

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR

SUBSISTENCE ARRANGEMENTS

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At the request of the Full Council, the Committee is to consider whether to provide refreshments before evening meetings and if so the budget implications of doing so and refer its recommendations to the Full Council.
- 1.2 A previous report on this subject was considered by the Governance Committee at its meeting on 6 June 2017 and this is attached for ease of reference at Appendix A.
- 1.3 This report aims to provide the additional information to enable the Committee to make a recommendation to Full Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **An option from paragraph 3.9 be approved and referred to Full Council.**
- 2.2 **Subject to 2.1 above, to approve a supplementary estimate to cover the cost for 2017/18.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 At the Full Council Meeting held on 26 April 2017, it was resolved that
- '...a further report be brought back to Council on the budget implications for providing refreshments before meetings of committees and Full Council.'*
- 3.2 At the Governance Committee held on 6 June 2017, a report was considered on subsistence arrangements before evening meetings (Appendix A) and it was resolved that
- 'consideration of the provision of refreshments before evening meetings starting after 5:30pm be deferred to the 19 September meeting of this Committee to enable this Committee to consider additional information and put a reasonable, sound, sensible recommendation to Full Council.'*
- 3.3 For comparison purposes, other Leicestershire districts were contacted to find out what refreshments are provided for Member meetings. This information is available at Appendix B. It appears that Melton is currently in line with other Leicestershire authorities in providing tea, coffee and water for the majority of meetings. Also in line with most of the other authorities surveyed, there is provision for a light buffet for Planning Site Visits as necessary and this is set out in the Members' Allowances Scheme as follows :-

'When the number and duration of site visits, combined with the duration of the Members briefing reaches a level where the Head of Regulatory Services in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee deems it appropriate, a light buffet shall be provided for the Members, without any deduction from their Site Visit Attendance Allowance.'

3.4 The minutes of the June Governance Committee meeting reflect a full debate and Members raised some helpful points both in support and against providing sandwiches before meetings as follows :-

For	Against	Other suggestions
<u>Length of meetings</u> It was difficult to foresee the duration of meetings. If a lengthy meeting was likely, it was reasonable to expect some sustenance.	A buffet prior to every meeting would be 'overkill'	Guidance from Committee Chairs would be required to determine the specific requirements prior to each individual meeting
<u>Opportunity to meet informally</u> Problems had been solved when previously Members had had the opportunity to gather for refreshments before meetings and that it had brought comradery between Members	<u>Wastage</u> There had been a lot of waste when a buffet service had been provided previously	<u>Officer subsistence</u> Consideration should also be given to the impact of this decision on Officers, who had completed a full working day before attending an evening meeting
<u>Work/travel commitments</u> Some Members had to travel a considerable distance to attend meetings and others had work commitments, which made it difficult for them to eat prior to the meetings	<u>Length of meetings</u> Our conduct determines the length of meetings. We can be more business like to reduce duration of meetings and be efficient without rushing decisions	<u>Tuck shop</u> A tuck shop or vending machine were suggested. It was agreed that a tuck shop was not feasible, as it would have to be staffed.
	<u>Members opting out of any buffet provision</u> Should a buffet option be approved, it would not have to be for all Members. A Member advised that they could be discounted from cost calculations, as they would always be able to make their own arrangements for refreshments prior to a meeting	<u>Vending machines</u> Vending machines containing healthy option snacks had been explored in relation to a previous staff query but had not proved viable as companies provided vending machines free of charge on the basis of the profit they made from snacks sold. Due to limited use, the Council would have to lease the machines which could prove more expensive than the buffet service option.

3.5 Following the meeting, all Members were given the opportunity to provide

comments and specific questions were asked which were designed to also help assess the value to the Council in providing a timeslot for informal Member/Officer discussion with or without catering.

Seven Members responded and the questions and a summary of those views is attached at Appendix C.

