

# **BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW**



## **TOWN HALL – CATERING SERVICE**

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MR.T.ROBSON, TOWN CLERK**

### **REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**COUNCILLOR J.M.MARR (CHAIRMAN)**

**COUNCILLORS J.PARKIN, P.WELSH AND MRS M.I.ROBINSON**

**OFFICERS: MR.G.NICKLIN ACCOUNTANT  
MR C.NELSON BAR MANAGER  
MR G.SMITH CATERER**

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Council provides a Catering service within the Town Hall by means of a franchise agreement with a professional caterer awarded following public tender.

The Council has in the past considered the various methods in which the service could be delivered, i.e.

- Employ a full time catering manager
- Purchase the services of Contract Caterers
- Franchise a Caterer

The Council is of the opinion that the Franchise option is the most effective and economical. This method of service delivery allows the Council to monitor and control quality levels and to maintain with the co-operation of the Franchisee a range of snacks and meals to suit all the various needs and budgets of the public.

## **OUR CURRENT POSITION**

### **THE MISSION STATEMENT**

The Council consider its main purpose is to ensure that the Community of Spennymoor can democratically voice its opinion and that the Town Council can support the carrying out of those views and contribute towards the well being of the community, the economy and regeneration, all at an economical cost.

### **AIMS FOR THIS SERVICE**

In support of the Mission Statement the Town Council provides, for the benefit of the Community, use of the facilities within the Town Hall. Integral within this overall service is the provision of a catering facility enhancing the recreational service being provided. The service aims to meet the needs demanded from our public by providing a high quality catering service at “reasonable prices.” The service is expected to produce an acceptable level of profit by way of commission’s receivable. The provision of this service is expected to impact positively on the public use of the Town Hall Facilities.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THIS SERVICE**

The service is not a statutory function. The Catering Service is available to recreational users of the Town Hall facility. The appointed caterer, who is franchised by the Town Council following public tender, carries out the Catering function. In return for being provided with the sole right to the catering needs of the Town Hall the Council receives a 15% commission from the franchisee.

### **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The following performance indicators are currently in place:

- i) Annual number of function requiring catering
- ii) Annual commission received

	<b>Y/E 98/99</b>	<b>Y/E 99/00</b>	<b>Y/E 00/01</b>
Number of functions	59	73	72
Commission received	£1,430 *	£1,897	£1,245

\* Commission level reduced during the year

## **CONSULTATION**

In order to seek a consensus from the community as to whether Council Taxpayers value the provision and would like the Council to continue to provide a Catering Service a 'sample survey' of local residents was conducted. Whilst the number of respondents to the survey was approximately 24%, the information received provided a statistically valid sample of opinion.

In order to ensure a wider view of the value of the Catering Service, employees within the Council and Councillors were individually canvassed as to their views of the service being provided.

### **1. RESULTS FROM SURVEYS**

Refer to the extract of the review and analysis of questionnaire responses  
(Appendix 1)

Refer to the summary of results obtained from customer feed-back forms.  
(Appendix 1)

Appendix 2 - Blank customer feed-back forms

### **2. CONSULTATION WITH EMPLOYEES**

All staff were consulted and were unanimous in their view that the provision of a Catering Service within the Town Hall recreational facility to be of overall benefit to the community

### **3. CONSULTATION WITH COUNCIL MEMBERS**

All Council Members were consulted and were unanimous in their view that the provision of a Catering Service within the Town Hall recreational facility to be of overall benefit to the community

## COMPETITION

### Is the service – Efficient?

The service is monitored on a regular basis with regard to commercial and quality issues.

### Is the service – Effective?

The service can provide for the needs of functions of various sizes both during the day and at night.

Throughout the year the Council have provided users of the service with an opportunity to express their views by means of “feed-back forms”. The information gathered from these forms clearly demonstrates that users are more than satisfied with the service and the way that it is being provided. See appendices for a sample of the feedback.

