

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 16 JANUARY 2006

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

8(A) REVIEW OF CATERING ARRANGEMENTS

RECOMMENDATION – that proposals to implement some of the recent recommendations by Directors' Board in relation to catering arrangements be put on hold for a minimum of six months.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 29 November 2005, Directors' Board considered a report by the Director of Policy and Performance on the current catering arrangements and proposals for changes following consultation with staff. (Appendix 'F', pages 106 - 128)
- 1.2 UNISON were provided with a copy of the report the day before the meeting and responded to the recommendations on 28 November, highlighting a number of concerns. (Appendix 'G', pages 129 - 131)
- 1.3 Directors' Board received the feedback but decided nonetheless to go ahead with all of the proposals, which were communicated to staff by email on 1 December. The text of the email is copied below:

Dear Colleagues

Many thanks to everyone who took part in the recent consultation on catering arrangements.

One hundred and forty colleagues took part in the consultation, with more than half of responses coming from Bishop's Stortford.

Directors' Board had previously agreed that the review needed to be based on two principles: equality of service and efficiency.

The exercise has shown us that we currently have widely varying levels of service across the sites, and different levels of satisfaction. Just 10% of colleagues who returned the survey based at Wallfields expressed satisfaction, whereas a much higher proportion of staff in Stortford are satisfied.

Taking on board all the issues from the review, including staff feedback, Directors Board agreed to the following developments on Tuesday of this week:

- a. A free supply of fresh Fairtrade ingredients and milk from local suppliers will be provided to all sites.
- b. Termination of the Trolley Service provided at Bishop's Stortford from April 2006
- c. Continuation of the drinks vending machine at Bishop's Stortford until December 2006, but without subsidy from the council.
- d. Removal of the Kenco vending machine and the five table top coffee filter machines from Wallfields and installation of boilers.
- e. Installation of a snacks vending machine at Bishop's Stortford, including provision of healthy options.
- f. Consultation with Buntingford staff on whether or not they would like snacks vending machine to be provided.
- g. Organisation of a single on line booking procedure to order/arrange everything for meetings.

Taking forward these proposals will take some time to organise and will be jointly managed by colleagues in Resources and Organisational Development under the project management of Simon Hawkins. The process will need to clarify accountabilities and necessary risk assessments.

Whilst some colleagues may feel that they are experiencing a reduction in service through the review, overall the exercise will provide an enhanced and fairer service to the majority of staff.

Directors Board

- 1.4 UNISON considered the impact of some of the proposed changes on staff, in particular those of withdrawing the trolley service and vending machine at Bishop's Stortford and the fresh coffee making facilities at Wallfields and concluded that not only were there unacceptable health and safety risks but also that the timing was particularly bad, given the period of instability currently being experienced by staff at all levels, the low morale and the loss of confidence in East Herts as an employer.
- 1.5 On 12 December UNISON wrote to Phillip Thomas expressing these concerns and requesting at least a delay in implementation of some of the proposals. (Appendix 'H', pages 132 - 133)
- 1.5 On 21 December Phillip Thomas replied by saying that having considered the request he felt that the decision to go ahead with implementation must stand.

2.0 Report

2.1 UNISON wishes now to discuss more fully the issues raised and make a case for delaying implementation until at least:

- A) the proposed project team has had time to consider the implications of the changes on staff,
- B) until health and safety risk assessments have been undertaken and
- C) until the working group set up to consider the new Facilities Manager post has decided on the responsibilities of the post.

2.2 It does seem a little strange that the decision to go ahead with the recommendations was made before details of the proposals were discussed or concluded.

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 As outlined in the UNISON response to Directors' Board, the Staff Side welcome some of the proposed changes to the current catering arrangements, in particular the decision to provide fresh tea and coffee making ingredients to staff on all sites and the decision to use Fairtrade products and local milk supplies.

3.2 The request to delay the decision to withdraw the trolley service and the vending machine at Bishop's Stortford and the filter coffee making facilities at Wallfields until at least full implications have been considered and risk assessments been conducted is not an unreasonable one and one which hopefully the Local Joint Panel will regard sympathetically. It is also hoped that by delaying implementation for a minimum of six months, trust and confidence in East Herts will have been restored and staff morale improved.

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Jane Sharp – Staff Side Secretary Ext 2120

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

DIRECTORS' BOARD – 29th NOVEMBER 2005

REPORT BY MARY ORTON DIRECTOR POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

CATERING REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION - that Directors' Board:

- (A) Agree to implement recommendations A1-A5 listed below arising from the Catering Review
- (B) Responsibility be given to the Director of Organisational Development to implement these recommendations

- A1) Provide fresh tea and coffee making ingredients to staff at Bishop's Stortford, Wallfields and Buntingford, using Fairtrade products and local milk suppliers. Cease the drinks vending machine provision at Bishop's Stortford, deciding on preferred option for when to terminate the contract as detailed in *figure 1, page 5*. Remove the existing five table top coffee machines and Kenco machine at Wallfields and cease supply of ingredients for these, co-ordinating the timing of this with the installation of boilers, which the Head of Property Services is organising.
- A2) Discontinue the trolley service from 1st April 2006.
- A3) Continue with current arrangements for sandwich and snacks delivery and continue to use Alexandra Catering for all internal catering. The relationship with Alexandra Catering should be formalised (as minuted at 6th September Director's Board), including the provision of standard menus with set prices dependant on the level of catering required.
- A4) Install a snacks vending machine at Bishop's Stortford using the current supplier to Wallfields, also ensuring these contain healthy snacks. Consult staff at Buntingford on whether they want a machine there as well e.g. through TeamBrief.
- A5) Implement a single central on-line booking procedure to order/arrange everything for meetings, timing this with when the Facilities Manager is in post.

