

MEMBERS' RESTAURANT AND BAR

Executive Summary

1. This paper seeks the SPCB's views on future use of the Members' Restaurant and Bar area. Consideration is given below to reducing the current level of subsidy; for more cost effective use of this space; and for possible alternative facilities.
2. Should SPCB members be attracted to any form of change, they are also invited to discuss arrangements for informal consultation with fellow MSPs and other building users, in relation to taking matters forward.

Issue

3. SPCB members have made a number of important resource reduction decisions in recent times, leading to almost £6 million of savings to the Parliament as a whole. In this context, as Members are aware, the financial viability of the Members' Restaurant and Bar has been a long-standing issue and the matter has been discussed on a number of occasions in the past. Given the remaining pressures on resources, the SPCB asked officials to look again at more cost effective use of the Members' Restaurant and Bar area.
4. The restaurant and bar area required a subsidy of £71k in the last financial year. Of that, some £50k relates directly to the cost of the evening service in the Members' Restaurant and Bar. The principal reason for this is the low demand for the evening food service. For example, of 16,000 potential covers only 1,236 were fulfilled over 2011/12 (7.7% capacity). We see little prospect of this demand increasing to the point where the subsidy is reduced significantly.

Options

5. (i) The SPCB is therefore asked to consider the option of closing the evening food and beverage service in both the Members' Restaurant and in the adjacent Bar area. (It is not suggested that the service be discontinued for the existing lunchtime service, which performs well in comparison and is recognised as a valuable service, in particular, for Members when welcoming constituents and other guests.) This option would deliver a saving of around £50k annually but would leave the Parliament without an evening bar and food facility.

(ii) A variation would be to close the evening facility but with consideration given to alternatives: SPCB Members could invite officials to look at the possibility of lower costs options, through re-location and an altered service, within the campus. Initial options could be provided in sufficient time for the next SPCB meeting on 13 June. Depending on the options pursued, this approach raises the possibility of reducing the subsidy over time whilst providing an evening facility.

(iii) The SPCB could decide to keep the current evening facility: as stated above, this matter has been looked at a number of times before. The subsidy cost would remain around £50k per annum. This would be the most straightforward option in the sense that it would entail no change.

Additional considerations

6. If Members were to take the view that either of the first two options be pursued, two further aspects are worth discussing:
 - The space freed up could be utilised as a dedicated venue for Member-sponsored events. This has the potential both to provide a new facility and to generate revenue.
 - It may also be possible to look at keeping the Restaurant [and Bar] open on a certain number of 'reserved' evenings each month: a reduced availability might create focussed demand such that the facility could operate with little or no subsidy.

Governance issues

7. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and there are no anticipated governance issues.

Publication Scheme

8. This Paper should be published in line with the SPCB publication policy.

Decisions

9. The SPCB is asked to:
 - note the costs of operating the evening service in the Members' Restaurant and Bar;
 - reflect on how sustainable this service is, especially in the current economic climate;
 - consider the options presented in relation to any future service;
 - review the additional considerations, including whether this space could be used in the evening for Member-sponsored events and/or keeping the Restaurant area open on certain 'reserved' evenings each month; and
 - decide on the next steps. In that regard, if the SPCB is attracted in principle to some form of change, we suggest that there should be an initial, informal consultation with MSPs and other building users to seek views on the issues and options set out above to help to inform a further discussion at the next SPCB meeting (on 13 June).