### Is the service – Economical?

The service provides income for the Council.

The provision of a catering service compliments the bar facilities provided within the overall function facilities of the Town Hall.

## FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

	Y/E 98/99	Y/E 99/00	Y/E 00/01	BUDGET Y/E 01/02
	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>1430</b>	<b>1897</b>	<b>1245</b>	<b>1200</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>1366</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1661</b>	<b>820</b>
EXPENDITURE EXCLUDES NEW KITCHEN EQUIPMENT WHICH IS CAPITALISED				

## COMPARISONS

The following Council's were contacted to provide information for the purposes of comparison.

Peterlee, Sedgefield Borough Council and Shildon Town

The Green Tree Inn located at Tudhoe village and the Town Hall Bishop Auckland responded to an enquiry, which demonstrated that the Council is providing a quality and competitive service.

The Council's of Peterlee and Wear Valley supplied information on the range of catering services provided along with selling prices of (held on file), other than this we have no meaningful information that can assist the Review Committee in making comparison's for the purpose of best Value.

## CHALLENGE

A purpose of Best Value is to challenge the status quo. The Review Committee began by challenging the way that the service is currently provided and considered the following challenging questions:-

1. *Is the provision of this service a statutory obligation?*  
~~YES~~ / NO

2. *Does the Council need to provide this service?*

Whilst there is no statutory obligation to provide this service the Committee unanimously agreed that it should be continued for the following reasons:-

- (a) The provision of the Catering Service is an integral part of the Town Hall Hire, used for Civic and Private functions, and provides a recreational facility for the well being of the community.
- (b) It is the Council's policy to provide Catering facilities at reasonable price levels and to provide a wide choice i.e. from light suppers "pies & peas", a range of hot and cold buffets at varying price levels to a silver service facility.  
 The service is provided as a means of encouraging the public to use the Town Hall facilities. The service is expected to produce an acceptable level of commission, however, the motivation for profit is secondary to the provision of a public service.

3. *Areas of innovation and emerging trends which have been identified include :-*

The Caterer has the skills to provide food for all tastes according to the wishes of the hirers that are becoming more and more cosmopolitan e.g. Curry's, Chinese or Thai

4. *How does the service contribute (directly or indirectly) to the Council's Statement of Purpose and other associated aims?*

The Council provides the service as a recreational facility for the well being of the community. The Catering Service compliments the Town Hall function. It is anticipated that the Catering service will positively impact upon the hiring of the Town Hall which is increasing annually.

5. *The following possible areas of improvements / enhancements have been identified.*

The Caterer and Bar Manager have produced reports headed "Personal Touch."  
 The Caterers report is inclusive of a mission statement. (See appendices 3&4 held on file).

These documents set out an approach to achieve levels of excellence.

6. *Why is the service provided by the current provider and in the current way / form?*

The service is performed “in - house” for the following reasons:-

- (a) Flexibility - the Caterer provides the service on a demand only basis i.e. no costs are incurred by the Council during periods of functional inactivity with the exception of the service, repairs and maintenance of kitchen equipment.
- (b) Control – The caterer is obligated, under the terms of his agreement with the Council, (See appendix 5 held on file), to provide the service at acceptable price and quality levels.
- (c) The service is a profit contributor and is integrated with the hall hire and bar service.
- (d) The caterer is able to be flexible in the supply of the service by employing staff from a pool of experienced personnel.
- (e) Responsibility – The caterer is made aware of all comments relating to the service whether adverse or favourable. In the unlikely event, given our experience to date that the caterer began to fall short of the Councils expectations regarding performance then the Council has the right to institute termination proceedings as set out in the agreement.

7. *Should the Council consider externalising the service provision?*

The review Committee considers that the Councils decision to provide the service in its current form to be the most efficient and effective.

