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12 MAY 2009

Dartford, Kent,

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

8th May 2009

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MAY 2009

Dear Sir,

In your enquiry on MP's expenses we hope you will include the following two issues.

1. The future ownership of properties purchased as second homes using public funds when MPs leave the house. As we understand it when MPs leave the house they can retain ownership of the property. If this is correct this represents a considerable asset acquired at public expense which is gifted to departing MPs. To correct this we would suggest that some independent assessment of the added value in the property achieved by the use of public funds at the point of the MPs departure from the House which they could be invited to pay if they wish to retain ownership. If this offer is declined then the property would be taken over by Parliament and it be retained for the use of other MPs requiring the use of second homes or sold and the money returned to the public purse (less, of course, any legitimate claims by the MP for payments they made towards the purchase of the property).

2. The pay and conditions of service of MP's staff.
It is clear there has been some abuse of the employment of personal staff by some MPs, in particular nepotism in choice of staff. While it is clear, due to the political nature of the work undertaken by MPs staff, that the choice of staff must remain with the MP there is clearly a need to regulate pay and conditions of service. We would suggest that Parliament should take over the setting of conditions of service for the employees of MPs based on Civil Service conditions and pay, attendance, holidays, disciplinary procedures etc., would be dealt with by Parliamentary officers rather than MPs. *

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

R and S Kipps

* With commensurate reduction in MP's allowances.