



DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SERVICES MEETING
HELD ON THE 14TH OCTOBER 2021
AT 7.30pm AT THE RUFUS CENTRE

Present:

Cllr I Blazeby (Chairman)
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr K Badham (attended virtually)

Stephanie Stanley – Corporate Services Manager (CSM)
Helen Glover - Senior Finance Officer (SFO)
Lisa Cousins – Administration and Bookings Officer (ABO)
Sarah Burges – Functions & Events Coordinator - attended virtually (FEC)
Tracy Lester - Catering & Facilities Lead - attended virtually (CFL)

Member of the public – 0

1312. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillors Snape and Earles (holiday), and Gleave (work commitments).

No apologies were received for Councillor Williams.

1313. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none.

(b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Councillor Mackey declared an interest under agenda item 12d – Debt Recovery - as he was a Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Ward Member.

1314. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements.

1315. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

1316. INVITED SPEAKER

There was no invited speaker.

1317. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

1318. MINUTES

- a. For Members to receive and adopt the Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 14th September 2021.

The minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 14th September 2021 were adopted.

1319. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Business Services Committee 14th September 2021.

There were no matters arising.

1320. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Kitchen Hire**

Members were asked to note the information circulated regarding the current offering in place for external hirers to use the kitchen facilities for functions.

Members were asked to consider the recommendation to cease this offer and allow functions to use our catering and bar only. Members will need to appreciate that the existing offer will be honoured for customers already booked for future functions.

An extended discussion took place regarding the circulated report. Questions were raised regarding if staff had been asked how they felt about working late or more hours at weekends. The CFL advised she had spoken with staff who were okay with this. Primarily casual staff would be used and the weekend, or the weekend split into 2 shifts. The CFL advised we were currently managing with current staffing levels.

Councillors raised concern regarding the low cost to customers who wanted to hire the kitchen, in relation to the revenue lost from not providing catering or alcohol sales for these bookings. Councillor Mackey thought it was sensible to have the option of allowing external caterers where the food type was something we could not provide, although concerns of hygiene standards were raised. It was agreed that all relevant certificates were always sourced. Councillors requested that the cost of a deep clean was factored into the revised price for kitchen hire. The Chairman asked what the lost value of bookings would be if we ceased allowing external caterers, based on bookings over the last few years. Cllr Badham suggested we have a preferred external caterers list.

It was **resolved** to combine options 2 and 4 presented with amendments. This was to:

- i) Continue hiring the kitchen to external caterers if the cuisine choice for customers was not something that the in-house team could provide. It was agreed to introduce an increased cost for this service based on the cost of carrying out a deep clean after external caterers had used the kitchen. Officers would create a preferred external catering suppliers list.
- ii) Discontinue allowing clients to bring in their own drinks/bar and provide all drinks in-house.
- iii) The in-house Catering Team would provide the food for all private hire events other than for customers whose cuisine the team could not produce. Officers would have the flexibility to look at individual enquiries where a catering van may be more suitable and weigh this up

against other catering that may be provided by the in-house team, i.e. another meal and/or providing the bar.

iv) For Officers to report back to the Committee on the profit made historically for kitchen hire to external caterers and to identify any profit that would be at risk from proceeding with the above changes. This would form a more specific proposal for Councillors to consider at the November meeting. The Committee were content for Officers to begin actioning the above changes from the following day, irrespective of additional detail being required next time.

Action: FEC

1321. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

There were no items for information.

1322. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

1323. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution will be **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

12a Officers Update – for information

It was **resolved** that the cleaning contract be accepted as it has now been revised to the National Living Wage of £9.50 per hour.

12b Financial Reports – for information

12c Occupancy Stats & Forecasts – for information

12d Debt Recovery – for consideration

It was **resolved** to progress with option 2 which was to approve the circulated Credit Control Summary with amendments. Members identified which debts should be written off and which should be pursued further, along with tasking Officers to investigate introducing a late payment charge for debtors and to include existing bills onto future invoices. Debtors would not be permitted to book space at the Rufus Centre until outstanding payments were received and Officers would refer to the Credit Control Summary for this purpose

12e Refurbishment Update – for consideration

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolve** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

Meeting closed: 21:00