

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub-Committee
DATE: 24th September 2009
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health & Community
SUBJECT: Norton Priory Catering Contract
WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Executive Board Sub Committee on the progress of the catering contract (Service Level Agreement) at Norton Priory which has been provided by Adults With Learning Disabilities Day Services since 25th October 2008 and seek approval for the Business Plan

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

i) **The Strategic Director, Health & Community in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, Health & Social Care be authorised to continue and where appropriate extend the contractual arrangements with Norton Priory Trust to provide catering and related services at Norton Priory.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Council like many other councils across the UK, has found it difficult to meet the Care Quality Commission's objectives of finding people known to Social Care, particularly those with Learning Disabilities, suitable employment opportunities.

3.2 In July 2008 negotiations with Norton Priory led to the offer from Norton Priory to Adults with Learning Disability Day Services of a contract (SLA) to provide all the catering at Norton Priory. This included special, local and corporate events as well as the cafe.

3.3 Day services had existing experience at providing community based catering projects at Murdishaw Café and Country Garden Buffet and has subsumed the Norton Priory contract into its current operations without any increase to establishment.

3.4 The current 'businesses' run by Adults with Learning Disabilities (ALD) Day Services include:

- The running of **Vine Street Kitchen** as the central commercial

kitchen producing dishes that are purveyed through Country Garden Catering (CGC) which operates at Norton Priory, Murdishaw Community Centre and through its borough wide Buffet Service. Two service users receive permitted earnings.

- **Murdishaw Café**, which operates two days per week. It is expected that the café will extend its opening times to five days per week in the very near future. It is also expected to extend the model to Ditton Community Centre in partnership with Sure Start and Leisure (still pending).
- The old **Moorfield Kitchen** remains as a training kitchen providing Vine Street and Norton Priory with experienced kitchen staff.
- The **Market Garden Service**, which provides as much as the fresh produce as possible for the catering arms. Currently the market gardening contributes around a quarter of the fresh vegetables required by the catering businesses. This is a good start but additional land will be required if the businesses are to be self-sustaining. Currently five service users receive permitted earnings.
- **Cup Cake Catering (CCC)** based at the Independent Living Centre (ILC). Constituted with some eight ex-service users from Bridgewater this group provides cakes and specialist breads to CGC's outlets at Norton Priory, Murdishaw and the Buffet Service
- **Norton Priory Museum** refectory operates seven days per week with between two and six service users per day. Three service users receive permitted earnings.

3.5 The catalyst that enabled these services to become more recognisable as businesses was the award of the contract to provide the catering at Norton Priory, which began officially on 5th December 2008. This has been a genuinely commercial opportunity. The refectory at the museum is staffed Monday to Sunday with at least one member of staff and between 2 and 6 service users per day. Between the Norton Priory site, Murdishaw Café and Vine Street there are currently 5 service users receiving permitted earnings.

3.6 The feedback at Norton Priory continues to be positive and warm with customers commenting favourably on the quality, cost, variety and the friendliness of the service. The standards are closely monitored and the repeat customer base is steadily increasing.

3.7 Monthly meetings are held with Norton Priory Trust's management team. The relationship remains strong and mutually beneficial. The success of the service and healthy relationship has provided further opportunities to cater for fetes and larger corporate occasions, for

example, the medieval weekend of the 1st and 2nd of August '09 during which over £1,000 was taken.

3.8 The Market Garden business evolved out of the horticulture projects run by ALD Day Services. The rationale is simple; grow produce that can be sold. The produce is sourced from: Hough Green, Deansway Allotments, Norton Priory Gardens and a small plot at Murdishaw Community Centre and sold directly to CGC. The ILC Market Garden Raised Beds Project will come online shortly helping to raise production levels and provide gardening opportunities to people with mobility problems. More land will be required for cultivation if it is to be profitable in the longer term.

3.9 Nonetheless the group has persevered and takes around £600 per month. The group has no permanent staff support and will not be given such support in the future – the emphasis being on independence. This does have an effect on production levels. CCC is supplied via CGC with ingredients, equipment and advice. CGC put in weekly orders and distribute to the outlets. Expansion will happen but it will need to go at the pace of those running the business.

4.0 **BUSINESS CASE**

4.1 Since the 5th December '08 CGC's takings from Norton Priory, the buffets and the 2 days per week at Murdishaw Cafe amounts to £29,500. Two thirds of this is made up from the trade at Norton Priory.

4.2 Based on this trading history the figures demonstrate that this is a profitable business. Margins are around 33% though it must be emphasised that the real costs of labour, i.e. the costs associated with the staff who support the service users to provide the services, are already paid for and effectively subsidise the business. This is not to say that in the future the projects could not be outsourced or act as stand-alone enterprises.

4.3 With this success (please note CGC received a 'Green Tag' - denoting an exemplar service in the recent Care Quality Commission Annual Review Meeting feedback) have come opportunities to diversify into other areas.

