



REPORT OF:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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TO:	COUNCIL
DATE:	9 FEBRUARY 2012

AGENDA ITEM NO:	5	WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL NORTHERN WARDS
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SUBJECT:	PETITION: BANSTEAD COMMUNITY CENTRE - HOT MEALS SERVICE
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:	TO RECEIVE A PETITION IN LINE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council is invited to note the petition.

SUMMARY

Under the Council's Petition Scheme, any petition with more than 400 signatures is referred to Council for debate.

A petition requesting that the Council continue to provide a hot meals service at the Banstead Community Centre has been submitted with 960 signatures. The matter is the subject of a savings proposal within the budget recommendation elsewhere on the agenda.

STATUTORY POWERS

1. The Council approved a Petition Scheme on 24th June 2010, in accordance with the *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009*. The scheme sets out how the Council will respond to petitions. The 2009 Act and Council Procedure Rule 11 require that the Council adhere to its petition scheme.

PETITION SCHEME

2. The scheme sets out the type of response the Council will provide, based on the number of signatories to the petition.
3. The table below summarises the Council's approach:

Number of signatories	Response
less than 20	Response from Officer (treated as standard correspondence).
20 - 199	Response from relevant Member of the Executive.
At least 200	Referred to the Executive.
At least 200	Officer(s) called to provide evidence at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, where such action is requested in the petition.
At least 400	Debated at a meeting of the full Council.

PETITION

4. A petition regarding the meals service at the Banstead Community Centre was received on 4th January 2012. The petition contains 960 signatures and has therefore been referred to Council for debate.
5. The petition requests that the Council continue to keep the kitchen open at the Banstead Community Centre (and consequently continue with the current hot meals service).
6. A complete copy of the petition and the signatories has been placed in the Members Room. In line with the petition scheme, details of the petition have also been published on the Council's website.

PROPOSAL

7. The meals service currently provides an average 17 meals per day across all three community centres with estimated daily take up at individual centres as follows:
 - Banstead – 25
 - Horley - 16
 - Woodhatch – 13
8. As part of the approval of the provisional budget, the Executive approved a saving of £24,000 in the Community Centres budget subject to further discussions with the Management Committees regarding the alternative meal service offer to be provided by the Centres.
9. The proposal from the Management Committees was as follows:
 - The continuation of the current service at Banstead (which is the most well used) with Council subsidy of £7 k
 - The service at Horley and Woodhatch being taken over by the Management Committees. The Management Committees will allocate sufficient funds in their budget to run the service for one year with reduced staffing. During that year, they will explore options for

promoting greater use of the service (including the snack bar) and generating more income from the kitchens.

- A reduced number of staff would continue to be employed by the Council
10. In consultation with the Executive Member for Healthy Communities, Officers have since met with all three Management Committees to outline the Council's position on the following basis:

Budget

- i. The Council no longer intends to fund the costs of running the meals service at the 3 Centres but is keen to work with the Management Committees to develop an enhanced coffee shop offer.
- ii. It is open to the Banstead Centre to continue to run the full meals service but all costs will need to be met (this is not limited to the £7,000 currently estimated).

Kitchen Equipment

- i. The Council is prepared to write this off and donate it to the Management Committees.

Capital Contribution

- i. The Council is prepared to work with the Management Committees over the next year to ascertain if any adaptations are required to the buildings and will allocate professional resources to scope, cost and (if appropriate) tender the work.
- ii. Without commitment, the Council will consider contributing to the funding of these works at the end of the trial year.
- iii. The Council will not contribute towards a replacement and renewals fund for the kitchen equipment.

5 year moratorium on changes /budget reductions

- i. The Council is not able to enter into any such agreement in the current financial climate and cannot fetter its future discretion.

Staff

- i. The Council is prepared to continue to employ the staff required to run services for the Management Committees on a fully reimbursed basis including any pay awards/increased NI pension contributions etc. that may arise. Staff will continue to be employed and managed by the Council.
- ii. The Council will not meet any costs which may arise from the need to employ additional staff to cover staff holidays, sickness etc.
- iii. The Council will meet the redundancy cost applicable up to 31.3.2013 but will expect any additional redundancy costs from that date to be met by the Management Committees.

CURRENT POSITION

11. The Horley and Woodhatch Management Committees remain willing to take on the service for the trial period of a year on the above terms and are ready to go ahead with putting the new arrangements in place. They have requested that authority be given for them to proceed to implement the new service with effect from 1st April 2012.
12. The Woodhatch Management Committee would like the Council to consider facilitating a connecting door between the existing kitchen and the coffee shop as soon as possible. They strongly believe this would help the financial viability of the service in the trial year. Officers will need to establish the feasibility and cost before responding. At present connection between the two spaces is via public areas, which is not ideal.
13. Agreement has not been achieved in relation to the Banstead meals service. There are two outstanding issues. The Banstead Management Committee has requested that:
 - The Council agree to pay for future years costs relating to on-going maintenance and safety checks of the kitchen equipment.
 - Assurance be given by the Council that the community centres would not be subject to any further cost saving exercises or operational changes relating to budget savings, for the next 5 years.
14. The Officers consider that future maintenance of the equipment (being handed over to the Management Committees) will be their responsibility going forward. In relation to the second request, as indicated previously, such an assurance is not recommended and could not in any event act to fetter the future discretion of the Council.
15. The Executive considered the position in relation to the meals service as part of their consideration of the 2012/13 budget on 26 January and their recommendation to approve the savings (including those relating to the community centre meals service) is before the Council elsewhere on this agenda. The report included reference to this petition.
16. If the proposal is progressed all three Management Committees will need some time to consider future operational models in relation to numbers of cooks, number of operational days etc. before finally committing but Officers consider that this can be achieved prior to 1st April, 2012.

RECEIVING AND RESPONDING TO THE PETITION

17. Under the Petition Scheme, a spokesperson for the petitioners may present the petition and speak at the Council meeting for up to 5 minutes.
18. The petition scheme provides that Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. This is an Executive matter and cannot be determined

by the Council. The usual options open to the Council would be to note the petition or refer the matter to the Executive for consideration.

19. However, in this instance, the Executive has already considered the matter within the 2012/13 budget development and made a recommendation, for consideration by the Council later in the agenda. As a result it is recommended that the petition be noted and consideration of the budget recommendation be dealt with by the Council through the usual procedures.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

20. The provisional budget proposals included a saving of £24k on the provision of the meals service at the Community Centres reflecting the reducing take up of the service and the increasing subsidy required from the Council to maintain the service.
21. The current cost per meal to users is between £3.50 - £5.50 dependent on the menu choice. On this basis the Council subsidy per meal is on average £5.35 per meal.
22. The net cost of service in all 3 centres in 2010/11 (after income from meals and £5,000 contribution from each Management Committee) was £38,000. This net cost breaks down across the 3 centres as follows:

Banstead -	£ 7,000
Horley -	£15,000
Woodhatch -	£16,000
23. Given the increase in costs and the limited ability to increase meal prices these costs will continue to increase.
24. The decision on this petition, in so far as it relates only to the Banstead Centre is not material to the adoption of the budget (elsewhere on this Agenda).

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

25. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The revised service will be available to all sections of the community. The Officers will work with the Management Committees to try to ensure the meal offer meets the needs of users in terms of cost, quality and variety.

Background Papers: Reigate and Banstead Petition Scheme
Petition regarding Banstead Community Centre – Hot Meals Service