

# All rise

FCSI MEMBER TURPIN SMALE LED THE REVIEW OF THE CATERING SERVICES OFFERED BY THE UK SUPREME COURT IN LONDON, WHICH HAVE BEEN HAILED A GREAT SUCCESS. SHEILA EGGLESTON REPORTS ON THE PROJECT



**S**et within the historic UK Supreme Court in Parliament Square is the recently revamped café offering a new food and drink experience for diners. As the final court of appeal for civil and criminal cases from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the building provides the backdrop to a hive of daily activity thus providing huge profit potential for the café.

Now operated by caterer Zafferano under the brand name Harvey & Osborne, this contemporary café situated on the lower ground floor serves espresso-based coffee from a wood-fired roaster and single estate tea, accompanied by a menu of sandwiches and soup, plus cakes and pastries baked on site or supplied by small producers.

When the court wanted to enhance its catering facilities and get an assessment of the café's financial self-sufficiency, sustainability and standards, plus suggestions on how the operation could be improved, it decided to bring in a consultant for advice and to help select a new caterer, hence the appointment of foodservice consultancy Turpin Smale.

"Like all public organisations, the Supreme Court faces increasing pressure to control costs and to use our assets to generate income, where this is practicable and consistent with our core work of hearing legal appeals on matters of public importance," explains William Arnold, director of corporate services at the UK Supreme Court.

"Moving our catering operation from the contractor retained by the Ministry of Justice, when we were first set up and to whom we paid a management fee in return for a commission on sales, to a concessionaire model was a vital step in our getting this operation on to the right footing.

"We wanted to increase the revenue our café and souvenir gift sales generated for the court's operating budget, as well as hand over administration of private room bookings to a third party to reduce the staff time spent on this task," he adds. "This unlocked a new revenue stream, which made the opportunity here even more attractive to concessionaires.

"The invitation to tender centred around running our café, which is open to the general public as well as to staff and court users from Monday to Fridays. The court welcomes around 80,000 visitors every year, so the potential footfall for the café is quite considerable.

"One of the challenges is how to create a compelling product offer at the right price point when our range of visitors is so varied – from foreign tourists on a tea stop to lawyers wanting a premium sandwich lunch. The contract also included provision of a buffet lunch each day for the Supreme Court Justices, administering the letting of meeting rooms to court users, and the

option of inclusion on our list of accredited caterers for evening events."

Turpin Smale, which has 26 years' worth of experience in foodservice consultancy, tendered for the work in June 2013 against a number of other catering consultancies, and won the contract, commencing the catering review and tender at the end of the same month.

"We are totally independent of any suppliers or contractors," says director Chris Brown, FCSI. "Our key strength lies in being able to apply our extensive experience to ensure delivery of successful, innovative, strategic and operational solutions for the benefit of our clients."


The consultancy already had experience in this part of London: "We have worked for other clients in Parliament Square including the House of Lords and Westminster Abbey; this is our third client in the area," explains Brown, who headed the project. "We did a strategic review of the court's catering and then a tender exercise to find an appropriate caterer."

Brown says the main challenge was to improve quality while ensuring the overall operation was financially sustainable. The contract covered the café, meeting rooms, Justices' lunches, Counsel catering and souvenir sales. "Staff can use the café but the main audience is visitors to the UK Supreme Court," he says. "The catering and room hire for Counsel is also an important element of the contract."

The intention was to award a three-year concession contract from March 31 2014, and, in response to an ad placed by Turpin Smale, seven caterers bid for the contract from which a shortlist of three gave presentations in January 2014. From these, Zafferano was chosen.

"This is a unique UK institution that is constantly in the news and wishes to welcome visitors to its building and deliberations," comments Brown. "The Supreme Court is rightly proud of its independence and quality and wishes its support services to be excellent and cost-effective, and we are proud to continue providing catering consultancy services to the country's leading organisations."

The Supreme Court says that the results "exceeded expectation with a new strategy and new caterer", with improvements to standards and increased footfall.

"We have been pleased with how the new concessionaires have settled into the building and devoted considerable management time to serving our needs," says Arnold. "Chris Brown's advice was invaluable in choosing a firm which would be committed to meeting the expectations of our visitors and court users, and which would use the Supreme Court as a showcase for other potential clients." 

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