4.4 The following are projects and businesses that Day Services and colleagues from the Children & Younger People Directorate have worked on in the belief that they are both achievable and sustainable:

4.4.1 **Priory Ales Microbrewery (PAM) (Working title)**

This is an ambitious initiative that will require full support to achieve.

Several meetings have taken place with Norton Priory management, board members, Children and Young Peoples services, Property Services and most importantly Patsy Slevin the founder and master brewer for Prospect Brewery in Wigan. Patsy and her beer were featured on the recent TV program 'Ozz and James Big Adventure' – a tour of great British vintners and brewers aired earlier this year. Patsy's background before becoming a brewer was in specialist education. Patsy's view is that the site is ideally suited for a small brewery and will offer a wide range of opportunities to develop all kinds of skills including teamwork and working to deadlines. The relationship to the Priory will be a major selling point and is likely to increase the number of visitors. The brewery itself will adjoin the tearooms (see below) and visitors will be able to see the brewery at work enhancing the attractions and pulling power of the museum resulting in a healthy bottom line all around.

The proposal to establish a microbrewery at Norton Priory was approved by the Norton Priory Board of Trustees on Monday the 27th July 2009. There is to be further discussion on the financing of the project.

The production of beer even at this level is relatively complex and requires expert knowledge. Patsy Slevin will provide this. Beer production involves a great number of separate tasks, which will provide opportunities for a great number and wider range of people of all abilities. Many tasks are ideally suited for people on the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) a group that will be specifically targeted for working recruits.

4.4.2 Priory Tea Rooms

This is a much simpler proposition and involves the refurbishment of the 'other end' of the long building housing the brewery. This end consists of three rooms one of which needs cooking and refrigeration facilities. The remaining rooms need tables and chairs. Situated by the walled gardens and the brewery it is ideal for the provision of cream teas, scones, home made jams and breads. It is in effect an extension of the successful refectory operation in the main building and carries minimal risk. It will of course extend the possibilities for people to experience and gain work.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

This proposal supports the national guidance "Valuing People Now 2009", which requires agencies to provide a holistic service and job opportunities to people with learning disabilities.

5.1 Children & Young People in Halton

All the proposals for development outlined above will include

opportunities for young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). From June this year an officer from Children & Young People's Services has sat on the Day Services Projects Board and played a full part in proposals and developments. To date 3 care leavers aged between 18 and 21 have been identified as suitable to become involved in the projects one of whom will start supervised work with Day Services under the 'Apprenticeship' scheme shortly. It is expected that this relationship will develop mutually benefiting both divisions and introducing a greater number of young people into the world of work.

5.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

These proposals will increase the opportunities of service users seeking volunteering and employment opportunities. With the initiative of the microbrewery there arises a technical and production opportunity whose ambition extends beyond the eponymous catering and gardening services found all over the UK.

From Bridgewater alone Cup Cake Caterers have been set up with some 8 service users who bake cakes and confections for sale at Country Garden outlets. These include, Norton Priory, Murdishaw Café and the buffet service. These service users no longer attend Bridgewater and will be in receipt of permitted earnings once their production levels can meet the bill. In other areas Country Garden Catering and the Market Garden service provides 10 people with permitted earnings and a total of 84 places for voluntary or work experience placements. The addition of the microbrewery, hairdressers, ILC raised beds, tearooms and chicken sanctuary should provide at least a further 100 places. Significantly through the inclusion of young people leaving care in these developments the department will assist in the councils objectives for NEETs.

5.3 A Healthy Halton

It is difficult to evidence actual physical health improvements as a result of developing these cottage industries but what is clear is that those who have moved out are happier and more fulfilled – and this must have a positive impact on physical health.

5.4 A Safer Halton

The movements out of the centres will have an impact on transport and Fleet Transport in particular. Close liaison with transport and ALD services to prevent doubling up is essential and has begun.

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 As the staff supporting the project are already remunerated by the council any revenues will not be subject to the demands of wages thus providing a successful trading opportunity and one that will not leave the council with a loss. Given our experiences with Country Garden Catering it is fully expected that the additional projects will contribute to an increase in the number of people receiving permitted earnings as a result of profits.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Using day service support workers as casual staff via the Stadium has resolved the issue of covering the contract during weekends and Bank Holidays. The average monthly costs of these staff of £400 have been met out of the profits generated from the catering itself.

7.2 The inclusion of the Day Services Office (DSO) with specific responsibility for the weekend catering services (funded from within the existing establishment) will also add further expertise to the catering arm and will be vital in expanding the services into other areas and securing its long-term future lead officer working at weekends.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 This proposal will enhance the opportunities of people with disabilities to gain employment and significantly assist the authority to maintain its three star rating. It is also expected that these proposals will secure further 'Green Tag' awards and substantially improve the profile of the authority on the national stage.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Valuing People 2001	Runcorn Town Hall 2 nd Floor	Audrey Williamson Operational Director Adults of Working Age
Valuing People Now 2008	Runcorn Town Hall 2 nd Floor	Audrey Williamson Operational Director Adults of Working Age