

Sir Christopher Kelly, KCB,
 Chairman – Committee on Standards
 in Public Life,
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Sir,

For over thirty years I worked for a major multinational company in Personnel/Human Resources, most of them in the field of Remuneration.

I suggest that it is time that we, as a country, regularized the pay and benefits of our M.P.s as employees of our State.

They are unusual employees in that their period of service can be as short as 4 years and is always uncertain. Therefore their terms of employment must make it attractive for a person of real ability to wish to enter into them. Their pay and pension must be much more than would be usual for their level of responsibility, and their pension should be particularly attractive to provide a long term reward for what may turn out be a short period of service. (This uncertainty of employment is one that many of us did not experience in our own working life, although it is becoming the norm these days when one-year contracts are not unusual.)

I suggest that M.P.s' pay should be linked to the midpoint of the range for a relatively senior rank of civil servant and maintained there automatically. They should not be expected to vote on their own pay at intervals.

Other allowances must be based on the premise that M.P.s will be provided with free accommodation both near the House and in their constituency, and this is additional to and quite separate from any home of their own.

I think it is important that no difference is sought to be made between those M.P.s who represent constituencies wholly or partly within the London postal districts or within the M25, and those outside, as there is no knowing where their home may be when appointed or subsequently.

In London, whether or not the House is sitting, a majority would be accommodated on an hotel basis (ie booking their accommodation as required) in one or two blocks of fully-furnished flats acquired near the House. If such a flat suitable for an M.P.'s family were not available when required, another must be found nearby and rented furnished. (If the Government were to acquire City Hall, for instance, it would provide convenient accommodation for many Members and could be linked to the House by a travelator under the Thames.)

In each constituency a house would be provided permanently to be available as the Residence of the sitting M.P, although he/she is not required to stay there. It would be situated near the population centre of the constituency, but convenient to a road, rail or air connection to London.

It would be fully furnished, have a garage, at least 4 bedrooms, two bathrooms/shower rooms and a separate dining room or study which could be used as a consulting room. It would be named "The Residence", and constituents would always be aware of its location. It would be secured, and visited regularly by the police.

All the Residences and London flats/houses would be provided, insured, furnished, repaired and maintained at the expense of the State, with no charge to the Members for their use, or for their local tax or utility bills, but the utility bills with regard to the Residence would be treated as taxable income of the M.P.

In view of this there would be no contribution to any mortgage, running costs, taxes or rent payable for any other property of the Member.

Receipts for the cost of direct travel between either the House, the Residence, the M.P.'s Westminster flat or the M.P.'s own home by the M.P., his/her partner or their family members aged under 18 are to be reimbursed, whatever the reason or method of travel.

The great majority of people in this country travel to/from their home and their place of work by public transport, but they only have the one place of work. However an M.P. not only has a place of work in the House, but also within his constituency where he may have to stay at the Residence or in his own home yet attend events or meetings at any time or place within his constituency or elsewhere in the interests of his constituents. So each M.P. needs official transport in addition to his family transport, and will be provided with a station wagon taxed, insured, maintained and garaged by the State and renewed at the time of every General Election. If the M.P. cannot drive then a driver would be provided, perhaps by the Army. However this service is one of several which could be usefully provided by the Member's family; others could be secretarial and clerical help, and research. Such work carried out by the family should be paid for at the going rate for such employees in the House, so the extent of the work must be evidenced by results, work diaries and occasional checks by telephone or visits by officials of the audit office.

Other business expenses, such as overnight accommodation, travel, or meals away from home, should be reimbursed fortnightly against receipts.

Steps should be taken to reduce the number of M.P.s to, say, 400, and the borders of all constituencies revised accordingly, before the locations of the permanent Residences are established.

I remain, Sir,

J.