

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

AGENDA ITEM No. **6**

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: COMMUNITY MEALS - LUNCH CLUBS
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	
Date: 20 MAY 2004	Ref: JD/JN/PM

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Committee the findings of the Council's Best Value Review of Community Meals; in particular proposals relating to lunch clubs and to seek approval to implement the recommendations outlined in this report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The community meals service was originally established under the auspices of Strathclyde Regional Council. Local government re-organisation brought together services from the three former Strathclyde Social Work Districts. The main Council contribution to the service was and still is a subsidy provided towards offsetting the full cost of meals.
- 2.2 Community Meals consist of two distinct services:
1. **Meals on Wheels** provision is an assessed service and forms part of a community care plan designed to support people at home,
 2. **Lunch Clubs** provision is a non-assessed service providing the opportunity for individuals, usually older people, to attend a local centre with peers and have a meal.
- 2.3 The introduction of the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 and the publication of the Pennington Report in 1997 (following the E-Coli outbreak in Lanarkshire) resulted in greater monitoring of food hygiene practices in lunch clubs by Protective Services. With the closer scrutiny of food safety and food hygiene, it is essential for the Council to ensure that lunch club meals are provided in compliance with the terms of the legislation.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The proposals contained in this report relate to Lunch Club provision only and take account of the findings of the Best Value Review of Community Meals which was reported to Committee in August 2001.

- 3.2 There are three types of Lunch Club operating within the Council's area. Self Catering lunch clubs where volunteers cook and serve meals, lunch clubs where pre-prepared frozen meals are cooked and served by volunteers or staff and lunch clubs where meals are delivered from local school kitchens and served by volunteers.
- 3.3 The Best Value Review of Community Meals recommended that "consideration needs to be given as to where the service would be best located within the Council" to ensure compliance with legislative requirements.
- 3.4 The increase in requirements to meet a range of food hygiene regulations affecting all community meal services but particularly lunch clubs raised the issue of whether the Social Work Department was the most appropriate Council Department to oversee these requirements.
- 3.5 It was recognised that food production was a specialised aspect of the Council's provision and that the monitoring of standards and practices would be better ensured if undertaken by professionals in that field.
- 3.6 Exploratory discussions took place between Social Work and the Council's main providers of meals, Community Services. The monitoring of premises, staffing, as well as training and hygiene standards could be centralised within one Department. Regular evaluation is also better achieved by professionals working within the food production service.
- 3.7 Community Services acknowledge their specialist role in food production and accept that the transfer of responsibilities for lunch clubs from Social Work to their Department would be beneficial to all parties involved.
- 3.8 The Best Value Review Group were supportive of the proposal to consider transfer of responsibility for lunch club management to Community Services and suggested that both Departments undertake a shadow period to consider all aspects linked to the proposal.

4. SHADOW PERIOD

- 4.1 During the shadow period it was agreed that Community Services would appoint a Temporary Senior Catering Manager to oversee hygiene practice within lunch clubs, visit every lunch club to offer support and encouragement to volunteers, audit equipment and discuss any issues that arise. Any equipment identified during the visits was supplied to clubs from Social Work.
- 4.2 Meetings were held to discuss financial arrangements and figures were provided to Community Services for year ending 2003 and projected figures for 2004.
- 4.3 A comprehensive list of all Lunch Clubs was supplied to Community Services. This includes Self Catering and Frozen Meals clubs.
- 4.4 During the shadow period all lunch clubs received a visit from the Temporary Senior Catering Manager. All clubs were issued with up to date hygiene information, any hygiene and catering issues were discussed and resolved. The Catering Manager reported that overall the lunch clubs are operating following good hygiene practice and where there was concern this was quickly resolved with some advice and instruction.
- 4.5 Volunteers commented that the visits were very helpful and informative.

5. FINANCIAL/PERSONNEL/LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory liability under the Food Safety Act 1990 and the subordinate Regulations, in respect of meals provided by North Lanarkshire Council from establishments owned by the Council. Statutory liability also arises where the meals are provided by organisations that can be regarded as being directly linked to the Council.

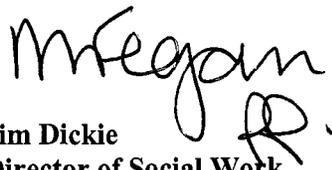
5.2 Underlying this the Council has a delictual liability in terms of its general duty of care in the provision of community meals. The Council is required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the food supplied to service users through the Community Meals service does not pose a health risk to those who consume it.

5.3 Regarding the financial implications of this report, both Departments have agreed that for the current Financial Year, Social Work will continue to hold the budget for this service, with Community Services re-charging costs in line with the available budget.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Committee;

- i) approve the transfer of responsibility of lunch club provision and associated requirements from the Social Work Department to Community Services.
- ii) remit this report for approval by the Community Services Committee.



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Director of Social Work
27 April 2004



Paul Jukes
Director of Community Services
27 April 2004

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