

# Dunstable Today

## Dunstable restaurant owner fined over £20,000

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Environmental Health officers from Central Bedfordshire Council visited the restaurant on April 12, 2017, after receiving the complaint from a customer and discovered a serious infestation of cockroaches in the kitchen to the premises.

Inspectors found a build-up of dirt, grease and food debris to the pipework throughout the premises particularly under the fridge and freezers and in difficult to reach places.

The skirting boards throughout the kitchen were also so thick with grease and dirt that the colour of the skirting boards could no longer be seen.

A Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice was served and the premises was closed with immediate effect due to the health risk to the general public.

Mohammed Hoque, the owner of The Maharajah Restaurant, attended Luton Magistrates' Court yesterday and pleaded guilty to six food safety offences. Mr Hoque and his business were fined a total of £20,970, including costs of £6,920 awarded to the council.

The court heard how, following the complaint of a cockroach spotted in the rice, Officers carried out an unannounced visit the following day.

The council found that Mr Hoque had not only failed to ensure that adequate procedures were in place to control pests, but the premises had also not been kept clean or in good repair, and a food safety management system had not been put in place.

Additionally, Hoque admitted that he had failed to notify the council of the change of ownership or to officially register his restaurant.

Since being closed down in April 2017, the council's Environmental Health officers have re-inspected the premises and have had confirmation from an independent pest control contractor, who treated the infestation, that it is now under control, so the restaurant was reopened to the public.

Cllr Ian Dalgarno, portfolio holder for community services, said: "The level of the fine imposed by the court reflects the severity of the offences. This sends a clear message to other food businesses that we will not tolerate businesses who flaunt food hygiene rules.

"We take food hygiene extremely seriously. It was clear following our officers' inspection that there were major breaches of standards, not least a serious cockroach infestation which was not being treated.

"We will not hesitate to clamp down on any restaurants or business who are not meeting the right food hygiene standards.

"We want residents and visitors to Central Bedfordshire to feel comfortable in the knowledge they are eating food that is being stored and prepared in a safe and hygienic way."