Purpose/Summary of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the results of the consultation with staff on current catering arrangements, as requested by 6th September Directors' Board.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

2.1 This review contributes to Corporate Priority seven – improve the health and sustainability of the organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 At the request of Directors' Board a review of Catering arrangements has been undertaken. In June 2005, Directors' Board were presented with the key issues that required consideration in order that preferred options could be further investigated. The Director of Policy and Performance brought back proposals for possible options for future catering provision to September 2005 Directors' Board, as summarised below:

1. *Proposals for the most efficient way to continue free tea/coffee provision at both sites*
 - Council either provides vending machines or fresh ingredients at both sites – both options would offer a saving.
 - Saving could be achieved through removal of trolley service.
2. *Snack vending provision*
 - Current supplier can supply machines to Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford and Wallfields, at zero cost, with a potential income to the Council of £2-6 per week
3. *Seek the position of the Executive Member for Public Engagement on the Council paying for catering at committee meetings:*
 - Executive Member's view was that some form of refreshments was needed, and in favour of the suggestion of a single Service Level Agreement with a single provider for all Council catering.
4. *Cease the booking of served tea/coffee at meetings and produce a protocol for the booking of sandwiches etc for daytime meetings.*
 - A draft protocol for ceasing bookings through Alexandra Catering for tea, coffee and sandwiches for meetings was brought in hard copy to the meeting. The recommendation being that:
 - a) No tea/coffee to be booked for meetings unless in exceptional circumstances which is agreed by the Head of Service e.g. a big event / workshop.
 - b) Sandwiches are booked only if coded to divisional budgets.
5. *Identify if the Council could obtain income through taking advantage of sales opportunities to staff, e.g. currently external providers supply sandwiches, snacks etc.*

Possible Option: Have a service level agreement with a single supplier to provide (at both sites):

- Member refreshments (approximately 80 meeting per year)
- Refreshments for any staff meeting/events e.g. away days etc (staff to only use this supplier and to be invoiced to divisional budgets)
- As part of SLA be sole supplier of sandwiches and snacks to staff, and profit share with the Council on this.

Indicative quotes were presented from Upper Crust, Scarboroughs and Alexandra Catering.

6: Clarify the current rules/policy for claiming subsistence.

Current guidance on the East Herts Intranet explains that subsistence 'will be payable to officers who are prevented by their official duties from taking a meal at their home or establishment where they normally take their meals, and they incur additional expenditure.'

The report recommended that Directors' Board:

- (a) Choose which tea/coffee option to pursue
- (c) Decide whether or not to introduce snacks machines in Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford Service Centre including an upgrade to the Wallfields machine
- (c) Discuss desired approach to be taken on catering for meetings
- (d) Request Human Resources update the policy on claiming subsistence

Following discussion on the issues above, it was also recommended that Directors' Board also gave consideration to:

- (e) Methods of consultation with staff on possible options
- (f) Once preferred options decided, wider consultation to inform the staff body

3.2 In response to these options and recommendations, as detailed in the minutes, Directors' Board recommended that:

- Provision of ingredients for tea/coffee should be consistent across all council sites
- Consultation with staff and Unison should be carried out on the options detailed in the report, including the provision of vending machines and facilities for daytime meetings.
- In respect of Members' refreshments, the Board agreed that relationships with existing suppliers needed to be formalised better with sample menus provided.

3.3 This report presents the consultation findings and implications of the options. In summary the following areas are referenced as follows:

- Key issues requiring decisions on **pages 5-9**
- Key consultation feedback on **pages 10-11**
- Full consultation findings **Appendix 1, pages 13-21**
- Bishop's Stortford Catering Assistant's duties, **Appendix 2, page 22**
- Environmental Support Officer submission on the benefits of using environmentally friendly products, **Appendix 3, page 23**

4.0 Report

Brief Summary of Methodology

4.1 A staff survey was designed in conjunction with the Director of Organisational Development, and put on the staff intranet and in October's edition of Team Update. The survey was designed to find out from staff:

- i) Whether they prefer fresh tea and coffee making ingredients or vending machines
- ii) Their views on current provision of tea and coffee
- iii) If they would like a snacks vending machines at Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford

4.2 In total 140 staff replied, 51 from Wallfields, 86 from Bishop's Stortford, 1 from Buntingford and two with no location stated. The full results of the survey are detailed in Appendix 1, pages 13-19.

4.3 On 26th October 2005, members of the Performance Team facilitated a focus group with a cross-section of staff involved in the process of ordering refreshments for meetings, with the outcome being a recommended model for an improved process, as detailed in Appendix 1, pages 19-21.

4.4 The key issues from the consultation exercise and the decisions that Directors' Board need to make on the future catering provision are detailed on pages 5-9.

4.5 Key issues for decision by Director's Board

Issue 1: The preferred method of provision of tea, coffee, milk and sugar - do the majority of staff prefer to have instant ingredients or vending machines?

Staff Response: The clear majority of staff favour instant ingredients over vending machines.

Decision 1: Directors' Board are required to choose one option from a-c below and confirm their decision on option d.
Recommendation: that Directors' Board supply fresh Fairtrade ingredients with fresh milk from local milk suppliers, and keep the Bishop's Stortford vending machine until the contract expires in December 2006 but stop the current subsidy. Additionally remove the existing five table top coffee machines and Kenco machine at Wallfields and cease supply of ingredients co-ordinating the timing of this with the installation of boilers (which Property are organising). Also terminate the Trolley Service provided by the Catering Assistant at Bishop's Stortford, from April 2006.

The cost implication: Note: the figures below were calculated based on assumptions of estimated usage as detailed in Appendix 1, page 15. Table 1 page 7 sets out more detail on the figures below.

