



# Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

<b>Title</b>	Code of Conduct for Officers – Part 2 - on Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality
<b>Who should use this</b>	All Staff
<b>Author</b>	Original Document provided by Renfrewshire Council Personalised by Shona Carlton, Principal Administrative Officer
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# RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD



## ***Code of Conduct*** ***(PART 2)***

***For Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Employees***

August 2007

**RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD  
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OFFICERS  
ON ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

**1. GENERAL**

- 1.1 As an officer of Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board you may occasionally be placed in a position where you have to decide whether or not to accept gifts or hospitality from individuals, organisations or businesses that either are or wish to be associated with the Board. It is impossible within a Code to cover every circumstance which may arise and you are personally responsible and accountable for decisions you take when offered gifts or hospitality. This Code, which applies to all Board employees, is designed to provide a basis for that decision making and also sets out the requirements to report and record offers of gifts and hospitality. However, if you are in any doubt about the appropriate action to take then you should seek guidance from your line manager.
- 1.2 It is imperative that the good reputation of Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board and its standing in the community be protected at all times. This will always be the prime consideration in any decisions you make regarding the acceptance of gifts or hospitality. However, this code should not be enforced in a way which is over rigid and does not take account of individual circumstance.

**2. GIFTS**

- 2.1 You should treat respectfully but with caution any offer of a gift or favour that is made to you, or to a member of your family, by a person or body who have, or may seek to have, commercial dealings with the Board, e.g. who do, or might, provide work, goods or services to the Board.
- 2.2 The person or body may hope to gain preferential treatment in any dealings they have with the Board. Even if this is not the intention acceptance could lead others to believe this was a factor. The general rule should be to refuse, tactfully, offers of gifts from such persons or bodies. All gifts to be returned should be return via the Assessor & ERO or Depute. It is, however, recognised that the Board and its officers carry out a wide range of duties and activities within the community and that some degree of discretion is appropriate in certain circumstances. Exceptions or additional consideration should be given to the following areas.

**Civic Gifts**

It is recognised that the offer of gifts from overseas visitors or civic dignitaries is normal practice and to refuse them could have a negative impact on the image of the Board.

**Community Events**

If undertaking a particular task relating to a community based event such as a school prize-giving, gala day or fete openings or Scout or Boys' Brigade Inspections, then a token gift or hospitality can be accepted, as to refuse would be likely to cause offence and could adversely affect the Board's civic role.

## **Promotional Goods**

An exception to the general presumption to refuse gifts relates to modest gifts of a promotional nature given to a wide range of people and not uniquely to you. These gifts are usually given at Christmas time when commercial custom and practice may lead to gifts being sent to customers including Board officers. Such gifts can include a calendar, diary or other item of office stationery and where the gift is clearly promotional and has only modest value it may be accepted.

### **Small Gifts offered as tokens of appreciation**

Small gifts where refusal would cause needless offence and the giver is not seeking a decision or business from the Board but merely wishes to express thanks for advice, help or co-operation received. This would apply, for example, to a small box of chocolates offered as a thank you for excellent service.

- 2.3 All gifts and offers of gifts shall be recorded with the Registers as described in Section 4 below. If you are in any doubt about whether or not to accept a particular gift then advice should be sought from your line manager.

## **3. HOSPITALITY**

- 3.1 Hospitality can have many forms – lunch/dinner invitations, tickets to sporting, theatre or other events. As with gifts, the general rule should be to refuse, tactfully, offers of hospitality from persons or bodies that are associated, or wish to be associated, with the Board commercially. Hospitality should also be refused from organisations or individuals who are seeking, or at some stage in the near future may reasonably be expected to seek, a particular decision or action from the Board. However, hospitality and entertaining are normal business activities in particular sectors and the acceptance of such hospitality may, on occasions, be in the Board's interests. Further, the creation of good external relations, both inside and outside the Board's area, is an important responsibility of senior officers and extreme strictness could give unnecessary offence to people and organisations with whom the Board's relationship should be both professional and cordial. The decision on whether or not to accept such offers is a matter of judgement on the individual case but the following considerations should be made:

- Is there a genuine need to impart information or represent the Board in the community? Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only where these are part of the life of the community and where the Board should be seen to be represented.
- Is it clearly evident that the work of the Board will be facilitated by attending?
- Is there an opportunity to promote the Board's image or standing in the community or in the business sector by accepting the hospitality?
- Is the offer of hospitality proportionate to the benefit to the Board?
- Is the offer of hospitality made to a group or is it unique to you? It may be more reasonable to join in hospitality offered to a group than to accept something offered to oneself.

