

**02 November 2020**

**Agenda Item: 5**

## **REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITIES AND PLACE**

### **CATERING & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND NEW OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR COUNTY OFFICE CATERING**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the Catering & Facilities Management group of services response to COVID19 and to seek approval for a revised operational structure for the County Office Catering team.

#### **Information**

2. Catering & Facilities Management (CFM) is a large group of traded services within the Communities and Place Division of the Place Department. The Group has a broad scope of operations that covers the whole County of Nottinghamshire and employs a significant workforce (approximately 2,500 individuals), predominantly in service settings in and around schools and public sector premises.
3. Services provided by CFM includes:
  - Schools catering – the provision of school meals across more than 250 sites around Nottinghamshire.
  - Cleaning & facilities management – the provision of cleaning, facilities management and landscaping services at over 400 sites around Nottinghamshire.
  - County office catering – the delivery of staff catering services at Council office locations, principally across the West Bridgford campus
  - County Enterprise Foods –the provision of the Council’s ready/hot meals services to the elderly and vulnerable.

#### **Coronavirus Response**

4. Like the rest of the Council the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic continues to pose significant challenges to the Service. However, feedback from the service’s broad customer base has been overwhelmingly positive, in respect of the resilience and flexibility that the Service has

shown in maintaining critical food and facilities services that the people of Nottinghamshire rely on. No staff have been furloughed. Key elements of the Service's response have included:-

#### Schools Catering

- Supporting the national COVID-19 response through the preparation and distribution of school lunches to the children of key workers and children eligible for Free School Meals.
- Helping schools to continue to provide hot meals through the development of an interim menu for schools designed to be easy to deliver with reduced labour.
- Continuing the centralised production of school meals at County Hall for schools in the West Bridgford area.

#### Cleaning & FM

- Protecting key workers with enhanced cleaning routines in schools and other public sector locations such as Notts Fire Service premises.
- Facilities and County Office Catering staff at County Hall have been instrumental in the organisation and distribution of vital PPE equipment across the Council and its partners, especially in the early days of lockdown when County Hall was used as a PPE distribution hub for Nottinghamshire.
- Protecting vulnerable elderly residents through additional cleaning provided at care homes.
- Keeping staff and the public/service users safe in all locations with the provision of spray bottles, chemicals and processes to allow customers to self-serve supplemental cleaning as required
- Performing a pivotal role in the safe reoccupation of County Offices over the Summer, enabling front line staff to continue to deliver critical services in a COVID-19 secure environment

#### County Enterprise Foods

- From the start of lockdown in March 2020 there was an immediate 20% increase in demand for the service as a result of self-isolation and social distancing. 8 additional drivers were trained to support this and the increase in demand continues.
- Largely as a result of panic buying there were national food supply shortages at the start of the pandemic and menus were swiftly adapted to overcome this, allowing meals to be produced with the resources to hand.
- Safe and Well checks have continued and have been adapted to allow for social distancing protocols.
- County Enterprise Foods has, during these difficult times, been nominated for two national awards for the services that it provides