Figure 1: 2006 / 07 Options

ai)	Supply fresh Fairtrade ingredients with <u>fresh milk</u> from local milk suppliers, and terminate Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract. Saving = £8,360
aii)	Supply fresh Fairtrade ingredients with <u>sachet milk</u> from local suppliers and terminate Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract . Saving = £11,773
bi)	Supply fresh Fairtrade ingredients with <u>fresh milk</u> from local milk suppliers and continue Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract until Dec 06. Saving = £8,067
bii)	Supply fresh Fairtrade ingredients with sachet milk from local suppliers and continue Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract until Dec 06. Saving = £11,480
ci)	Supply fresh Fairtrade ingredients with <u>fresh milk</u> from local milk suppliers, keeping the Bishop's Stortford vending machine until Dec 2006, but cutting the subsidy. Saving = £9,374
cii)	Supply fresh Fairtrade ingredients with sachet milk from local suppliers keep vending machine until Dec 2006 cutting the subsidy. Saving = £12,787
d)	Recommend that Directors' Board terminate the Trolley Service provided by the Catering Assistant at Bishop's Stortford, from April 2006, Saving £8,091 (included in savings options above)

In 2006/07 savings will be less due to the cost of the Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract, with overall savings ranging between £8,360 and £12,787 depending on the preferred option (from a-c above). In 2007/08, with the vending machine contract having been concluded, there would be a saving of £2,282.

- 4.6 In conjunction with the preferred option above it is recommended that notice is given in December 2005 to terminate the Wallfields Kenco machine contract (as although the contract ceases on 1st December 2005, 3 months notice is still required), whilst ensuring the boilers are installed by February 2006. The cost of the machine for one more quarter, up until February 2006, is **£698**, and this had been included in the savings options on the previous page, and Table 1 overleaf.
- 4.7 Effective procurement of the ingredients is key in ensuring a saving particularly in regard to the milk as highlighted by the costs above. Purchasing fresh milk from a local dairy (as is the current practice at Bishop's Stortford) although costing more than sachet milk would meet the Council's ethos of where appropriate using local suppliers and thus supporting the local economy.
- 4.8 In regard to options a-c, Directors should be aware of staff feedback regarding the use of environmentally products (page 9) and in Appendix 3, page 21, is a submission from the East Herts Environmental Support Officer.
- 4.9 In terms of option d), consultation findings highlighted some potential issues in regard to the Bishop's Stortford Catering Assistant that Directors' Board should be aware of when making their decision as summarised on page 10, figure 2.

Table 1: Savings options on supply of hot drinks to staff

Table A: Overview of savings for 2006/07	Cost	Total Saving on current costs
Current annual cost of supplying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tea/coffee/milk/sugar ingredients and vending machine to Bishop's Stortford • table top machines and supplies at Wallfields • trolley service at Bishop's Stortford 	£22,381	
Proposed annual cost through supplying fresh ingredients, including fresh milk to Wallfields, Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford, and removing trolley service	£11,334	£11,047
Cost if supply sachet milk instead of fresh milk	£7,921	£14,460

Table B: Costs to Council	2006/07 Cost
Terminating Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract in December 2005 (expires December 2006, so arrears for 12 months would be due of:)	£1,989
Continue with the Bishop's Stortford vending machine until the contract expires in December 2006 (subsidy costs council 4.5p per cup)	£2,282
Keep Bishop's Stortford vending machine until December 2006, but stop subsidising it (note: volumes may decrease so would need to check contract to ensure no minimum monthly charge)	£975
Terminating Wallfields Kenco machine requires 3 months notice. Cost of keeping machine for one more quarter, until February 2006	£698

Taking into account the costs to the Council in Table B above, the options for savings are:

Table C: Options For Savings	2006/07 (with removal of trolley service, & keeping Kenco machine until Feb 06)
ai) Supply fresh ingredients including fresh milk, terminate Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract in December 2005	£8,360
a ii) Supply fresh ingredients but with sachet milk and terminate Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract in December 2005	£11,773
bi) Supply fresh ingredients including fresh milk and continue Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract until December 2006	£8,067
b ii) Supply fresh ingredients but with sachet milk and continue Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract until December 2006	£11,480
ci) Supply fresh ingredients including fresh milk, keep Bishop's Stortford vending machine contract until December 2006, but stop subsidising it	£9,374
ci i) Supply fresh ingredients but with sachet milk keep Bishop's Stortford vending machine until December 2006, but stop subsidising it	£12,787

4.10 **Issue 2:** In regard to whether the Council could obtain income through taking advantage of sales opportunities to staff e.g. currently external providers supply sandwiches, snacks etc – how satisfied are staff with current sandwich delivery arrangements?

4.11 **Staff Response:** The majority of people at both sites are satisfied with the current sandwich delivery service.

Decision 2: Director's Board to choose from either option (a) or (b) below:

Recommendation: *That Directors' Board make the decision to continue with current arrangements for sandwich and snacks delivery and continue to use Alexandra Catering for all internal catering. The relationship with Alexandra Catering should be formalised (as minuted at 6th September Director's Board), including the provision of standard menus with set prices dependant on the level of catering required.*

- a) continue with the current arrangements, using external companies for sandwich delivery and continue to use Alexandra Catering for internal meetings/events.
- b) in line with best procurement practice, undertake a formal tendering process with the outcome of a service level agreement with a single supplier to provide (at both sites): Member and staff refreshments for meetings, catering at Castle Hall and sandwiches / snacks - replacing sandwich delivery service.

4.12 **No cost implications:** to option (a) – expenditure would remain at £4,451.67 per annum, however option (b) could result in efficiency savings including additional income should the Council decide to obtain an income from the sale of sandwiches/snacks to staff.

4.13 In regard to Directors' consideration of option b, it is recommended they note staff feedback in regard to dissatisfaction with level of service from the current caterer, **see page 20, figure 12.**

4.14 **Issue 3:** Whether staff want more snack vending machines like the one at Wallfields.

4.15 **Staff Response:** Staff would like to see more snack vending machines.

Decision / Recommendation 3: Directors' Board agree to install a snack vending machine at Bishop's Stortford using the current supplier to Wallfields, also ensuring these contain healthy snacks. Consult staff at Buntingford on whether they want a machine there as well e.g. through TeamBrief.

