

## REVIEW OF MPS' EXPENSES AND ALLOWANCES

### Note on Parliamentary Working Hours

1. Research conducted in 1983 by the SSRB indicated that the average working week was 62 hours, 69 hours per week when the House of Commons is sitting and 42 hours per week in the recess.<sup>1</sup>

2. In more recent research conducted in 2006 by the Hansard Society, the 2005 intake of MPs reported an average of 71 working hours per week.<sup>2</sup> The variance in working hours between when the House of Commons is sitting and during recess is not clear from the Hansard Society's research.

### Time spent on constituency work

3. A 1995 survey found that MPs spent 1.8 days a week in their constituency. The survey found that on average MPs devoted 35 hours a week to constituency work, or 47 per cent of their time.<sup>3</sup>

The Hansard Society's more recent research found that in 2006 MPs reported spending about 49 per cent of their time on constituency work. These figures are only averages and it should be pointed out that allocated time varied significantly between individual MPs, with some claiming to spend 15 per cent of their time on constituency work, compared with 97 per cent by another MP respondent.

4. Many MPs stress that the volume of casework they deal with is steadily increasing. However, it does not necessarily follow that this additional workload has led to MPs spending more time on casework themselves. MPs who responded to the Hansard Society's survey in 2005 reported working an average of 71 hours a week and spending 49 per cent of this time on constituency work (approx. 35 hours). This is no different to the results of the 1995 survey, which also concluded that MPs were spending 35 hours a week on constituency work.

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<sup>1</sup> Radice, L., et al, V. *Members of Parliament: The Job of a Backbencher* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (Macmillan, 1990). p 53.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenblatt, G., *A Year in the Life: From member of Public to Member of Parliament* (Hansard Society, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Wood, D and Young, G., "Constituency Activity by Junior Legislators in Britain and Ireland: A Comparison." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22: 217 – 232, (1997).

### Sitting hours of the House of Commons

5. On average, the House of Commons sittings lasted for 7 hours and 55 minutes in the 2007 – 08 session.<sup>4</sup> Although this is not a full reflection of the amount of time MPs spend in Parliament, given that many will also attend Select Committees and other meetings held outside of sitting hours.

6. The standard sitting hours of the House are shown below, although there are circumstances where business may continue past this time and therefore on occasion the House will sit later than the times given:

Monday	14.30 – 22.30
Tuesday	14.30 – 22.30
Wednesday	11.30 – 19.30
Thursday	10.30 – 18.30
Friday*	09.30 – 15.00

Source: *Sittings of the House* (House of Commons Information Office, March 2009), <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/P04.pdf> [Accessed 02/10/09]

\*the House sits on Fridays only when there are Private Members' bills to discuss.

### Sitting days per session

7. During the 2007-08 session the House of Commons sat on 165 days.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lightbrown, S. and B. Smith, *Parliamentary Trends: Statistics about Parliament* (2009) <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2009/rp09-069.pdf> [Accessed 02/10/2009]

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*