

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2013 16:45
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Breakfast [REDACTED]

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear [REDACTED]

I have been given your contact details because we organised a breakfast-meeting, sponsored by [REDACTED] in the Houses of Parliament (Dining Room A) yesterday morning, and we have a few concerns about the quality of service we received. I should explain that [REDACTED], so we have a particular focus on ensuring a warm welcome for our guests, which includes catering for their diverse requirements.

1. Venue unprepared

- a. **Welcome area:** I had confirmed with [REDACTED] that we would be able to use the welcome area for our banner, name badges and leaflets; but the staff informed us when we arrived that this was not the case, leaving us rather awkwardly handing out materials in the middle of the corridor.
- b. **Prayer space:** We had requested a prayer space for our Muslim guests, and I had explained to [REDACTED] at a face-to-face meeting that the bar was not really appropriate for this. Nevertheless, our booking form still stated that the bar was our prayer space; but even that was unavailable as it was being prepared for another event.
- c. **Dietary requirements:** Despite sending our dietary requirements well in advance, one guest with a number of allergies had no food prepared for her. Additionally, there were difficulties with the arrangement of kosher catering, which I'll explain in more detail below.

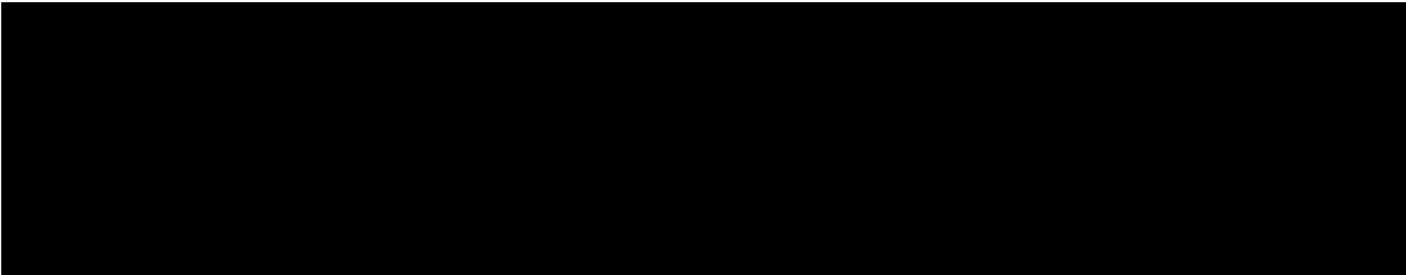
2. Unacceptable attitude towards our guests

- a. **Shouting:** We did not appreciate the manner in which HoC staff shouted at our guests, both when instructing them to move into the room, and when ordering their swift departure. A warm welcome is an essential aspect of our events at [REDACTED] so it was particularly jarring that our guests should be removed from the room without due politeness.
- b. **Early finish:** The shouting may be on account of another event which was following reasonably soon after our own breakfast. We do appreciate the busy turn-around at the Houses of Parliament, but we do not think it appropriate that the food was removed fifteen minutes before the event's end, with the result that some of our guests in fact did not manage to eat any breakfast at all. Our guests were then removed from the dining room five minutes before the event was due to end.

We should say that on the whole, the event was positive and well-managed, and we did enjoy the food which we were able to consume. However, we would be grateful to hear within the next few days that the above comments have been noted and auctioned, and we are of course keeping our sponsor, [REDACTED], updated throughout this process ([REDACTED] is copied in).

There is, additionally, a wider discussion which has been ongoing throughout the booking process and which ties in to some of the issues noted above. [REDACTED] we have been concerned with the **lack of provision for religious dietary requirements** within the Houses of Parliament. Despite an undertaking in the HoC Terms and Conditions to cater for all dietary requirements, and a 2005 report suggesting that kosher and halal diets should be

accommodated by the HoC catering team, our experience from booking this breakfast is that there is absolutely no provision for these dietary requirements. Not only did we have to source kosher breakfasts from an external company, but we are being charged a handling fee of £10 per breakfast. This charge could appear quite strongly to discriminate against our Jewish guests who keep kosher, as it does not apply to any other diets which are prepared internally. Additionally, despite the time and effort involved in complying with the security requirements and arranging the (expensive) delivery of the breakfasts, the staff yesterday morning still seemed surprised to hear that we had ordered kosher breakfasts. In short, our experience – and we understand from recent conversations that this is an experience shared by MPs, peers and their staff – is that the Houses of Parliament does not cater at all for religious dietary requirements, and that there are in fact charges and processes which appear to discriminate against those of particular faiths.



Many thanks for your help with these issues. I look forward to hearing from you very soon, and would be happy to call to discuss on Tuesday if that would be helpful.

With all good wishes,