4.16 **The cost implication:** There is no cost implication to the Council. The current supplier to Wallfields is prepared to install a 32 selection refrigerated Snack Vendor plus a 7 selection Pepsi/Tango Canned Drinks Vendor at no cost to the Council, at Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Buntingford Service Centre. All filling, cleaning and maintenance of the machines would be undertaken by DK as often as is necessary at no cost to the Council and they would be prepared pay the Council a 'royalty' of 10% on all sales over £90 (excluding VAT) per week. There are no long term rental contracts just the requirement of six months' notice by either side to terminate the agreement after the first year if either party wishes to remove the machines. The potential income for the Council is approximately £104 to £312 per annum.

4.17 **Issue 4:** Consult staff involved in regularly ordering tea and coffee for meetings to ascertain how the process could best work.

4.18 **Staff Response:** Have a single central on-line booking procedure to order/arrange everything for meetings (as detailed on page 21, figure 13).

Decision / Recommendation 4: That Directors' Board agree to the Implementation of a single central on-line booking procedure to order/arrange everything for meetings, timing this with when the Facilities Manager is in post.

4.19 **The cost implications:** Feedback from IT/Customer Services is that the only costs to implementing this system would be officer time as the Council already has the necessary software.

4.20 In regard to this option Directors' Board should also note the duties of the Bishop's Stortford Catering Assistant, as detailed in Appendix 2, page 22. The cost of the Catering Assistant is £8,091, as also referred to in issue 1, on page 4 above.

KEY SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION FINDINGS

4.21 Below is a summary of all the key consultation feedback that Directors' Board should be aware of in relation to their decisions on future provision (Issue 1, page 5).

Figure 2: BRIEF SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM STAFF SURVEY

Concern over removal of trolley service

39 respondents (based at Bishop's Stortford) expressed concern at the removal of the trolley service with 2 respondents commenting that they felt the service was not needed.

The main concerns were:

- ceasing this service would cause health and safety hazards - through spillages, more people using only one kitchen and the kitchen not being cleaned regularly.
- front line staff were concerned that they relied upon the trolley service as they could not leave their desk to make a drink/take breaks.

Bishop's Stortford Catering Assistant's Duties

The Catering Assistant has supplied a list of all the tasks she currently undertakes (see Appendix 2, page 22). Director's Board may wish to consider whether any of these duties e.g. clearing away after meetings, cleaning the kitchen etc will need to be included in the job description of another post.

Environmentally friendly products:

Respondents from both sites suggested that the Council use environmentally friendly products e.g. Fairtrade tea and coffee, mugs instead of plastic cups etc. The East Herts Environmental Support Officer has supplied more detailed information on becoming a Fair Trade organisation – see Appendix 3, page 23.

4.22 The clear majority of staff favour instant ingredients over vending machines. A quarter of those favouring instant ingredients prefer filter to instant coffee. The majority of staff at Bishop's Stortford are satisfied with current arrangements whereas most staff at Wallfields are dissatisfied.

4.23 It should be noted that some staff, predominantly at Wallfields, are members of tea clubs (Figure 7, page 16) and that access to drink making facilities varies at Wallfields. Many staff at Bishop's Stortford are concerned that there is only one kitchen in the building, which would be insufficient should the trolley service be removed, and removal of this service would also have health and safety implications as detailed on page 14, figure 6

- 4.24 The majority of people at both sites are satisfied with the current sandwich delivery service, although approximately a third of all respondents gave no answer which may indicate they do not use the service.
- 4.25 Staff would like to see more snack vending machines, however only a slight majority of people are in favour at Bishop's Stortford compared to a larger majority at Wallfields. Several staff from both sites commented that these should contain healthy snacks. Only one questionnaire was received from Buntingford so this may not be reflective of all the staff based there.

Views of staff involved in regularly ordering tea and coffee for meetings on how the process could best work.

- 4.26 It was put forward by the focus group that having a single central on-line booking procedure to order/arrange everything for meetings in one go would be beneficial, this would include:
- room booking, numbers attending, room layout, who will clear the room
 - IT required
 - tea, coffee, food provision (enter purchase order/expenditure code)
 - linkages on system e.g. so can cancel a room and it appears on Outlook and also the refreshments are automatically cancelled e.g. email sent to caterer, caretakers etc
 - calendar of external caterer's availability on intranet – stating if external caterer cannot do a particular date so staff know they will need to use a back up caterer
 - external caterer to provide on-line menus including vegetarian with costs and availability.
 - **overseeing this process to ensure it runs efficiently would be the Facilities Manager. Clearing the rooms etc needs to be in someone's job description**

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 None at this stage.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 Based on approximate calculations potential savings for 2006/07 of between £8,360 and £12,787 (depending on the decisions of Directors' Board on options a-c page 5), and savings for 2007/08 of £2,282

The 2006/07 saving above includes £8,091 from the termination of the trolley service, which this report is recommending Directors' Board agree to.

7.0 Human Resource Implications

7.1 If Directors' Board decide to terminate the trolley service this would have Human Resource Implications.

8.0 Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 If the issues set out for discussion in this report are not discussed and preferred options not identified, there is a risk that the Council will not obtain best value from current catering provision. This could result in the Council missing an opportunity to help achieve efficiency savings in line with the Government's efficiency agenda, and also the risk of not meeting the Council's Priority of improving the health and sustainability of the organisation.

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: Simon Hawkins (Performance Officer ext:2244)

APPENDIX 1: STAFF CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Issue 1a: Staff feedback on preferred method of provision of tea, coffee, milk and sugar to staff.

Q1: Satisfaction with current arrangements for tea and coffee

As detailed in figure 3 below the majority of staff are satisfied with current arrangements.

Figure 3. Satisfaction with current provision. Respondents from all sites					
Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	No answer/null
42%	18%	14%	16%	7%	3%

Breakdown by site

In terms of comparison between the Council sites, detailed in Figure 4 below, the majority of staff at Bishop's Stortford are satisfied with current arrangements in contrast to Wallfields where the majority of staff are dissatisfied. As originally no responses were received from Buntingford efforts were made to obtain their feedback, however only one questionnaire has been received – therefore it should be noted that the feedback is not reflective of all the staff based there.

