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Standards Committee -

From: F
Sent: 12 May 2009 12:23
To: Inquiry
Subject: Standards in Public Life

Dear Sir Christopher

May I congratulate you and your team on the quality and clarity of your Issues and Questions paper. Besides being a very comprehensive one, it deserves a prize for its excellent plain English.

I have a long background in employment policy and practice, both in the private sector, dealing with large multinational companies (www.esg.eu.com), where the issues which have to be tackled are often fundamentally similar to the ones which you are addressing with MPs, and in the public policy arena, where I am a Rapporteur in the European Parliament based think tank, The European Ideas Network (www.ein.eu).

Whilst it is possibly alluded to, I would urge you and your Committee to look at and benchmark against policy and practice with other Parliaments. If you do this and include such research in your Report, it will add considerably to the weight of your eventual arguments. Were I to be in your position, I would look at a small comparative sample, for example Norway or Sweden, Canada or Australia, France or Germany, but being mindful of the fact that not all other countries MPs have the geographic or constituency responsibilities to the degree that UK MPs do.

I would also look at a reverse of the "Roseland" principle used by large employers, and which is widely accepted by staff, whereby London allowances are paid to reflect higher housing and commuting costs in the capital, and then progressively reduce as the place of work gets further from the high cost areas.

You might also consider a variant on the Housing Association model for MPs accommodation needs near to Parliament. Whilst this could give the potential for some "profit", it would be limited and more transparently acceptable to the public at large. But it would also allow some form of limited capital appreciation, which would help to address MPs' post Parliamentary career housing needs.

Finally, I would urge to you state that your proposals are guided by the "no worse off" principle for the reward of the people affected. By implication it is already used by you and your team, but it never does any harm to say so openly at the start of any policy document.

If I can be of any help to you and your team, especially in the benchmarking exercise with other Parliaments, do please get in touch.

With best wishes

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