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London

Sir Christopher Kelly
Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BQ

1st May 2009

Dear Sir Christopher

Re: MP's Expenses

In 2006 as a Partner in a headhunting consultancy I approached the Conservative Party, through David Cameron with a suggestion of how to identify more female candidates for the party. We were pointed in the direction of Bernard Jenkins with whom we had a couple of meetings and put together a proposal on an approach and methodology of identifying high caliber female candidates within a constituency. As part of this exercise we were given the full white paper on MP's expenses.

Our strong feeling then, as it is now, was that there seems to be no substantive role specification for an MP against which they can be judged successful or even a structured set of criteria against which they could be chosen. In what other area of public service is this case? The majority of public institutions have or are implementing performance appraisal systems for all their employees which may affect their financial reward and success within their organizations.

Many public service executives as well as those working for a commercial organization spend a substantial amount of time traveling for their work. It is one of the areas that it is discussed early on with candidates before submitting them for interview. As the workforce becomes more global the need for travel is increasing, despite the enabling of technology. In our experience of recruiting executives for the both not for profit and

commercial sectors, expenses are tightly controlled. Overnight accommodation in hotels with company arranged rates; company flats for the use of traveling executives and economy travel are carefully monitored. Families have had to adapt to the international working dictates of the key breadwinner. In many cases the executive has to pay for the travel and accommodation expenses and then claim back from their organization ensuring that the claims are receipted and genuine. Misuse of expenses has always been a quick route to dismissal, especially in the current economic climate.

It would not be difficult to undertake a benchmark of allowable expenses claimed across the public sector – my consultancy performed one for the Law Society about five years ago – so as to judge what would be the normal for today's market conditions. This could form the basis for a recommendation as to what MP's could claim as justifiable expenses.

It is my own personal view that in the UK we do not pay our MP's enough countered with the fact that the selection criteria is not set high enough and that the interview and referencing process is not the rigorous process it is in any other area of public service.

Yours sincerely

J Chadaway