Figure 4. Satisfaction – breakdown by site					
Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	No answer/null
Bishop's Stortford, in total 86 questionnaires					
60%	14%	14%	7%	2%	2%
Wallfields, in total 51 questionnaires					
10%	25%	16%	32%	14%	4%
Note: 2 questionnaires did not state which location					

Q2. Do you believe the Council should provide free access to tea and coffee?

The overwhelming majority of staff, 89% do believe the Council should provide free access to tea and coffee.

Q3. Service preference

The majority of people favour instant ingredients over vending machines. Out of those favouring instant ingredients, a quarter expressed a preference for filter over instant coffee, as highlighted in figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Service Preference	
Instant Ingredients Instant coffee, tea, sugar & milk / Filter coffee, tea, sugar & milk	61%
Vending machine	8%
No answer / null (Note: where respondents ticked the box for instant and vending machines this was taken as being a null answer as the question specified to tick one box)	31%

Q3a. Please note down any other comment or request you have for drinks services to staff

A copy of all the feedback is available upon request, below is a summary of the most frequent comments grouped under generic themes.

The Catering Assistant has supplied a list of all the tasks she undertakes (see Appendix 2, page 22).

Figure 6: Trolley Service

- 39 respondents (based at Bishop's Stortford) expressed concern at the removal of the trolley service for the following reasons. Only 2 respondents felt the service was not needed.
- Service is excellent standard and cost effective as otherwise staff have to leave their desk to make a drink.
- A few people said that they relied on the service for a hot drink as they were unable to leave their desk/or did not get a break and similarly front line/reception staff valued the service as otherwise they would not get a hot drink.
- Ceasing this service would result in the kitchen becoming unclean and a health hazard as the tea lady keeps it clean, particularly as Bishop's Stortford has only one kitchen compared to several available at Wallfields.
- Also there would be more spillages occurring on the stairwell – another health and safety hazard. Therefore if Trolley Service goes would need access to tea/coffee making facilities on each floor

Views of Catering Assistant at Bishop's Stortford

- Who will perform the duties (detailed in Appendix 2, page 22) if my post is made redundant. This is done during 20 hours per week at a cost of £8,000 per year.
- I am unable to contact contractors direct to ensure maintenance to equipment, have to go through Property Section
- Do not believe there is a financial breakdown of stocks for staff, meetings,

training and members – can I help in this respect

- Why is milk delivered when it could be collected more cheaply from the supermarket next door
- Could or should food be prepared on the premises? (I am a caterer, have certificates for health and hygiene and have been head of a school kitchen)
- Why isn't my post responsible for arranging and ordering food and refreshments for meetings.

General

- 8 respondents **suggested more healthy tea and coffee making ingredients such as fresh milk and de-caffeinated coffee**
- 8 respondents commented they were unaware that tea, milk and sugar was available to staff at Wallfields

Environmentally friendly products (refer to Appendix 3, page 23)

7 respondents asked for the Council to use more environmentally friendly products. Comments included:

- Can the Council become a Fairtrade organisation by buying Fair Trade tea, coffee etc, and use local milkman to reduce plastic waste.
- Encourage all staff to make drinks using mugs to reduce plastic waste – ban plastic cups.

Several respondents indicated that they were members of tea clubs, and an email request was sent out to ask for some more information e.g. where these are located, how much staff contribute etc, as detailed in figure 7 overleaf.

Figure 7		
Section	No. of people	Details
Economic Development	4	Each buy a box of tea bags in turn but use the milk and other facilities in the kitchen on the first floor at Wallfields.
Direct Services	5	Pay around £5.00 monthly to buy tea and coffee, with contributions from others who drink the tea and coffee occasionally. Take it in turns to buy the milk, sugar, squashes and biscuits. Use own spoons and cups. Use the facilities in the small kitchen on the 2 nd floor and the fridge. The coffee machine is still used by some of the officers and when they have visitors.
HR	4	£8 per month and use the facilities opposite rooms 27/28.
Environmental Health	20	Pay £1 per month towards milk. Teabags are the responsibility of the tea drinker but some do club together for teabags and sugar. Use the tiny (approx 1.5 x2.0 m) "tea room" on the top floor of Wallfields together with all other staff on that floor :- Environmental Health, Licensing, Housing Options, Leisure and Engineers. (approx 70 persons)
Development Plans	About 7	£1.50 a month. This covers tea bags and milk – filter coffee is already available for free. Do not have any tea making facilities – use the mini kitchen on the ground floor at Wallfields (the one near the staff entrance).
Development Control Planning Enforcement Team	3	Tea fund, paying £1 per week. Supply own coffee, tea, milk and mugs. Use the kettle in the kitchen cupboard on the ground floor of Wallfields. Take own mugs home now and again to put them in a dishwasher to remove any coffee or tea stains.
2 staff in Democratic Services	4	"informal" tea club - someone buys the tea bags one month then we sort out between us who buys the next lot. Do not have own kettle but just use own tea bags as preferable to ones supplied by the Council
Contract Services		Supply my own coffee, sugar and creamer, but there is a milk club in this section (to which I do not belong, as I prefer creamer). Some people in Grounds Maintenance drink the perked coffee supplied by the Council, but all bring their own tea bags.

Cost Implication should decision be made to supply fresh ingredients to all sites.

The approximate cost of fresh ingredients to both sites would be £11,334 per annum, calculation detailed below.

There are approximately 360 people based at the Council offices, 150 at Bishop's Stortford, 200 at Wallfields and about 10 at Buntingford (based on the current Establishment List). To estimate what would be required before getting a quote from 3663 (current supplier to Bishop's Stortford), the following calculations were made:

- 175 people drinking tea and 175 people drinking coffee.
- Assumption made that on average people drink 3 cups of tea /coffee per day.

