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20 MAY 2009

Sir Christopher Kelly  
Chairman  
Commission for Standards in Public Life  
35 Great Smith Street  
LONDON  
SW1P 3DQ

16 May 2009

Dear Sir Christopher

**Additional Costs Allowance**

The current febrile media/Westminster atmosphere is hardly conducive to calm reflection and no doubt you are being inundated with correspondence but, suspecting that you may conclude some sort of second accommodation arrangement is appropriate (surely hotel bills would be expensive and possibly open to abuse), I hope you may be willing to consider my suggestions.

You must be aware of the passions evoked by choice in education. I think it should be stipulated that, if an MP has school age children, the first home must be that from where the MP's children go to school. Given that ordinary members of the public are rightly not allowed to use a second home to secure access to an oversubscribed school, MPs should not enjoy that privilege for their children either, however technical the 'second' home. MPs are the last people who should be able to skew admissions in their favour.

There is a bad smell about the tiny London flat being the principal residence and the broad acres being designated second. As a general rule, I think it only right that the house with the highest market value should be the first home, an exception being where children are educated by the State from a cheaper residence. You would not be able to send boys to Eton from a small flat and claim on a country mansion. London house prices being what they are, there may be too many anomalies to insist that all first homes be in the MPs' constituencies, although that has attractions. In any system there must be some flexibility and an appeal mechanism could be devised to take account of an individual's particular circumstances.

I hope this is helpful and wish you all success in your deliberations. The stables appear more Augean by the day!

Yours sincerely

M.