



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Review of MPs' Expenses
The Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

May 13, 2009

Mr Sir Christopher

I welcome your inquiry, and look forward to its recommendations. I am enclosing a brief submission containing a series of proposals. I have not set out to cover all the issues covered by your inquiry.

I have based these suggestions on some founding principles, which I think are consistent with the seven principles cited in your Issues and Questions document.

I believe it is important that the new system is as simple as possible, with its rules as clear as possible. This is necessary to secure public understanding and acceptance.

I hope these suggestions may assist your committee, and thank you for the opportunity to contribute. You have a tough task.

Yours sincerely

James Plaskitt MP



A New System of Pay and Allowances

Principles

- Anyone should be able to stand and serve as an MP regardless of personal circumstances
- A proper rate of pay for the job, determined independently
- All allowances subject to independent audit
- Maximum transparency
- Penalties for breaches

Salary

To be independently determined. MPs not able to vote on recommendations.

Other Income

Permitted but to be fully declared

Staffing

Employment by a central authority – but with selection and line management by the MP

Central authority sets pay scales, and overall maximum budget, pegged to annual earnings index

All staff to have contracts and job descriptions, lodged with the central authority

Constituency Offices

Chosen by MP in accordance with size/cost criteria centrally determined.

Central authority retains responsibility for rent and rates – details published

MP responsible for remaining running costs from a capped, fully receipt based, independently audited budget, linked to RPI



London accommodation

Not provided to London MPs

Allowance can only be used for accommodation in London

Allowance covers rent or mortgage interest – but capped at £10,000 pa, linked to RPI. Mortgage agreement and schedules and rental contracts to be lodged with the central authority.

Further allowance capped at £5,000, linked to RPI, to cover other running costs, such as council tax, utilities, service contracts etc. All backed by receipts and independently audited. No furniture, white goods etc permitted.

A settling in allowance of £1,500 (linked to RPI) to newly elected MPs, payable once only. All claims to be backed by receipts and subject to independent audit.

Resettlement Grant

To be retained as at present, but not available to MPs after reaching state pensionable age.

Travel

Retain current arrangements, subject to making purchase by centrally issued travel card mandatory.

Further

All claims and receipts, in respect of all allowances, to be published on a yearly basis.

All MPs to declare annual tax return.

The 'central authority' referred to may initially be the 'Fees Office', but should eventually be managed by an independent authority, headed by a Commissioner, with its own tribunal system, to judge and settle disputes and to levy fines for breaches of rules.

James Plaskitt MP

May 2009