Figure 8: TEA AND COFFEE INGREDIENTS AT BOTH SITES - QUOTE FROM 3663 - Base on the above a quote from 3663 was obtained for the following (excluding V.A.T):

Tea: £25.70 per box of 2200 tea bags (currently paying £28.73)
10,800 tea bags per month = **£1,542 per annum**

Ordinary instant coffee: £126.58 per box of 6 large tubs (currently paying £134.82). 20 large tubs per month = **£5,076 per annum**

Sugar: £15.54 for box of approximately 20 bags (currently pay £19.83 per box) 42 bags per month = **£396 per annum**

Fresh Milk: Currently £1,800 for 150 people at Bishop's Stortford so estimate for 360 people approx **£4,320 per annum** (Using sachets would only cost £907 per annum.)

Total Cost of Ingredients = £11, 334 per annum.

Issue 2: In regard to whether the Council could obtain income through taking advantage of sales opportunities to staff e.g. currently external providers supply sandwiches, snacks etc – how satisfied are staff with current sandwich delivery arrangements.

Q4. Please indicate how satisfied you are with current arrangements for sandwich delivery.

The majority of people at both sites are satisfied with sandwich delivery although approximately a third all respondents gave no answer which may indicate they do not use the service.

Figure 9. Satisfaction – with Sandwich Delivery					
Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	No answer/null/Don't use it
Bishop's Stortford (in total 86 questionnaires)					
17%	20%	35%	5%	0%	23%
Wallfields (in total 51 questionnaires)					
4%	35%	40%	10%	4%	8%
Note: Buntingford do not get a sandwich delivery					

Also of relevance to this feedback (should the Council decide to market test all Council catering provision), are the findings from the focus group with staff who regularly order refreshments for meetings (page 20, figure 12). In terms of staff satisfaction with the current company, Alexandra Catering who undertake the Council's internal catering the key findings were:

- Lack of customer care from external caterer e.g. taking responsibility for clearing away after meetings – whose responsibility is this? Exactly what service do we pay for? **Caterer should be responsible for all the administration of this service and clearing the rooms – as this takes up officer time.**
- Need menus including vegetarian, cost per head, punctuality.
- Have to give 48 hrs notice for bookings which is too rigid – however external caterer is generally flexible. Other companies e.g. Upper Crust just deliver food, whereas Alexandra's will set everything up.
- **Instructions not always followed e.g. food to go inside/outside the room**

Issue 3: Whether staff want more snack vending machines like the one at Wallfields

Question 5: In some parts of the Council, vending machines are provided offering a range of snacks such as chocolate, cereal bars and crisps. Do you think that more machine of this type should be provided?

Overall, staff would like to see more snack vending machines. There is a slight majority of Bishop's Stortford staff in favour, compared to a significant majority of Wallfields staff. This may be due to the fact that staff at Wallfields have further to travel to the shops. As only one questionnaire was received from Buntingford, a representative view from this site is not available.

Figure 10: Snack Vending Machines			
	Yes	No	No Answer
Bishop's Stortford	50%	44%	6%
Wallfields	47%	33%	20%

Question 6: Please note down other suggestions you have for food services to staff.

Figure 11

Sandwiches for Meetings

- **6 respondents** felt that there is too much waste, including an example of recent meetings of Licensing Sub-Committee which have finished early where 'Members have not even been prepared to wait ten minutes for the arrival of sandwiches (which have appeared promptly at noon) although they have insisted they were ordered and these sandwiches are then circulated through the offices'.
- **3 respondents** commented that the Council Should cut back on Member refreshments, not necessary to supply food for Members' lunchtime meetings
- Other comments were: Why is the catering assistant not included in this consultation? And the Council should use local food where possible

Snack Vending Machines

- **11 respondents** were concerned that the machines contain healthy snacks rather than just junk food

Sandwich Delivery

- **4 respondents** from Bishop's Stortford commented they did not know when the sandwich delivery was there

Issue 5: Consult staff involved in regularly ordering tea and coffee for meetings to ascertain how the process could best work.

On 26th October 2005, members of the Performance Team facilitated a focus group with a cross-section of staff involved in the process of ordering refreshments for meetings, representatives attended from Customer Services, Property, Policy and Performance, the Executive Support Team and Democratic Services. No staff from Buntingford attended, so Director's Board may wish to undertake specific consultation to pick up their views.

Figure 12, overleaf, summarises feedback on what works well and not so well. The key outcome of the discussion was a desired future model as shown in Figure 13, page 21.

Figure 12: How the current system for ordering refreshments for meetings works at both sites & how well this works

Current System

- Phone Bishop's Stortford Catering Assistant / receptionist to book tea and coffee, not able to do this on-line.
- B/S Catering Assistant has a separate diary for tea and coffee bookings 9-3.30pm, Monday-Thursday. For Friday bookings staff provide refreshments themselves.
- B/S Catering Assistant clears the rooms after meetings as does the caretaker.
- Food is ordered from external catering assistant on-line. **If tea/coffee and food required there is two separate procedures.**
- The Executive Support team suggested there are food hygiene issues regarding storage of sandwiches and food for meetings as food is often brought in several hours prior to a meeting and question over external caterers (Alexandra's Catering) qualifications
- **Democratic Services** post a monthly list of meetings requiring catering to the external caterer. Caterer provides invoice for each meeting she caterers for.
- Meetings often do not get cancelled / have to ring Alexandra's directly to cancel / should be able to do this on-line
- Catering Administration undertaken by EHC staff
- Invoices dealt with centrally by Customer Services. Concern that some miscoding on invoices.
- At Wallfields reception staff currently hold a bookings' book for the Caterer where they write in any requests for the Caterer's attention and the Caretakers clear rooms of cups etc. and place them in the dishwasher for the Caterer.

