

Written evidence submitted by The Vegan Society

1. What topic(s) do you think the Modernisation Committee should prioritise and how do they link to one or more of the strategic aims set out in the Leader's memorandum?

The Modernisation Committee's second strategic aim focuses on improving culture and working practices, with the aim "to make the House of Commons an accessible and inclusive place of work." Increasing numbers of the UK population are adopting vegan diets and lifestyles for animal rights, environmental, health and religious reasons, including MPs, their staff and others working on the parliamentary estate. Veganism is a protected belief under the UK Equalities Act 2010, meaning that public bodies have a duty not to discriminate, even indirectly, against people who are exercising their right to practice this belief. Instead, public bodies are required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The Vegan Society believes the Modernisation Committee should meet its inclusion goal by ensuring that everyone working in and for the House of Commons is aware of and acting upon their responsibilities to respect and cater to the needs of this group.

This would also support the Modernisation's Committee's strategic aim to drive up standards by ensuring "members and all those who access Parliament feel safe and supported" as well as potentially having a role in preventing bullying and harassment. While we are not aware of examples within parliament, The Vegan Society's 'Know Your Rights' service has compiled many, wide-ranging examples of discrimination against vegans. The House of Commons should therefore ensure that all elected representatives, policymakers and other staff understand that veganism is a protected belief, similar to other philosophical or religious beliefs under human rights law.

2. Why would the topic(s) benefit from the attention of the Modernisation Committee?

Within the context of inclusion and support outlined above, the Modernisation Committee could support the Administration Committee to drive forward more inclusive policies and practices by making sustainable, healthy plant-based and vegan-friendly foods more accessible on the parliamentary estate. This would increase options for those who do not consume animal products and would help them feel more supported both in and out of Parliament.

Additionally, plant-based foods have many health benefits such as increased fruit, vegetable and fibre content, lower saturated fat content and are linked to reduced instances of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Therefore, encouraging the uptake of plant-based meals would serve a secondary purpose of helping the House of Commons maintain a healthy workforce.

3. Are you aware of examples from other Parliaments relevant to the topic(s) which may be interesting for the Modernisation Committee to consider?

This year, vice-chair of the European Parliament's Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, Francisco Guerreiro, and fellow colleagues [expressed the need for change](#) on plant-based food provision within the parliament, calling for the next mandate for catering contracts to favour providers competent in meeting the growing demand for healthier, professionally planned plant-based food.

Additionally, multiple councils across the UK have chosen to adopt 100% plant-based catering including Oxfordshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, Lewisham Council, Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council, Hythe Town Council, City of Lincoln Council, Faversham Town Council, the University of Stirling and Nottingham City Council. Other councils such as Norwich City Council and Forest of Dean District Council have also passed motions to not only provide but promote plant-based options.

4. Is there any existing work relevant to the topic(s) which you think the Modernisation Committee can build on?

The latest House of Commons [Responsible Catering report](#) states that only one vegan dish is required to be available on the estate each day. However, in the House of Commons [Cafeteria Survey Results November 2024](#), it was evident that current options are not meeting people's needs, with respondents stating portion sizes of vegan meals were "consistently too small" and did not contain enough calories. Additionally, respondents to [June 2024's Cafeteria Survey Results](#) emphasised the need for more vegan options, stating they would like "more vegan options overall on the estate" and "on a weekly basis". We would therefore suggest you work with the Administration Committee to improve the nutritional quality and availability of vegan meals at House of Commons cafeterias, meetings and events and encourage their uptake through health campaigns.

