



HOUSE OF LORDS

House Committee

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3<sup>rd</sup> Report of Session 2008-09

# Refreshment Department Functions

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### *The House Committee*

The House Committee is appointed each session to set the policy framework for the administration of the House and to provide non-executive guidance to the Management Board; to approve the House's strategic, business and financial plans; to agree the annual Estimates and Supplementary Estimates; to supervise the arrangements relating to Members' expenses; and to approve the House of Lords Annual Report.

### *Current membership*

The members of the House Committee are:

- Lord Baker of Dorking
- Lord Brabazon of Tara
- Lord Bradley
- Lord Craig of Radley
- Baroness D'Souza
- Baroness Hayman (*Chairman*)
- Baroness Hollis of Heigham
- Lord McNally
- Baroness Royall of Blaisdon
- Lord Strathclyde
- Lord Tordoff
- Lord Wakeham

### *General information*

General information about the House of Lords and its committees is on the internet at <http://www.parliament.uk/lords/index.cfm>

### *Contacts for the House Committee*

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the House Committee, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW.

The telephone number for enquiries regarding the Committee's work is 020 7219 6644.

**THIRD REPORT OF SESSION 2008-09  
FROM THE HOUSE COMMITTEE**

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**REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS**

**Introduction**

1. The House Committee has approved revised guidance and explanatory notes for Refreshment Department functions, as proposed by the Refreshment Committee. The Refreshment Committee undertook a review of the existing guidance in order to make it clearer and to ensure that it was broadly in line with the guidance in the House of Commons. The proposed guidance and explanatory notes are set out on page 4.
2. The Refreshment Committee agreed at the outset of its review that the primary purpose of Refreshment Department functions is as a service to Members and to promote the role and work of the House; providing income to the House was deemed to be a secondary purpose. The guidance should therefore be read in this context.

**Guidance**

3. The following guidance is broadly based on the Commons guidance. The major difference from the existing Lords guidance is that Members will not be able to sponsor promotional functions for companies in which they have a direct pecuniary interest.

**Implementation**

4. If the House agrees the guidance and explanatory notes, they will come into force immediately. Members with existing bookings will be advised by the Head of Catering Services that the new guidance will apply to them.

**Conclusion**

5. **The House is invited to approve the guidance and explanatory notes set out on page 4.**

**Guidance**

- (1) Subject to the exclusions in (2), functions are not to be used for the purposes of direct or indirect financial or material gain by a sponsoring Member, political party, or any other person or outside organisation.
- (2) It is acceptable for registered charities to use functions for the purposes of indirect financial or material gain, but it is not acceptable for them to ask attendees directly for financial or other kinds of support. The sponsoring Member must provide the registered charity number on the booking form.
- (3) Subject to (1) above, it is appropriate for function rooms to be used for political functions or for raising parliamentary awareness of policy issues.
- (4) Members may not sponsor promotional functions for companies in which they have a direct pecuniary interest.

**Explanatory Notes**

- (A) It is the responsibility of Members to ensure their own compliance with the rules. If Members are unsure whether a proposed function would comply with the guidance, they should consult the Director of Facilities. Members who proceed on the basis of his advice are deemed to have complied with the guidance.
- (B) The key principle in the guidance is that functions are not to be used for the purposes of “direct or indirect financial or material gain by a sponsor, political party, or any other person or outside organisation”. In practice, this means that Members should not receive payment or any other kind of benefit, such as an offer of employment based on the ability to provide access to House of Lords facilities, in return for hosting a function. Similarly, political parties must not use functions to recruit members or seek donations, and outside organisations (with the limited exception of charities as set out in (2)) must not use functions to drum up business or as a perk for existing clients or shareholders. However, any reputational benefit that an outside organisation derives from holding a function in the House of Lords is not deemed to be a financial or material gain.
- (C) Charities may not seek direct financial or other kinds of support at House of Lords functions, and the amount (if any) charged to guests must be broadly in line with the actual cost per head. However, registered charities may, with the permission of the sponsoring Member, seek indirect gain from functions. This might include, for example, lobbying guests about the value of their activities, handing out leaflets and requesting the names and contact details of attendees. Functions organised by charities may be supported by non-charitable organisations, but those organisations are subject to (1).
- (D) Members may not sponsor promotional functions for companies in which they have a direct pecuniary interest, such as a paid directorship or a substantial shareholding. However, it is acceptable for Members to sponsor social functions primarily aimed at the workforce of a company in which they have a direct pecuniary interest. It is also acceptable for Members to sponsor functions for their former employers if their only pecuniary interest is a company pension.
- (E) Members may hold book launches for books written by them or primarily about them.