**OVERVIEW – STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT.**

(i) *Does the service meet the Council's current aims/objectives*

*YES / ~~NO~~*

The review Committee was unanimous in their opinion that the service was meeting set aims and objectives.

The Committee noted that since the introduction of Best Value, systems and procedures had been implemented to better monitor:-

- (a) The way in which the service is being provided
- (b) Financial performance
- (c) Customer feed-back

(ii) *Service Expansion*

The Committee accepted that whilst the Town Hall was used regularly particularly at week-ends for various types of functions opportunities may exist to expand the service provision by:-

- (a) advertising the availability of the hall for day-time business use i.e. conferences/seminars
- (b) advertising the availability of the hall for exhibitions i.e. weddings / holidays
- (c) Council promoted events, Theme Nights, for example.

(iii) Does the Council consider the provision of the service to be a strategic priority.

*YES / ~~NO~~*

The Council is committed to enhancing the quality of life of its residents and intends to maintain the service provision and to make any necessary improvements as identified in this Best Value Review.

The Council believes that the implementation of the recommendations following the Best Value Review will positively impact upon the service areas of presentation, quality and financial performance.

## **SERVICE IMPROVEMENT – ACTION PLAN**

The Review Committee takes opportunity to point out that the newly appointed caterer (March 2001) has instituted some procedures to monitor standards of product quality and service.

The Caterer along with the Bar Manager has produced reports headed “personal touch” the implementation of which should improve customer service.

The caterer has produced a mission statement laying down his goals to achieve a standard of excellence.

1. Investigate methods of promoting the use of the Town Hall facilities thereby maximising the Catering Service.
2. Investigate the possibilities of providing the Catering Service to the Community Halls. Invite the views of Community Hall Management Committee’s as to whether the Catering service could be utilised.
3. Look to improve upon areas of presentation i.e. Air quality, décor for example
4. Establish a Panel, made up of residents & hirers, to meet twice a year to consider the service being provided:-
  - Is it meeting and keeping up with current needs and trends?
  - Is it promoted sufficiently?
  - Are quality standards being achieved?
  - Are targets (performance indicators) being achieved?
  - To make recommendations as necessary.

## APPENDIX 1

### PUBLIC FEED-BACK AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

The review and analysis of user “feed-back” forms provided the following results:-

	Good	Average	Poor
Standard of meal	100%	Nil	Nil
Table layout	100%	Nil	Nil
Speed of service	100%	Nil	Nil

The review of responses to the questionnaire provided the following information:-

#### TOWN AND COMMUNITY HALLS.

How often do Members of your household use a hall for hire:-

	Once a Week or More	2/4 Times a Month	Less than once a Month	Never
Town Hall	-	-	14%	86%
Byers Green	-	-	2%	98%
Middlestone Moor	-	-	2%	98%
Tudhoe	-	1%	4%	95%
Kirk Merrington	-	3%	1%	96%

Percentage of those responding

Of those people that responded regarding HALL’S the following ratings were given.  
Percentage satisfaction.

	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very Poor
Town Hall	53%	47%	-	-	-
Byers Green	-	-	-	-	-
Middlestone Moor	-	75%	25%	-	-
Tudhoe	17%	83%	-	-	-
Kirk Merrington	17%	66%	17%	-	-

**Spennymoor Town Council  
Best Value Policy**

**APPENDIX 2**

*To be assured that we are affording you the hirer, a quality service, please be so kind as to complete this questionnaire*

<b>Date of Function:</b>	
<b>Name of Hirer:</b>	

**Please Tick**

	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>STAFF</b>			
Assistance given to make your booking			
Set up of the room for your function			
Assistance if requested from staff during your function			

<b>FACILITIES</b>			
Room décor			
Furniture			
Toilets			
Overall cleanliness			

<b>BAR</b>			
Standard of Goods Purchased			
Service performance			
Degree of pleasantness			

<b>CATERING</b>			
Standard of Meal			
Table layout			
Speed of Service			

**Any other Comments**