

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting12th April 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Meeting Venues - Report of the Corporate Policy Select Committee

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Select Committee relating to Meeting Venues. It was noted that the review had been identified as the subject for a short and focused piece of work with a view to reducing the pressure on corporate meeting venues and ensuring consistency in the standard of the venues and facilities offered.

The Committee found that usage of corporate meeting facilities was at capacity and that there was regular use of external meeting venues. After consulting with officers responsible for the management of operational meeting venues, the Committee felt that services should be able to continue to exercise discretion in releasing operational meeting rooms to other services. However, the Committee felt that information on operational meeting venues should be publicised on the Council's intranet so that officers were more aware of alternative meeting rooms and could approach the service concerned if there were experiencing difficulties in finding suitable accommodation for meetings.

The Committee felt that the information compiled on internal and external meeting venues was a valuable resource and would help officers in finding alternative meeting venues where corporate venues were unavailable or where there might be specific requirements for a meeting.

The Committee noted that Conference Calling through the Council's existing phone system provided an alternative to holding a meeting in a conference room. The Committee also acknowledged that this would reduce unnecessary travelling time and car journeys and support the valuable work being undertaken by the Council as part of the Workplace Travel Plan Review.

As a result of site visits to meeting venues, the Committee found that the quality and accessibility of the facilities varied from venue to venue but that there were specific problems associated with most of the meeting venues visited and improvements which could be made.

The Committee acknowledged that, although, the visits had been a useful exercise in highlighting the type of problems encountered by disabled people, they were not a substitute for a specialist audit of the facilities. The Committee were advised that full access audits were being undertaken of the Council's buildings and that this would include all internal meeting rooms. The audit was due to be completed by the end of 2007.

One area of concern which arose from the site visits was the evacuation arrangements for disabled people unable to use stairs in the event of an emergency. The Committee felt that this issue should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

It was noted that following consideration by Cabinet an action plan would be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how the approved recommendations would be implemented detailing officers responsible for action and timescales.

RESOLVED that

1.detailed information on all Council meeting venues and a range of external venues (previously used by the Council) be provided on the Council's intranet to enable officers to make informed judgements on the best choice of meeting venue and that the information provided include:

- facilities and equipment available
- occupancy
- barriers to access where known
- cost
- arrangements for getting to the venue by public transport
- distance from Stockton Town Centre
- booking arrangements
- whether Fairtrade refreshments are available

2.when calling meetings involving external invitees and Members, meeting organisers be asked to include information in a standardised format on the front page of meeting invitations directing those invited to where they can find further information on how to access the meeting venue, including parking and travelling arrangements and public transport and who to contact to discuss any access needs;

3.officers be encouraged to make full use of suitable internal meeting venues available before booking external venues;

4.operational Meeting Rooms not currently on the Council's outlook

system be added for ease of booking;

5.the use of telephone conference calling be promoted for smaller meetings in order to reduce the pressure on conference facilities, unnecessary travelling and car journeys and, subject to available resources, the use of video calling be considered as a further alternative;

6.emergency evacuation arrangements from the Council's buildings be reviewed as a matter of urgency;

7.the wording of the Council's Conference Room Guide and meeting room confirmations be revised to stress that evacuation in an emergency is the responsibility of the meeting organiser and that a full risk assessment must be undertaken before knowingly inviting any member of the public or disabled person to a meeting in Council premises and reasonable adjustments made to conform with Disability Discrimination Act requirements where possible.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The review was identified as the subject for a short and focused piece of work with a view to reducing the pressure on corporate meeting venues and ensuring consistency in the standard of the venues and facilities offered.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight Friday 20th April 2007

Proper Officer
13 April 2007