- Will the acceptance of the hospitality prejudice, in any way, the good standing and reputation of the Board in the community?
  - If a contractual relationship exists with the provider of hospitality is this likely to be compromised by the acceptance of hospitality?
  - Can the decision be easily justified to the Board, press or the public?
  - Is the motivation behind the invitation or offer absolutely clear?
  - Could any decision of the Board either now or in the future be prejudiced in any way by the acceptance or otherwise of the offer?
  - Is the person or body involved in competitive bidding for Board work or support on which decisions will be taken in the immediate future?
- 3.2 It is unlikely that there will ever be a situation where offers of hospitality which involve a significant amount of paid travel or residential stays for leisure purposes would ever be acceptable.
- 3.3 You must never canvass or ask for hospitality, even in the belief that this may save the Board money. There is too much scope for misinterpretation of intentions and uncertainty about your impartiality.
- 3.4 **All** offers of hospitality should be reported to the Assessor & ERO or Depute and recorded timeously within the Register described in paragraphs 4.1-4.3 below.

#### **4. REGISTER OF OFFERS OF GIFTS OR HOSPITALITY**

- 4.1 How the Board deals with offers of gifts and hospitality should be open to public scrutiny at all times. You must report the offer of any gifts or hospitality to the Assessor & ERO or Depute. The Board must have in place a register within which reports will be recorded of all offers of gifts and hospitality and whether it has been decided that they should be accepted or refused. If you accept an offer you must detail your justification for your acceptance in the register. This register is retained by the secretary.
- 4.2 The Assessor & ERO will retain a similar Register within which he will record offers of gifts or hospitality made to himself and to his Depute. Entries on the register for the Assessor & ERO and his Depute can be inspected by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services of Renfrewshire Council.
- 4.3 All registers maintained for the purpose of recording offers of gifts or hospitality will be made available to the public and Renfrewshire Council's Internal Audit.

#### **5. CORRUPTION**

- 5.1 It is a serious criminal and disciplinary offence for you corruptly to receive any gift, loan, fee, reward or other advantage for doing, or not doing anything in your official capacity.
- 5.2 If an allegation is made, it is for you to demonstrate that any such reward has not been corruptly obtained.

- 5.3 You must report immediately to the Assessor & ERO or Depute if you are concerned that an individual or organisation has made you an offer of a gift or hospitality with a view to gaining preferential treatment in their dealings with the Board.

## **6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- 6.1 It is likely that you or your family and friends will have dealings with the Board, Renfrewshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council and Inverclyde Council in a private capacity, for example as a Council taxpayer, applicant for a regulatory consent or decision or as a recipient of Council services. You must never use your position to seek preferential treatment for or further the interests of yourself or your family and associates. If you are involved in any work the Board or the three Unitary Authorities in which close members of your family, friends or people living in the same household as you may have financial interests, these interests must be declared to and recorded by your line manager. Similarly s68 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 requires you to give notice in writing to the Board if you have any pecuniary interest in a contract the Board has or proposes to enter into. Such notice should be given to the Assessor & ERO or Depute and failure to do so is an offence.
- 6.2 Further guidance on possible conflicts of interest is contained within the “Code of Conduct for Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board Employees” which is available in Lotus Notes and from the Board’s personnel practitioner.

**RENFREWSHIRE VALUATION JOINT BOARD**

**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR OFFICERS**

**ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

Date of receipt of offer of gift/hospitality:	
Name of employee(s) who have received the offer:	
Name of individual/organisation who has made the offer:	
Nature of gift/hospitality:	
Whether the individual/organisation currently has, <u>or</u> is likely to have in the future, dealings with the Board – and if so, specify:	
Decision on whether the offer of the gift/hospitality is to be accepted and, if accepted, justification for the acceptance:	
Signature of Assessor & ERO or Depute:	