

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON VEGETARIANISM AND VEGANISM



Parliamentary Launch of The Vegan Society's Report, Catering for Everyone: How far are councils across the UK catering to vegans?

8 November 2023, Attlee Room, House of Lords

(Please note this a paraphrased summary of the speakers' contributions and not a verbatim account.)

Minutes of the APPG meeting

On 8 November 2023 the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism, supported by The Vegan Society and Vegetarian for Life, held a meeting to discuss the importance of improving vegan options throughout public sector catering. The session aimed to explore the challenges faced by vegans when accessing food in local councils, hospitals, schools, and care homes. Its purpose was to encourage discussions among different stakeholders aiming to identify actionable steps for both the Government and local authorities to improve the provision of vegan options in public sector catering.

Introduction by Claire Ogley, Head of Policy, Campaigns and Research at The Vegan Society

- Claire opened the meeting by presenting the findings of The Vegan Society's latest report, [*Catering for Everyone: How far are councils across the UK catering to vegans?*](#) which showed that, despite veganism being a protected belief under UK law, many councils are not taking the necessary steps to be inclusive of veganism.
- Claire emphasised that veganism needs to be recognised at all levels of central and local government and said that local authorities should be going even further than this to reduce meat and dairy consumption in the areas for which they are responsible, to meet environmental targets.
- She called on the Government to legislate to ensure that at least one nutritious vegan option be guaranteed on every public sector menu in the UK.

Councillor Ria Patel, Equalities and Diversities Spokesperson for Croydon Council

- A vegan of 5 years, Councillor Ria Patel spoke about the difficulties sometimes faced by vegans in accessing appropriate food in the public sector.
- She shared her own experience by highlighting that although the council tends to provide vegetarian options at meetings and events, there were not vegan options offered as standard.
- Ria stressed that councils have the authority to lead by example in the community, and to normalise the provision of plant-based food for everyone.

Councillor Marisa Heath, Cabinet member for Environment at Surrey County Council and Founder of the Plant-Based Food Alliance

- Councillor Heath mentioned the need to include food and diet in the Council's Environment Strategy and to show that farmers can be supported in this transition to a more sustainable food system.
- Marisa also highlighted the different ways people can lobby their local authority for change – including by contacting their local councillors/council, submitting public questions to council (which can be done by email) and attending meetings to show the individuals working in local government that this issue is important to their voters.

Councillor Ian Middleton, Oxfordshire County Council

- Councillor Middleton whose local authority ranked top five in The Vegan Society's report because of its decision to adopt 100% plant-based catering for external events to meet environmental goals shared how the council passed a motion whereby catering for all full council meetings should be fully plant-based.
- Schools were also encouraged to include one vegan day per month and have at least one vegan option on the menu at all times.
- Ian further spoke about the need for catering to reflect a future workforce of young people who are increasingly becoming vegetarian and vegan, as well as safeguarding the future of the planet, and the creatures that inhabit it.

Amanda Woodvine, CEO, Vegetarian for Life

- Amanda discussed the negative experiences of vegans in hospitals.
- Amanda shared examples of best practice in the care sector that should be adopted to improve these kinds of issues – such as having a larger quantity and variety of vegan options, commissioning a nutritional analysis of menus to ensure they contain the right nutrition, and promotional posters in canteens to show the environmental impact of animal agriculture.
- She noted that many big companies are starting to set food carbon targets so we will naturally see a shift in more sustainable options as a result of this.

Find out more about The Vegan Society's Catering for Everyone campaign [here](#), including how your council was ranked in the report and what actions you can take to support the campaign. For further information on the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism, you can visit the website [here](#).

About the APPG on Vegetarianism and Veganism

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism (VegAPPG) was formed in December 2016. The VegAPPG is chaired by Christina Rees MP and brings together MPs, Peers, and third sector organisations from across the political spectrum to debate, discuss, and campaign on the key issues that vegetarians and vegans face.