- 3.6 From the views expressed in Appendix C the majority have shown some support for the provision of refreshments for those who travel to the Council and come straight from work/other commitments to meetings and for those who attend several meetings in one day. There is a suggestion for a self-serve sandwich machine and for healthy food options and this issue had been responded to at the last meeting (see table at paragraph 3.4) and there were already vending machines on Floors 1 and 2 which contained snacks (including muesli bars) and these were already available to Members. There is some concern about the cost of introducing sandwiches and whether these would be needed for all meetings. The majority consider that having a timeslot to meet informally with officers is helpful and could be beneficial to the work of the Council in keeping everyone informed of latest developments and arising issues but this does not have to be before meetings or with food and would depend on the timing of such sessions.

One Member was against introducing sandwiches and felt there were sufficient opportunities for informal discussion.

- 3.7 It appears that a qualifying criteria for whether sandwiches are required before a meeting could relate to the length of the meeting and this could be estimated using agenda length and recent history of meeting end times. Working on this approach and using a cut off for number of items on an agenda as 10, the Town Area Committee and the Licensing and Regulatory Committee could be discounted from the calculations. Also with regard to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, this is more often than not cancelled due to a lack of business. However it is noted that the Planning Committee may not include 10 items of business but from previous meeting history, it is understood that most of these meetings last as long or longer than policy committee meetings and therefore these meetings remain included in any subsistence arrangements.

To remove the Town Area and Licensing and Regulatory Committees from the calculations would mean a reduction in the annual provision for the Calendar of Meetings* as follows :-

Meeting(s)	No. of mtgs per year	No. of People (Cttee + 3 officers)	Basic Menu (£3 pp) per mtg	Enhanced Menu (£4 pp) per mtg	Total for year – Basic menu	Total for year – Enhanced menu
			£	£	£	£
Full Council	6	31	93	124	558	744
CSA	5	13	39	52	195	260
Governance	5	13	39	52	195	260
Licensing	5	13	39	52	195	260
PFA	5	13	39	52	195	260
Planning	17	14	42	56	714	952
REEA	5	14	42	56	210	280
Town Area	11	18	54	72	594	792
Totals					2856	3808

Deduction					789	1052
New Totals					2067	2756

*These calculations do not include a contingency for ad hoc meetings nor working groups or task groups.

3.8 It is usually the case that buffet refreshments are provided from the Mayoral budget for the Annual Meeting of the Council therefore there is no provision in the figures supplied in this report for that meeting.

3.9 To assist the Committee in its decision-making here is a list of suggested options for a decision at 2.1 and it is proposed that one option is selected and referred to Full Council :-

(a) the basic menu be provided from 5.45 p.m. before Full Council and Committee meetings which include an agenda of at least 10 items of business and Planning Committees at a cost of £2,067 per annum and there be a £200 contingency for Extraordinary Council or Ad hoc Committee meetings where it is anticipated the meeting will last longer than 1 hour;

(b) the basic menu be provided from 5.45 p.m. before all Full Council and Committee meetings, Extraordinary Council, Ad Hoc meetings, Task Groups and Workings as detailed at paragraph 5.1 at a cost of £4,076 per annum;

(c) alternative arrangements be investigated as to informal liaison between Members and Officers and this not be reliant on formal subsistence arrangements;

(d) there be no change to existing arrangements.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The service supports the well-being of Councillors and the Council's Officers who attend evening meetings and contributes to the Council's priority for being a 'Well run Council'.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 As there is no current budget provision for sandwiches before meetings, it is proposed that a supplementary estimate would be needed for this service in the sum of £4,076 for 2017/18 to provide a basic sandwich menu and £5,268 to provide a slightly enhanced menu before meetings as detailed below :-

Meetings	Total for year – Basic menu (£3 pp)	Total for year – Enhanced menu (£4 pp)
	£	£
Total cost for all Council & Committee meetings scheduled on the Calendar of Meetings for 2017/18	2856	3808
20 x Ad hoc Task Groups and Working Groups involving up to 12 people at each meeting	720	960
Contingency for Extraordinary Council and Ad hoc Committee meetings	500	500
Totals	4076	5268

- 5.2 Should it be approved to go ahead with this service in 2017/18, a growth bid will be put forward for the 2018/19 budget.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 There are no community safety implications relating to this report.

