



REFRESHMENT COMMITTEE **MINUTES**

Thursday 10 December 2015
at 12noon

Present:

L. Curry of Kirkharle
B. Eaton
L. Kennedy of Southwark
L. Laming (*Chairman*)
L. Lee of Trafford
L. Pendry
L. Sawyer
L. Skelmersdale

together with the Clerk of the Parliaments

Also present: Tim Lamming (Catering and Retail Services Change Programme Leader)
Stephen Perkins (Interim Head of Catering and Retail Services)
Carl Woodall (Director of Facilities)

Apologies were received from Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Lord Goddard of Stockport, Lord Ribeiro, the Earl of Stair and Baroness Wall of New Barnet.

I. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting.

One Member requested a meeting with the marketing and communications officer (and, at the end of the meeting, the Committee agreed to meet informally with relevant staff).

2. CARVERY ON THE LONG TABLE EVENING BUFFET [RESERVED]

The Chairman introduced the paper (R/15-16/19) and invited the Committee to comment on the carvery service. Members felt it was working well and that the supplement was reasonable. There was a discussion about what meat to serve – a longer period providing the service would help establish this. One Member questioned whether Monday was the best evening to provide the service. Themed nights (currently on Tuesdays) were also popular. Another asked whether the configuration of tables was optimal. Efforts were needed to improve awareness of the catering offering. One Member asked whether signs in the Peers' cloakroom could be used for this.

The Committee agreed that the carvery service would continue to be offered. A flexible approach would be taken to layout, the best night to provide the service, and promoting the service.

3. THE PEERS' GUEST ROOM AND THE BISHOPS' BAR [RESERVED]

The Chairman introduced the revised version of the paper (R/15-16/20B) and invited the Committee to provide feedback on the services provided in the Peers' Guest Room and the Bishops' Bar. Members asked whether the possibility of a limited food offering could be explored in the Peers' Guest Room, such as packaged biscuits or fruit cake. One Member asked whether the provision of cafetières as in the Pugin Room could be replicated.

There was a recognition that space in the Bishops' Bar limited exploration of alternative models or provision; there might not be appetite for significant change to that outlet in any event. Progress had been made shortening queues.

The Committee agreed that provision of a limited food offering and coffee-service in the Peers' Guest Room would be explored further.

4. RECIPROCAL ACCESS PRIVILEGES FOR CATERING OUTLETS [RESERVED]

The Chairman introduced his paper (R/15-16/21). There was good co-operation between the staff and Members of both Houses; the Chairman thanked staff for their efforts in this respect. The Chairman of the Committee and the Chairman of the House of Commons Administration Committee were keen to remove certain restrictions to achieve flexibility for the benefit of users. After discussion, the Committee agreed that the proposed changes would not be conditional upon any changes by the House of Commons. The House of Commons Administration Committee was considering access to catering facilities as part of a rules review. Members hoped that simplicity would be encouraged; times had changed since previous rules had been agreed. The history of the Pugin Room was discussed. The Chairman emphasised that we must move towards using the facilities available to the best effect.

The Committee agreed:

- **to remove the restriction that MPs can only book tables in the Peers' Dining Room Guest Side up to 48 hours in advance; and**
- **that MPs be allowed to use the Peers' Guest Room facility from 8pm – end of service, in addition to before 12noon.**

5. USE OF THE ROYAL GALLERY FOR COMMERCIAL BANQUETING [RESERVED]

The Chairman explained that the House Committee had recognised that the timing was not good and so the proposal would not be explored further at this time. **The Committee took note of the House Committee's decision set out in the paper (R/15-16/22).**

6. CATERING AND RETAIL SERVICES CHANGE PROGRAMME: UPDATE ON THE CULTURAL CHANGE WORKSTRAND OF THE CRS CHANGE PROGRAMME [RESERVED]

The Chairman was pleased that various changes proposed by the Committee had been delivered through the Change Programme. The Change Programme Leader introduced this paper (R/15-16/23). Members were pleased that there was a defined end-point and that the cultural change to be delivered would become business as usual. Significant improvements were recognised.

The Committee took note of the progress of the cultural change workstrand of the CRS Change Programme.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman thanked Members of the Committee for their helpful feedback and the thoughtful discussion.

The following queries were raised:

- could further thought be given to ensuring that menus were culturally sensitive;
- whether the need for the policy on fixed menus in the Peers' Dining Room for parties over a certain size could be reviewed;
- whether there could be guest draught real ales in the River Restaurant Bar;
- if catering debts were now better controlled (they were);
- whether a painting of Barry could be hung in the Barry Room;
- whether costings could be done on the viability of a trial of a breakfast service in an outlet other than the River Restaurant;
- whether the dress code in the Barry Room could be looked at.

The Chairman proposed that an informal meeting be held to discuss marketing and communications.

The next Committee meeting would be on Thursday 4 February at 12noon.