Intranet system not effective

- Only applies to Wallfields
- No confirmation for bookings
- Invoices not on intranet / not clear what budget is being used
- Often duplication in having to ring and email
- External caterer does not have answerphone facility
- Need calendar of all bookings viewable on-line
- Need one electronic system to do everything connected to a meeting booking

Customer Care (re: Alexandra's Catering)

- Lack of customer care from external caterer e.g. taking responsibility for clearing away after meetings – whose responsibility is this? Exactly what service do we pay for? **Caterer should be responsible for all the administration of this service and clearing the rooms – as this takes up officer time.**
- Need menus including vegetarian, cost per head, punctuality.
- Have to give 48 hrs notice for bookings which is too rigid – however external caterer is generally flexible. Other companies e.g. Upper Crust just deliver food, whereas Alexandra's will set everything up.
- Instructions not always followed e.g. food to go inside/outside the room

Protocol

- Need criteria for when food is appropriate

Clearing Away

- Not clear whose responsibility this is. Is it part of Caretaker's Job Description?

General

- One attendee suggested that a large amount of the food for Member's meetings is wasted, however the Executive Support Team feel sandwiches should be provided for Member evening meetings.
- Pilfering of tea/coffee/biscuits/milk at Bishop's Stortford needs addressing
- Cup's should not be locked away in the cupboards
- Concerns from Executive Support Team that they do not have capacity to be 'tea ladies' if the tea/coffee service is cancelled.
- Executive Support Team ask whether there should be a choice of catering provider.
- Executive Support Team suggest that having only one fridge at Bishop's Stortford is insufficient.

Other feedback

Caretaker

Feedback was also obtained via email from one of the Caretakers

- Caretakers (Hertford) are only really involved in occasionally clearing up the cups etc,
- Some meetings are very short and the food and drink supplied seems a waste, instead it would be more cost effective for the Council to supply a tin of biscuits and let those attending make their own drinks. Similarly some meeting have large buffets which is over the top.
- At times meetings are cancelled but the food still arrives which is a complete waste and could be avoided with better communication.
- Better evaluation of why money being spent on catering for some meetings is needed

Figure 13: Ideal model for ordering refreshments for meetings

One central on-line booking procedure to order everything including:

- Room booking
- Numbers attending
- Room layout
- IT required
- Tea, coffee, food provision (enter purchase order/expenditure code)
- Who will clear the room
- Linkages on system e.g. so can cancel a room and it appears on outlook and also the refreshments are automatically cancelled e.g. email sent to caterer, caretakers etc.
- Calendar of external caterers availability on intranet – stating if she cannot do a particular date so staff know they will need to use a back up caterer.
- External caterer to provide on-line menus with costs and availability.

Overseeing this process to ensure it runs efficiently would be the Facilities Manager. Clearing the rooms etc needs to be in someone's job description

Appendix 2: Duties Catering Assistant Performs (submitted by Catering Assistant)

- Deliver tea and coffee to about 120 people twice a day 4 days per week
- Deliver hot water flasks, biscuits, tea, coffee, sugar and milk to meetings and training sessions when required
- Clear away food, crockery and rubbish after meetings
- Keep the kitchen clean and tidy to what I believe is a high standard and one expected by most staff
- Keep cupboards tidy
- Clean fridge and empty out of date food in order to prevent bacteria
- Clean microwave for the same reason
- Ensure coffee machine is filled with cups and working correctly every day, and contact company to send engineer when needed (about once a fortnight)
- Ensure dishwasher is working correctly (during my absence it did not work due to misuse)
- Check that the water machines do not have stagnant water in the drip trays
- Ensure water boilers are working correctly and contact Property Section if they are not working.
- Ensure the air conditioning is working and contact Property Section if it is not working (generally about once a week)
- Ensure that stocks of tea, coffee etc are maintained for all use. Pass lists of suppliers to Purchasing.
- Ensure that there are clean towels for staff to use
- I am asked to pass on messages and collections to staff

This is done during 20 hours per week at a cost of £8,000 per year.

Appendix 3: Submission from Environmental Support Officer

Proposal for Fairtrade tea and coffee

Now is an ideal time to consider providing fair trade tea and coffee at EHC.
Before I explain what Fairtrade is I would like to dispel a few myths before I begin

- Fair trade products are not a 'hippy' alternative to big brands – Nestle' have just launched a NESCAFE Fairtrade product.
- By buying fair trade tea and coffee, the consumer is not supporting a left wing radical organisation intent on destroying the free trade economy – the Tory party serve Fairtrade tea and coffee in its headquarters.
- Fair trade tea and coffee tastes horrible – I have included two tea bags – which one is fair trade? (Also – the tea and coffee all comes from the same plants - the difference is in what we pay the farmer – not the ingredients)
- Buying fair trade products is not good business practice – GSK now ONLY provide fair trade tea to visitors and staff.

What is fair trade?

Fair Trade is an alternative approach to conventional international trade. It is a trading partnership which aims at sustainable development for excluded and disadvantaged producers. It seeks to do this by providing better trading conditions, by awareness raising and by campaigning. The goals of Fair Trade are:

- To improve the livelihoods and well-being of producers by improving market access, strengthening producer organisations, paying a better price and providing continuity in the trading relationship.
- To promote development opportunities for disadvantaged producers, especially women and indigenous people, and to protect children from exploitation in the production process.
- To raise awareness among consumers of the negative effects on producers of international trade so that they exercise their purchasing power positively.
- To set an example of partnership in trade through dialogue, transparency and respect.
- To campaign for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.
- To protect human rights by promoting social justice, sound environmental practices and economic security.

By buying fair trade tea and coffee the council would be recognising that the decisions that are made from the comfort of our lives here in England can have a major impact on the lives of those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

For more information please see
East Herts Council's sustainable procurement policy,
www.fairtrade.org.uk,
www.oxfam.org.uk

Thank you for your time,

Jennifer Greaves

DIRECTORS' BOARD – 29 NOVEMBER 2005

CATERING REVIEW – UNISON POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

UNISON welcomes the report on the Catering Review, which reflects accurately the views of staff following consultation and is a fair and comprehensive assessment of current catering arrangements.

The recommendation to provide fresh tea and coffee making ingredients to staff on all sites is particularly welcome, as is the recommendation to use Fairtrade products and local milk suppliers.

There are however a number of concerns, which UNISON would like to draw to the attention of Directors' Board and which warrant further consideration.

