

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Board

Review of Council Catering

Report by: Governance and Logistics Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel

Portfolio: Cabinet Lead for Governance and Logistics and Human Resources

Key Decision: N/A

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the recommendations being made in connection with the corporate catering review.

2.0 Recommendation

The Governance and Logistics Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel recommend to the Cabinet that food and drink provision for future Council events and meetings be as follows:

- 2.1 Tea and coffee only be provided for future councillor events including meetings;
- 2.2 Food and drink be provided for Mayoral events if appropriate; and
- 2.3 All lunch requests for officer events be approved by the relevant Service Manager.

3.0 Summary

- 3.1 With budgets under review the Panel decided in November 2014 to undertake a review of the costs of catering at the Public Service Plaza and ensure it represented value for money. The Panel met with the Facilities Team Manager on 12 January 2015 who provided information on the types and costs of catering provided.

4.0 Catering at the Plaza

- 4.1 The Panel's aim is to look at catering for external visitors, officers and Councillors with the aim of reducing costs to the Council. Currently food is provided for internal officer meetings but not for councillor meetings.

4.2 Options

The Panel considered the following options:

- a) To only provide food for internal officer meetings (the present arrangements);
- b) To provide food for both Councillors and officers at meetings and other events; and
- c) Providing no food for any internal officer or councillor meetings.

External Visitors

- 4.3 Since the refurbishment of the Plaza external visitors are able to hire the rooms in the conference suite and order catering through the Facilities Team Manager. There are no costs to the Council associated with providing catering for external visitors as they are charged for all costs incurred. An administration fee is charged, where possible, by the Council to external visitors for the processing of any external catering orders and subsequent invoices. The administration fee provided an income to the Council of approximately £1,000. Therefore, as there was no cost to the Council and it in fact brought income in no changes should be made to the current provision.

Officer Catering

- 4.5 The Panel then looked at the costs and benefits of officers ordering catering for officer meetings.
- 4.6 Wise Catering provides the majority of catering for Council events and all bookings are placed through the Facilities Team Manager to ensure there is a system of control in place. Wise Catering has twelve food menus available from tea and coffee through to hot and cold buffets. Officer events requiring catering are provided with the £5.00 per person basic menu (sandwiches and juice). Requests for more expensive menus have to be justified but can be ordered if there is a budget code to recharge the costs to.
- 4.7 To assess what was spent on officer catering the Panel looked at the costs, excluding VAT, incurred between the same two periods in 2013/14 and 2014/15:

April to September 2013

Food = £1,640.20
Vending = £1,310.00

Total = £2,950.20

April to September 2014

Food = £1,343.56

Vending = £1,186.00

Total= £2,259.56

4.8 Looking at the figures the Panel agrees that the current expenditure on officer catering is not excessive. All the costs came out of existing department budgets and it is felt that if it was reduced this could have a detrimental effect on staff morale at an already challenging time for the workforce. To ensure any officer catering was necessary in future it is recommended that approval for catering should be required to come from a senior member of staff, such as the relevant Service Manager.

4.9 With regards to individuals or small groups of external visitors coming to the Plaza it should be expected that officers will not provide catering for them and any food bought by them from the Café onsite, or elsewhere, can be reclaimed from their organisation.

Councillor Catering

4.10 Finally, the Panel decided what catering Councillors currently received.

4.11 First of all the Panel decided not to investigate catering costs associated with the Mayor, for example a ceremonial occasion such as Mayor Making, as there was a budget in place to cater for events where catering was deemed appropriate.

4.12 For Councillor events there was currently no budget for the provision of food, however a provisional sum of £1,000 had been allocated in the next municipal year's budget to provide food for Councillors on seminar days. With the Council having to save money the Panel feels that this provisional sum will not be necessary and future Councillor events should continue to only receive vending. The Panel considered that the austerity cuts faced by the Council should be shared equitably between Councillors and officers and this was a good opportunity for the Councillors to show that they were prepared to take a reduction in their service. As such the Panel believes that the best option would be to expect Councillors to utilise the Plaza Café or provide their own food for events such as seminar days.

4.13 The Panel also discussed the viability of the Councillors having a dedicated area in one of the kitchenettes in the Plaza where they can access to tea and coffee.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Following the Panel's investigation it was concluded that the Council continue with its present arrangements.

6.0 Implications

Resources:

6.1 As this report recommends no change to the existing policy as regards to Officer and Member catering, there is no financial impact to the current budget.

Legal:

6.2 There are no direct legal implications for this report.

Strategy:

6.3 The recommendations will contribute towards Havant Borough Council being financially sustainable.

Risks:

6.4 If it is seen Councillors are increasing their benefits this could lead to adverse publicity.

Communications:

6.5 This would be an opportunity to show that Councillors make a contribution to reductions in Council expenditure.

For the Community:

6.6 No implications from this report.

Integrated impact assessment

6.7 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed and concluded the following:

7.0 Consultation

7.1 Facilities Team Manger

Background Papers:

Panel Minutes

Agreed and signed off by:

Relevant Executive Head: 5 February 2015

Legal Services: 9 February 2015

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