

Subsistence Arrangements : Members' Views

No	Question	Responses
1.	When a buffet was provided previously, it gave Members and Officers the opportunity to meet informally before a meeting, is this more important to you than having food available?	<p><u>Councillor 1</u> I am always pleased to meet up with officers informally, although mostly I am rushing in from work or other meetings. I personally think that the officers may feel that they have more important things to do than chatting before meetings. I think this may set a precedent to have to, rather than want to. Unless the officers have put forward this may actually save them time in the day from answering lots of individuals, I don't feel it should be imposed.</p> <p><u>Councillor 2</u> It was very convenient to be able to talk to officers informally before the mtg over a cup of tea & a sandwich</p> <p><u>Councillor 3</u> I do not think that it is an either / or one thing leads to another.</p> <p><u>Councillor 4</u> Meeting informally before a meeting is useful. However due to the timing of the meetings often participants do not have time to eat beforehand and arrive just in time for the meeting. Some meetings are very long and working members do not get a chance to have food until after 9.00pm.</p> <p><u>Councillor 5</u> Sometimes I am attending meetings straight from work, without going home, so I am often hungry. I'm not keen to eat biscuits but something more healthy would be appropriate. I suggest a self-serve sandwich machine/freezer. With healthy snacks, like nuts/oat flapjacks/yoghurt/fruit pots. I would ensure that I had sufficient funds for this.</p>
2.	Do you think it would be helpful to have a specific timeslot for Members and Senior Officers to meet informally to share the latest Council news/social media	<p><u>Councillor 1</u> I don't see it as a necessary thing to set up time slots. This could then turn into another meeting to attend which could then become a burden. Happy to participate if officers feel this would benefit them however.</p> <p><u>Councillor 2</u> Yes</p>

	<p>topics, run through new ideas and discuss concerns?</p>	<p><u>Councillor 3</u> It is difficult to find a time and date to suit all. Half an hour before a meeting gives a chance for relevant members to meet relevant officers on an informal basis.</p> <p><u>Councillor 4</u> Yes, it's important for good relationships</p> <p><u>Councillor 5</u> There could be a regular time-slot each week when it would be possible to come along (to have coffee) and chat about issues, so that accessibility is an option.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>If you agree with (2), can you describe how you see this working?</p>	<p><u>Councillor 1</u> N/A</p> <p><u>Councillor 2</u> Pre mtg brief or as 1</p> <p><u>Councillor 3</u> I think that this is a different issue. We have the away day in January and I think that it would be useful to have another day like that, say in September.</p> <p><u>Councillor 4</u> Every 2-3 months perhaps to openly discuss concerns. Often when matters are discussed by a group in a 'brain storming session' problems are averted saving officers and members time which results in reducing costs.. It would be a step towards being proactive rather than reactive.</p> <p><u>Councillor 5</u> Nice coffee and chat, possibly informal setting such as around the kitchen area re the staff sitting area.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>What benefits would meeting up in this way bring to your Councillor role?</p>	<p><u>Councillor 1</u> N/A</p> <p><u>Councillor 2</u></p>

		<p>To give/get a better understanding on the subject of your particular interest</p> <p><u>Councillor 3</u> It breaks down barriers and allows informal discussion on issues that may be a concern to either Councillors or Officers but is not worth a formal meeting.</p> <p><u>Councillor 4</u> Keeping in touch with Senior Officers to ensure good relationships and assisting /monitoring progress on various issues and projects</p> <p><u>Councillor 5</u> To gain insight, ideas and information about a whole variety of issues, to help me do my job more effectively as a Councillor.</p>
5.	Do you need sandwiches to make the above work for you?	<p><u>Councillor 1</u> Not really</p> <p><u>Councillor 2</u> No - but when mtgs conflict with meal times would suggest sandwiches are made available.</p> <p><u>Councillor 3</u> Food is a good catalyst to get people together.</p> <p><u>Councillor 4</u> Depending on the timings of meetings.</p> <p><u>Councillor 5</u> A self-serve sandwich machine would be a great alternative to sandwiches although the latter are always appreciated!</p>
6.	Some Councils have a self-serve machine for a selection of hot drinks, would this be of interest to you?	<p><u>Councillor 1</u> Self service food and drinks machines would be something that would benefit me. I sometimes miss meals due to work and other commitments. An online pre payment card would be useful as I rarely carry cash either.</p>

		<p><u>Councillor 2</u> No - a buffet table is far more convenient plus a better quality/selection of food.</p> <p><u>Councillor 3</u> Certainly worth a try</p> <p><u>Councillor 4</u> Not really, they could incur leasing costs unless it is used by all staff to ensure sandwiches are frequently replenished and remain very fresh. There could be a lot of waste and someone has to pay for that.</p> <p><u>Councillor 5</u> There seems to be one or two places to make yourself a cup of tea and coffee, although a self-serve for this would always go down well. There could be hot chocolate and latte/cappuchino. If there was a freezer machine for self-serve sandwiches, you could include fruit juices and milk shakes (cooled) as well as natural spring water/carbonated - again, more healthy.</p>
7.	Any other comments	<p><u>Councillor 1</u> A provided buffet is always a nice to have but I am not sure I agree with the cost of this for all meetings, unless the meeting is long, late or particularly arduous.</p> <p><u>Councillor 2</u> -</p> <p><u>Councillor 3</u> Only 49% of officers feel valued by Councillors (Staff Survey). I feel that this is because now we do not communicate informally and know each others concerns. Officers are only involved when there is an issue by members. Given the high turnover of Officers it might be useful to have some sort of meeting between "the whole team".</p> <p><u>Councillor 4</u> Tea, coffee and biscuits should continue to be provided before all meetings and a small selection of sandwiches before Full Council meetings would be a welcome addition. Also ensure a small selection of sandwiches is provided after site visits if it is a long morning without the need for a reminder!</p> <p><u>Councillor 5</u> The self serve options would be more cost effective as well as meet a real need for something more</p>

substantial. Self service would also be a continuous option throughout the day and we wouldn't have to wait for sandwiches to become available.

Councillor 6

I am not in favour of reintroducing members' sandwiches etc. I think there are sufficient opportunities for informal and political interaction and discussion.

Councillor 7

My personal view is that some form of refreshments should be provided by the Council. I often leave home to attend back to back meetings. For a 4.p.m. meeting I have to leave home by 3.20.p.m. and if this is followed by a 6.p.m. or 6.30.p.m. meeting I am lucky to be home by 9.p.m. When I was first elected we socialised with Officers and staff before meetings over a tea/coffee and a sandwich. I never leave home now without a banana in the car to eat prior to driving home. As for the idea of having a cabinet with out of date sandwiches to purchase fills me with horror.

Rural Members can be away from home attending Meetings for 5 / 6 hours on a regular basis. Officers often think they are doing us a good turn arranging back to back meetings to save us unnecessary journeys but without some form of subsistence they become endurance tests. Some form of subsistence must be re-introduced. There are many ways the cost of light refreshments could be covered without putting the budget in the red.