Health and Safety

Page 2 of the report states that the review contributes to the health and sustainability of the organisation. The report also points out on page 10, 4.23 and on page 14, figure 6 that the removal of the trolley service in Bishop's Stortford would have health and safety implications, which do not appear to be addressed anywhere in the report.

UNISON wishes to reiterate that facilities in Bishop's Stortford are not up to the standard of those in Wallfields and may well impose a considerable health and safety hazard. There is only one kitchen on the first floor, which means that if both the trolley service and the vending machine are withdrawn, the kitchen will be in constant use with possible overcrowding and lack of cleanliness, not to mention loss of work time in queuing to use the facilities. Furthermore, the risk of accidents will be greatly increased with staff from the ground and second floors having to carry drinks up and down the stairs several times a day. Finally, front line/reception staff could find themselves going without a hot drink because they are unable to leave their desks. UNISON believes it is essential to address these issues before reaching a decision.

Staff Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction

The results of the staff survey show on page 4, 4.2 that of the 140 replies received, 51 or 26% were from Wallfields and 86 or 57% were from Bishop's

assumption to make that Bishop's Stortford staff feel more strongly about the catering issue than Hertford staff. It is also interesting to note on page 13, figure 4 that the percentage of staff who are very satisfied with current arrangements is 60% in Bishop's Stortford and 10% in Hertford.

Despite the above, the proposals for Bishop's Stortford remove two out of the three existing facilities: the vending machine and the trolley service, leaving just free provision of tea and coffee and the added provision of a snacks vending machine. In light of the survey results this seems a bizarre proposal and could have the effect of swinging the high level of satisfaction to a high level of dissatisfaction. The proposal could also exacerbate the Hertford/Stortford divide, where Bishop's Stortford staff already feel much aggrieved and the poor relation, following the removal of their town centre parking.

Meetings

It is not altogether clear from the report what the proposals for tea making arrangements are for daytime meetings. This needs clarification. There will be many staff who will be concerned that they will be required as a matter of course and on a regular basis to make tea and coffee and clear up after meetings. This could mean, although it should not, that PA's or clerical staff will be expected to undertake this additional duty.

On page 9, recommendation 4, reference is made to a Facilities Manager being in post. Who is the Facilities Manager? Is this a new post or a new title for the caretakers? If a new post, what are the cost implications when one of the main objectives of the exercise is to achieve savings?

Alexandra Catering

Recommendation A3 is to continue to use Alexandra Catering. UNISON wishes to draw Directors' Board attention to page 8, 4.13 and page 20, figure 12, which shows dissatisfaction with the level of service provided by this caterer.

Eye Tests/ Subsistence Claims

It was noted that in the Directors' Board report of 6 September 2005 on page 13 – a snapshot of staff subsistence claims for May 2005, half of the 'subsistence claim' total - £313.50 was for eye tests. What possible connection do eye tests have with subsistence claims?

UNISON Conclusions

As mentioned previously, UNISON welcomes the proposal to provide fresh tea and coffee making ingredients at all sites and to use Fairtrade products.

UNISON believes that Corporate Priority seven – improve the health and sustainability of the organisation is not just about achieving efficiency savings but also about ensuring the health and welfare of the workforce in order to deliver an efficient and effective service.

The proposal, which in our view fails to contribute towards this objective is that of discontinuing the trolley service. A small saving will be achieved without taking this action and UNISON believes there are considerable risks in dispensing with the service, as outlined on page 10, figure 2. The facilities in Bishop's Stortford are simply not adequate to meet the needs of 150 staff making their own tea and coffee and the withdrawal of the trolley service coupled with the withdrawal of the vending machine pose a real health and safety risk to staff.

UNISON urges Directors' Board to reconsider this part of the recommendation and look again at the positive aspects of employing a catering assistant as listed on page 14, figure 6. Deleting this post would save the Council only £8,000 per year and would be a big mistake.

Jane Sharp
UNISON Branch Secretary

28 November 2005

East Hertfordshire Branch

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12 December 2005

Dear Mr Thomas

Catering Review

With reference to the recent recommendations of Directors' Board to implement new catering arrangements on all sites, I wish to formally request on behalf of the UNISON Branch Executive Committee, which met last Wednesday, that the proposals are put on hold for a minimum of six months.

UNISON has already made representations to Directors' Board, highlighting a number of concerns, including:

- health and safety issues,
- inadequate facilities at Bishop's Stortford,
- the disparity of the kitchen provision between Wallfields and Bishop's Stortford,
- lack of arrangements for providing refreshments for meetings,
- the potential increase in work time lost due to congestion in the kitchen at Bishop's Stortford, and
- staff dissatisfaction.

Directors' Board has received this feedback and subsequently made the decision to take these proposals forward.

UNISON would like to ask that Directors' Board reconsider the timing of implementing these proposals. Staff at East Herts are currently experiencing a period of instability, which is affecting staff at all levels and from all sections.

This organisational instability is being compounded by low morale brought on by a number of different issues, and loss of confidence in their employer.

It is unfortunate, but perhaps inevitable, that recent unfavourable press coverage is shaking staff morale still further, depicting the Council as a severely dysfunctional employer and minimising the good work being done by individuals through the weekly public beating that we seem to be getting recently.

Amidst this instability, general unease at "being the last to know" and overall weariness at the pace of change experienced, the last thing staff need now is the withdrawal of amenities, causing them frustration, inconvenience, further decrease in morale and possible health and safety hazards.

UNISON would therefore ask that all proposals for new catering arrangements are put on hold, other than the provision of fresh milk and tea and coffee making ingredients for Wallfields and Buntingford, which I would ask to be introduced with immediate effect, to bring these sites in line with Bishop's Stortford. Staff need a boost to their morale and good-will gestures from management.

I am hoping you will look favourably upon this request but I am quite happy to raise it with Council Members at the next Local Joint Panel in January if you prefer.

Yours sincerely

Jane Sharp
UNISON Branch Secretary

Cc's: Georgina Stanton
Jeff Self