

## POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

29 SEPTEMBER 2010

### REPORT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (AT)

#### FOOD PROVISIONS AT MEETINGS

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the Extraordinary Efficiency Task Group's recommendation that buffet refreshments at meetings be no longer provided for Members in order to make budgetary savings.
- 1.2 To note that staff who attend meetings at venues that are away from their normal place of work at relevant times are entitled to subsistence upon production of a receipt under the NJC terms and conditions.

##### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Buffet refreshments be no longer provided for Members at meetings.**
- 2.2 **Officers attending evening meetings make their own subsistence arrangements in accordance with the NJC terms and conditions and upon production of a relevant receipt.**
- 2.3 **Members consider the Member Development Steering Group's proposal to self-fund catering (para 3.6).**

##### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 At its meeting on 2 July 2010 the Efficiency Task Group considered a report on the current catering provision for meetings and the associated costs. It was noted that in 2009/10, the £6,530 budget was fully utilised in catering for Council, Committees and Member training events. The Task Group was minded to reduce the budget by £3K and provide catering for officers attending meetings only.
- 3.2 The Task Group was advised that one caterer provided most of the Council's pre-meeting buffets when at Phoenix House and the Baptist Church at a cost of £3 per person. However when external venues were used, one of the conditions of booking was to use their in-house catering arrangements and this cost was significantly more per person than using the Council's usual outside caterer. In the case of the Samworth Centre, tea, coffee and biscuits is £1.50 and the cheapest buffet of sandwiches and cakes is £4.50 per person.
- 3.3 It was noted that although external venue costs may be claimed from the insurers, catering costs were not claimable.

3.4 With regard to subsistence, the NJC rates for 2010/11 are as follows :-

Breakfast (if absent from normal place of work before 7am)	£4.48
Lunch (if absent from normal place of work between 12-2pm)	£6.17
Tea (if absent from normal place of work after 5.30pm)	£2.43
Dinner (if absent from normal place of work after 8.30pm)	£7.64

Therefore the above subsistence rates apply to officers who attend evening meetings at venues that are not at their normal place of work after 5.30 p.m. and upon production of a relevant receipt.

3.5 Currently the 'Tea' rate at 3.4 mainly applies to staff attending the Development Committee and Council meetings as these meetings are held at external venues. It is unlikely that it would be viable for a caterer to deliver/provide a buffet to meet the £2.43 rate taking into account the reduced frequency and quantities required for selected meetings and officers only. Therefore if the Council no longer provided buffets for staff attending evening meetings, staff could make their own subsistence arrangements and upon production of a receipt claim the £2.43 at the same time as processing their travel expenses.

3.6 At a recent meeting of the Member Development Steering Group, food provisions at meetings was discussed and some concern was raised mainly relating to Councillors coming from other meetings/work straight into an evening committee meetings and needing something to eat and the site visits for the Development Committee running into the actual evening committee meeting with no opportunity to go home in between. They were concerned that if food was not available some Members may not feel able to attend a meeting as they would need sustenance before being able to carry on.

Due to these concerns and being mindful of the Council's desire to make budgetary savings, the Steering Group proposed that buffets prior to meetings continue and be funded by Members by either :-

- A monthly deduction from each Members' Allowance to pay for food at meetings or
- Members make a monthly contribution for food at meetings

If this type of arrangement was favoured, then there would need to be commitment from all Members to such a scheme and staff who attend regular evening meetings may wish to be part of these arrangements.

3.7 With regard to Civic catering, the Mayor selects a caterer for each activity according to the type of event and the same caterer may not be used for all events. For example, for Civic Dinners the venue usually provides the catering and in recent years these have been held at the Cattle Market. The Mayoralty has a separate budget and all Civic hospitality is taken from this budget.

#### **4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are existing working protocols relating to statutory breaks for staff. Also many Councils have daytime meetings and therefore do not have the same issues as Melton.

4.2 Buffets provide subsistence to Members and Officers who are coming to meetings straight from work or from other commitments where there has been no opportunity to eat since lunchtime. Food provisions help to ensure sustenance and well-being throughout long meetings where important decisions are to be made. They also provide an opportunity for networking and encourage participants to arrive in good time to prepare for the start of the meeting.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This report seeks to reduce the existing budget and create a saving.

#### **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 There are no legal implications.

#### **7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no community safety implications in this report.

#### **8.0 EQUALITIES**

8.1 Food provisions currently provided are tailored to special dietary requirements upon request. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is being consulted on at present but is available upon request.

#### **9.0 RISKS**

9.1 Non-attendance at meetings and leaving meetings before the end due to personal subsistence arrangements.

#### **10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 There are no climate change implications in this report

#### **11.0 CONSULTATION**

11.1 The Extraordinary Efficiency Task Group was consulted as to current catering arrangements and costs. The Unions have been consulted regarding the potential withdrawal of buffets for staff attending evening meetings.

11.2 The Member Development Steering Group was consulted and their views are listed above.

#### **12.0 WARDS AFFECTED**

## 12.1 None

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Contact Officer: Senior Democracy Officer

Date: 18 August 2010

Background Papers: Extraordinary Efficiency Task Group – Minutes of 2 July 2010

Reference : X: Committees/PFA/2010-11/290910 SE – Food Provisions