift is offered with the intention to bribe or otherwise influence, they must report the matter to the Chief Executive as soon as possible. Acceptance of a gift in these circumstances will constitute gross misconduct and could result ultimately in removal from post.

If in doubt, the question whether to accept a gift must be referred to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive may, in exceptional circumstances, depart from the principles set out in above (paragraph 6.1) where he/she is able to demonstrate that the needs of IPSA, taking account of any risk to its reputation, justify it. An example of this might be where a visiting foreign dignitary offers a gift, and to refuse it would cause offence. Approval for the acceptance of a gift should be sought as soon as the gift is offered.

In reaching a decision whether to accept a gift, IPSA's Chair and Members will consider whether the gift should be put to another use (e.g. donated to charity or a library or displayed in public) and the possible risks to the reputation of IPSA associated with keeping the gift. Donating a gift to the giver's preferred charity where appropriate would avoid any question of conflict of interest in the choice. It is impermissible to solicit a gift on the basis that it will go to charity. A gift which has been accepted must not be sold or exchanged for monetary or personal gain.

67.3 Providing gifts

It would not normally be appropriate for IPSA's Chair and Members to give official gifts. Should the question of giving such a gift arise, the following matters must be considered:

- the circumstances giving rise to the consideration of giving the gift, including any relevant factors to the potential recipient;
- the justification for the gift in terms of IPSA's objectives;
- a description of the gift; and
- the cost of the gift (which should be modest, and not exceed the value of the gift received when it is reciprocal).

When a dignitary provides a service at an official event it may be appropriate to provide a small gift or memento (e.g. a bouquet of flowers, or a small commemorative gift).

67.4 Recording Gifts given or received

Any and all gifts or entertainment, offered or received must be recorded in the "Gifts and Hospitality Register" (see paragraph ~~3~~ 4) and published quarterly on IPSA's Website.

67.5 Reciprocal gifts

Such gifts are not encouraged. However, there may be circumstances where the failure to give a gift could cause offence. An example would be an official visit by a foreign official whose custom would be to give/or receive a token of friendship or respect. In these circumstances, a Gifts and Hospitality Form must be completed as above.

78. AWAY DAYS AND TEAM BUILDING EVENTS

These are occasional events organised to develop working relationships. Such an event may be acceptable as long it can be justified as providing good value for money and can demonstrate development achievements. Any costs incurred must be reasonable and comparable to the status of the event.