GOVERNMENT HOSPITALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE PURCHASE OF WINE

242nd Meeting held at Lancaster House on Tuesday 4th August 2009

PRESENT

Chairman : Sir David Wright GCMG, LVO
Members: Mr John Avery MW
Mrs Deirdre Blackstock MW
Mr Mark Pardoe MW
Mr Sebastian Payne MW

Secretary: Mr Robert Alexander, GH

Minutes

1874. The minutes of the 241st Meeting were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Business Arising

1875. The Secretary was able to advise the Committee that as a result of the re-shuffle of the government in June, Chris Bryant MP had been appointed as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for Protocol Directorate. The Chairman requested that the Committee should have an opportunity to meet the minister at the first opportunity. [Action: Secretary]

The Secretary up-dated the Committee on recent Freedom of Information queries from the Sunday Times and the Conservative Party. Members expressed some concern at the number and frequency of the enquiries. The Secretary commented that a barrage of parliamentary questions in the spring had, in turn, led to an increased number of FoI queries. He saw no indications of an orchestrated campaign, although the queries were time-consuming.

The Secretary was able to circulate some sample documents showing how the new Wine Database would present information. The Committee expressed approval and relief that they would soon be able to scrutinise proper documentation recording wine usage and cellar management. Members asked for an amendment to be made to the layout of the Consumption Statement for clarity, but otherwise commented that the new presentation was clear and easy to read.

The Secretary could report nothing on the lease negotiations on Lancaster House, except to say that it was understood that the final document had been drawn up and was awaiting signature.

Stock-sheet and Consumption Statement

1876. There was no quarterly consumption statement available. The Committee examined the monthly consumption statements, and offered comments on the layout of the new format documents that will be available from the revised Wine Database.

Future Tasting Programme

1877. The Committee confirmed that the 243rd Meeting should take place on 13th October 2009, at which 2006 Red Bordeaux would be tasted. [Comment: Meeting subsequently postponed to 11 December.] Provisional dates of 10th February or 18th February 2010 were agreed for the 244th Meeting. Suggestions for tasting at that time included 2006 White Burgundies or a review of Bordeaux holdings.

Tasting

1878. The Committee tasted a selection of red and white "Fairtrade" wines, in fulfilment of the commitment given to the former minister responsible for Government Hospitality, Ms Gillian Merron (1863). None of the wines tasted was of a sufficient quality for the Committee to recommend their purchase. In addition, the Committee tasted 2007 Rhine, Mosel and Alsace wines, and 2007 red Rhône wines and made recommendations for purchases of the following:

German and Alsace Whites:

Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Kabinett 2007
Serriger Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese 2007
Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Spätlese 2007
Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese 2007
Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett 2007
Pinot Gris "Les Eléments" 2007
Riesling 2007, Domaine Marcel Deiss
Riesling Grand Cru Kirchberg 2007

2007 Rhônes

Gigondas Pierre Aiguille 2007
Châteauneuf du Pape 2007
Châteauneuf du Pape Chante le Merle 2007
Côte-Rôtie La Côte Brune 2007

Lunch

1879. There was no guest for lunch.

Any Other Business

1880. There was no other business and the meeting concluded.

11th December 2009

Sir David Wright GCMG, LVO
Chairman