

E209

From: BRIAN LEWIS
Sent: 14 May 2009 11:56
To: public@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk
Subject: MPs' expenses

Dear Sirs,

I accept that not all Members have become embroiled in the expenses fiasco and I wish you well in reconstructing the rules pertaining to claims. I wish to offer the following views:-

1. 'Flipping' of main/second homes should be forbidden, since it is used to maximise claims rather than used with integrity
Any MP's main home should be counted as the one in which their family normally lives, or where their domestic history makes their normal place of residence evident
2. Since everyone in the country has to maintain their home from their routine income, MPs should have to do likewise. Many people work away from home and maintain their property even when it is not occupied. MPs are not a 'special case'
3. No expenses whatsoever should be allowed (directly or indirectly) in respect of the main home
4. Any second home should be within easily commutable distance from the House, such that the MP can reach it by public transport at the end of a session.
5. Second homes 'in the country' or in Constituencies are clearly a means to maximise claims, and this is disreputable
6. Those MPs who already live in the capital should have no right to a second home, since it is not necessary. The more honest MPs do not make claims for second homes
7. Where the purchase of a property has been supported by the Fees Office (i.e., the taxpayer), any profit made on subsequent resale should be paid in its entirety to the Fees Office. No MP should make profit from property at the taxpayers' expense, especially when public funds enabled the purchase in the first place
8. No MP who benefits from 'grace and favour' accommodation should be allowed any other form of second home provision
9. Serious thought should be given to provision of accommodation by the government, possibly through the purchase of an hotel or apartment block in which MPs could have space provided. This system works for members of HM Forces and it is not beyond the wit of the government to make similar provision for MPs
10. The Fees Office should be managed by qualified and experienced Auditors, empowered to ask searching questions around any and all claims and to deny payment where even a shadow of doubt exists
11. In Local Government, officers must produce a receipt to prove every claim they make, since public money is being used to support their work. This should apply equally to MPs, who have no special rights in the matter and are just as accountable as are local public servants

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12. It seems that many MPs pay members of their family to act as secretaries or administrators as a matter of expedience. This system flies in the face of Equality legislation. In local government, any post paid for by the public must be subject to a transparent recruitment process involving advertising, person specification, job specification, applications, references and interviews. The lack of equivalent openness in MPs' offices is evidence of both greed and nepotism. The spending of public funds should be based on equality and finding the best person for the job. The element of 'convenience' for MPs is not a sustainable reason to simply hand out paid jobs to friends and family.

I hope you find these views of interest. I am a supporter of the democratic process, but I am appalled that MPs have distorted their interpretation of the rules to either make life easier for themselves or to supplement their income at public expense. I encourage you to be very strict in any future rules or guidelines, and not to allow too much 'room for manoeuvre' around expenses. If MPs don't like tighter rules they can be replaced by others who are just as capable and are probably possessed of greater moral integrity.

Yours sincerely,
B Lewis

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