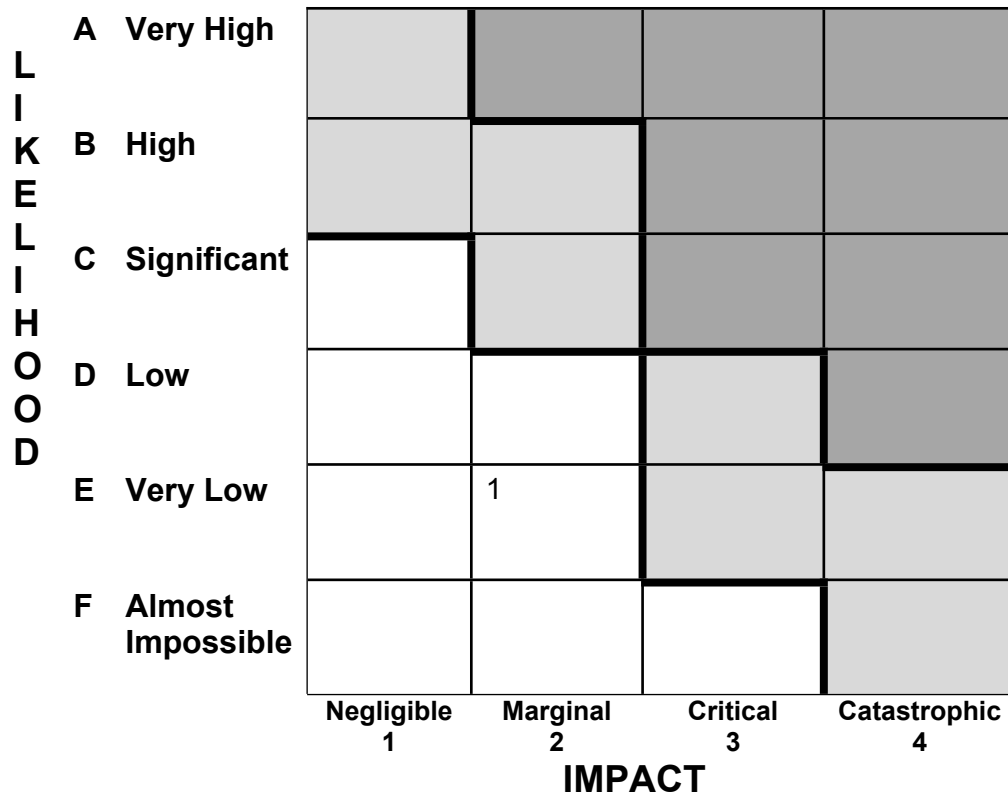
8.0 EQUALITIES

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is to be drafted.

9.0 RISKS

- 9.1 The risk is very low and is mainly attributable to the health and well-being of those attending meetings in having the opportunity for subsistence before the meeting. Those coming straight from work and other commitments are most at risk.

9.2



Risk No	Risk Description
1	Impact on health and well-being due to no opportunity to eat before meetings

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change implications.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 There has been consultation with Unison as the proposal affects the well-being of staff.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 No wards are affected by this report.

Contact Officer: Angela Roberts/Sarah Evans
 Date: August 2017
 Appendices : Appendix A – Subsistence Arrangements report to Governance Committee on 6 June 2017
 Appendix B – Current Subsistence Arrangements – Leicestershire authorities
 Appendix C – Members views on subsistence arrangements

Background Papers:
 Reference : X : Committees\Governance\2017 18\190917\Subsistence Arrangements