

Future of Member Catering Survey Analysis

1. Summary

- All councillors were consulted on the future arrangements for member catering at County Hall, Chichester in light of the closure of the Martlets canteen. 48 out of 69 councillors completed the online survey, a response rate of 70%.
- Responses indicate strong support for making savings from the member catering budget and for any future provision to minimise the impact on climate change and to include health options.
- Overall, there is support for continuing to provide hot drinks (via free-to-use vending machines) and buffet lunches at full Council meetings (via an outside caterer).
- Some members commented that refreshments provide an opportunity for networking and for members to get to know each other, and one suggested that space should be provided for this to happen – even if members are bringing their own food/drinks.
- A number of members commented on the potential increase in costs if members claim for purchasing refreshments as well as on the impact for those members with further to travel, when meetings are held in person.

2. Responses

Responses to the survey are set out below. Responses do not always total 48 as some did not answer all questions.

Questions	Yes	No
1. Do you agree that savings should be sought from the member catering budget (approximately £25,000 per year)?	38	10
2. Do you agree that all catering for member meetings should cease (no hot drinks or food at any meetings and members to make own arrangements)? (see below for responses from those answering 'no' to this question)	14	34
3. If you answered yes to question 2, should members be able to claim their lunch costs as the current Members' Allowance Scheme provides for?	8	18
4. Do you agree that the costs of any future member catering should be deducted from individual member allowances?	13	35
5. Do you agree that any refreshments provided for members in future should be based on healthy options?	35	14
6. Do you agree that any refreshments provided for members in future should aim to minimise the impact on climate change? (e.g. reduced waste/packaging/energy)	44	4

Those answering 'no' to Q2 were asked which of the following options, or combinations of options, they preferred:

Option	Response
Hot drinks from free-to-use vending machines for members only	24
Buffet lunches from an outside caterer for Full Council meetings only	22
Buffet lunches from an outside caterer for all formal member meetings continuing beyond 1.15pm	16
Hot drinks from payment vending machines for anyone at County Hall	13

Option	Response
Refreshments and lunches for those with disabilities or health issues constraining access to outlets	13
Use of kitchens at County Hall to make own hot drinks (but members to provide their own refreshments)	11
Buffet lunches from an outside caterer for all member meetings (formal and informal) continuing beyond 1.15pm	10
Catering from an outside caterer for group meetings	8

3. Other comments/suggestions

A number of members made comments on the future of member catering and some suggested different options, as summarised below. Several commented that drinks should still be provided, to include water, and one commented that any buffet lunches provided should be small and light.

- a) No longer provide food as standard at all meetings:** 13 respondents said that members should no longer be provided with food and should either bring their own or use food outlets in Chichester. Two respondents felt that food should only be provided at full Council or special/specific whole-day meetings.
- b) Networking opportunities:** Four respondents highlighted the benefits of member catering in terms of providing a space and opportunity for councillors to get to know each other and to talk and there was a suggestion that there should be an area provided where members could meet informally.
- c) Keep as is:** Five respondents commented that catering arrangements should continue, particularly for longer meetings, with cost and time implications being given as the reasons for this. Two commented that members claiming expenses for making their own arrangements would cost more than the current provision.
- d) Distance travelled:** Seven respondents made specific comments about the implications of removing catering on those members who have a long distance to travel and that it could disproportionately affect those who lived further away from meetings venues and therefore spent a lot of time at meetings in County Hall.
- e) Financial implications:** Five respondents made reference to the financial implications of the options proposed, with all these commenting that costs could escalate if members claim for refreshments.
- f) Alternative suggestions:** Three different suggestions were proposed:
 - Is there a mobile sandwich company that would be willing to visit County Hall at lunchtime (members could pre-order).
 - The ability to pre-order a lunch from an external caterer for full council or whole day scrutiny sessions which could then be deducted from the allowances of those using it.
 - There could be a tea/coffee float where members pay a monthly fee for the provision of teas, coffees and biscuits/fruit. Only those that have registered and paid for the service would be able to use it.