

Hospitality Sector Council 23 February 2026 Meeting Minutes

1. Attendees

Co-Chairs:

Kate Dearden, Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection

Karen Jones DBE, Pioneer Hospitality

Attendees:

Peter Kyle, Secretary of State for Business and Trade

Andy Slee (Society of Independent Brewers and Associates (SIBA)), Emma Heal (Lucky Saint), Emma McClarkin (British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA)), Jane Holbrook (Côte), Jane O'Riordan (Caravan, Flight Club, Turtle Bay), Kate Nicholls (UK Hospitality), Nick MacKenzie (Greene King), Rhys Mckinnell (Culture Quarter), Rob Pitcher (Revolution), Sarah Warby (Nando's), Simon Emeny (Fullers), Steve Alton (British Institute of Innkeeping (BII)), Tim Doubleday (Burger King), Tom James (Bill's)

Officials in attendance:

Officials from Department for Business and Trade (DBT)

Apologies:

Nisha Katona (Mowgli), Rich McGinnis (Circus), Shamil Thakrar (Dishoom)

2. Summary of actions

Action	Owner
DBT to share new Employment Rights Act website	DBT
Nominate potential new members to join the Hospitality Sector Council (HSC)	Members

3. Note of discussion

a) Update from the Secretary of State and Minister Dearden

The Secretary of State for Business and Trade thanked members for their leadership and contributions to the council. He reiterated hospitality's vital role in driving economic growth and supporting local communities. He acknowledged difficult decisions had to be made at the Budget and committed to working with the sector to ease burdens once the economy turns a corner.

Minister Dearden said the sector is being actively championed by her and the Secretary of State across government. Minister Dearden highlighted the opportunity to develop a set of policy proposals that could stimulate growth and invited members to share ideas to take to other departments.

b) Update from Karen Jones

Karen Jones shared changes to the council's membership and governance, including the inclusion of new members Rhys McKinnell and Tom James.

Karen also updated members on the council's new Advisory Group, which will focus on growth levers and provide advice and policy recommendations aligned with government priorities.

Karen informed the council that she was stepping down and had proposed Jane O'Riordan as her successor and that Minister Dearden had agreed. Jane O'Riordan will succeed as Co-chair from 1st April for a 2-year period.

c) Working Group updates

The working group chairs were invited to update the council on their progress.

Sustainability

Tim Doubleday highlighted the group's priorities including kitchen electrification, food-waste reduction, waste collection reform, packaging innovation and food security.

Tim shared that the Food Waste Innovation trial will be repropounded once the new Hospitality Sector Fund has been launched. He encouraged members to read the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Global Biodiversity Report and flagged the UK's reliance on imported food and implications for prices and consumer behaviour.

Members stressed the need for stronger links between DBT and DEFRA to ensure a joined-up approach and avoid siloed policymaking.

Social mobility

Jane Holbrook emphasised hospitality's positive social impact and role in social mobility, highlighting the sector's ability to unlock untapped talent and deliver strong careers, but noted that businesses need greater financial headroom to invest in people and drive transformation.

Innovation

Jane O'Riordan outlined a vision for innovation as a core growth lever, stressing the need for sector-wide collaboration, improved tech foundations and integration.

Jane confirmed that the HSC Innovation Lab will be featured at the Hospitality Tech 360 event on the 30th of March. The aim is to help close the gap with other sectors and make innovation accessible across hospitality.

Rebalancing the tax burden

Nick MacKenzie welcomed fiscal issues being formally included in the growth lever agenda. He called for a time-bound, evidence-led taskforce approach supported by both DBT and HMT, with clear checkpoints and data-driven asks, similar to the Licensing Taskforce.

High streets

Sarah Warby welcomed the growth-lever approach and sought clarity on how hospitality can feed into the forthcoming High Street Strategy (HSS), including development of a generic sector Profit and Loss (P&L) statement to inform policy.

Sarah asked members to share data so the group can start to work on a generic P&L and look at how general occupancy of hospitality sights is built into a wider high street strategy.

Members highlighted the role of trade bodies in coordinating data, benchmarking and regulatory insight, drawing on experience from previous recovery and growth work.

Family Business and Independents (FBI)

Emma Heal was pleased to hand over her role as Chair of the Family Business and Independents Group to Rhys McKinnell. Emma noted that the majority of hospitality businesses are owner-operators, with many stagnating or closing sites, flagging declining competitiveness versus Europe.

Rhys McKinnell felt that the FBI could be of real help in developing the growth levers.

Jobs and skills

Kate Nicholls emphasised building on recovery and resilience work by better using existing evidence and regulatory insight. Kate also highlighted the sector's success in creating pathways into work, including securing hospitality as a foundational apprenticeship in the Youth Guarantee.

d) Closing remarks and AOB

Minister Dearden thanked members for their updates and hard work, paying tribute to Karen's leadership. Minister Dearden congratulated Jane O'Riordan on her new role as HSC Co-Chair. She then reaffirmed her commitment to keeping hospitality high on the agenda across government and was keen to see how much could be achieved before the next council meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next quarterly council meeting is due to be scheduled for 11th June 2026.