## **Revised Operating Structure for County Office Catering**

5. The impact of COVID-19 has resulted in Nottinghamshire County Council facing a range of unanticipated operational and financial challenges.
6. The Riverview Restaurant at County Hall has not operated since late March 2020, as the premises have been largely unoccupied by staff. This situation is unlikely to change in the short to medium term future, due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.
7. The staff catering operation at the West Bridgford Campus has historically operated on a cost-plus basis which means that it receives a subsidy from revenue budgets of £154,000 a year. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak plans were in place to revise the catering offer to make it commercially viable and to remove the need for corporate subsidy. The impact of COVID-19 means that the way that the Council operates its office estate has changed. It is therefore unlikely that the office buildings across the West Bridgford Campus will have a high enough footfall in the future to commercially sustain the in-house catering provision without significant changes to its staffing and operating model, as more staff work remotely and flexibly.
8. It is also anticipated that for the medium term future, most staff will prefer to bring their own food to reduce the risk of contagion. As well as the challenge of safe food production, the restaurant seating areas also provide a high volume of touch points where transmission could occur. As such it is proposed that the restaurant space remains closed to staff until such a time that the risk of contagion has significantly reduced. It is not currently possible to predict accurately when this may be.
9. That said, it is intended to re-open the Coffee Shop on the ground floor of County Hall as an exclusively self-service unit once physical changes have been completed, and once there are a sufficient volume of staff/visitors occupying the County Hall building. The Coffee Shop will offer an enhanced menu of pre-packaged food and self-service drinks that staff/visitors can take away to consume. This will reduce the risk to staff and ensure that some staff on site food and beverage provision is retained.
10. This revised operating model for catering services at County Hall will require fewer staff. A revised team structure has therefore been developed. With a broad range of redeployment opportunities available across the wider Catering & Facilities Management service and the Council, it is anticipated that compulsory redundancies for affected staff can be avoided.
11. Trades Unions have been engaged in the proposals and impacted staff have had a period of formal consultation lasting 30 days. Due to the unusual circumstances surrounding this process due to coronavirus, virtual meetings have taken place and consultation was launched via a letter to staff that was sent by recorded delivery. A virtual meeting took place with Trades Union representatives and there have been a number of telephone conversations and virtual meetings with staff. Feedback and suggestions put forward throughout the consultation period have been incorporated into the final structure, which is attached as an appendix to this report. Voluntary Redundancy has been on offer throughout the process and there has been some interest. Staff have been and will continue to be supported throughout this process.

## Posts in Scope

12. There are eleven posts affected across five different grades totalling 7.85 FTE (see the following table and structure diagram at the appendix to this report). The disestablishment of these posts present a saving equivalent to the size of the current revenue budget subsidy, a saving of £154,000. The cohort of impacted staff includes a number of casual posts (4 headcount, 0.7 FTE) that have accrued employment rights due to the length and frequency of their service.

### Disestablished posts

Role	Grade	FTE	Headcount
Chef Manager	Hay A	1	1
Catering Supervisor	3	2	1 (1 vacant)
Waiter/waitress	1	0.75	1
Catering Assistant	1	1.5	2
General Assistant	1	2.6	6
<b>Totals</b>		<b>7.85</b>	<b>11 ( + 1 vacant)</b>

13. The suspension of the Riverview service will be reviewed after a period of 12 months and an assessment made as to whether a commercially viable catering offer can be provided. It is important to recognise that any future arrangement would be a very different offer to the one that has historically been provided.

### Other Options

14. The option of not restructuring the county office team has been considered. However, the financial pressures that the Council is facing in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic require officers to explore and deliver achievable cost reductions in all areas of Council operation that do not impact directly upon front line service provision.

### Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. To establish a cost effective staffing structure for the county office catering team.

### Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

17. These are set out in paragraph 12 above. The disestablishment of the posts would present a saving equivalent to the size of the revenue budget subsidy, a saving of £154,000. Any surplus above this would be used to offset any trading deficit across the wider service.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that this Committee approves the revised staffing structure for the county office catering team set out in the appendix to this report.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director – Communities and Place**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

**John Hughes**  
**Group Manager – Catering, Facilities Management and County Supplies**

### **Constitutional Comments (KK 05/10/20)**

18. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee.

### **Financial Comments (SES 09/10/2020)**

19. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 12 of the report. The disestablishment of the posts would present a saving equivalent to the size of the revenue budget subsidy, a saving of £154,000. Any surplus above this would be used to offset any trading deficit across the wider service.

### **HR Comments (JP 09/10/20)**

20. Consultation has taken place with staff and the recognised trade unions. The Authority's HR policies and procedures will be applied in respect of this restructure. This includes the enabling procedure, redeployment and redundancy policies.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All