

- Standards Committee -

From:
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To: Inquiry
Subject: Issues and Questions Paper

1. What are the necessary elements of a system which both supports MPs properly in the performance of their important and demanding role and commands public confidence?
Honesty, integrity, dedication, consideration, responsibility, ability/knowledge (to be exceptionally capable at the job they are paid for - after all they are expected to be leaders), and a **wish to serve the public**. None of which are present in most government (Local and national) representatives.

The elements I see are: **the ability to avoid the truth, fame, greed, power and control**. None of our government representatives have any knowledge or ability in their chosen portfolio. Jobs for the boys (and girls) it seems to me.

2. Is it right that the House of Commons should be in a position to determine the nature and size of its own expenses scheme? If not, what are the alternatives? Who should be responsible for approving the content of the Green Book which sets out the basic rules?

The expenses politicians are allowed to claim for travel and accommodation should be in line with that dictated by the Inland Revenue for business travel. E.g. Hotel expenses (to the level of Premier Travel Inn only for those nights they are expected to stay behind for work after a time that would otherwise have allowed them to get home by train before midnight (which is my travel limitation). The cost of travel should be a 2nd class train fare from 30 miles outside London to their home.

A public committee should be set up to agree expenses. Only two politicians should be on the committee, all the rest should be made up from members of the public.

3. Are the range of expenses which are currently reimbursable correct? Are the correct judgements being made about the resources MPs need to perform their jobs effectively?

No they are most definitely not. There is no way a politician should be allowed to buy a second home at the cost of the tax payer. All mileage charges should be based upon the shortest route from home to 30 miles from London, this is representative of many London commuters that have to pay their own fares to work. All other employees in the country are similarly limited and have to do their job effectively. Politicians are no different and if they only want the job to make money they shouldn't be so employed.

4. Are the arrangements for policing the expenses system adequate? If not, how should they be reinforced? Is there adequate independent involvement? Are the new arrangements for internal and external audit introduced at the beginning of this financial year adequate?

No they are not. The committee (see 2. above) should police them through an independent accountant that has been selected by the committee.

5. If it is the right principle that MPs should not expect any element of personal financial advantage through the claiming of personal expenses, what approach should be taken in situations such as the support of mortgage interest which does offer the possibility of such advantage but which may nevertheless provide better value for money to the tax payer?

The 2nd home does not offer the public the best value for money. This simply allows the MP to spend six days swanning around London whilst he turns up at the House for a couple of sessions.

6. However logical the approach to reimbursement of expenses, is it possible that its implementation throws up so many difficulties, including difficulties of explanation to the wider public, that there is a case for considering a radical simplification which costs the same or less than the current arrangements? Would it be acceptable for some increase in the level of basic pay to form part of that?

No. Politicians are already paid more than they are worth. If we could have politicians that understand their job and didn't try to rob the public (speeding fines, traffic wardens, hidden taxes, band-wagon green taxes, etc.) with hair brained schemes, we (the public) would have less of an issue with MP's pay. But as it stands, we have; a) a police force that is more interested in catching motorists for no other reason than to make their life hell and falsely improve government crime figures; b) traffic wardens that have lost touch with the reason why they were introduced in the first place; c) a justice system that works in favour of the rich and powerful; d) an immigration scheme that none of us want; e) terrorists granted asylum on the basis that their own country would harm them if returned; f) political correctness that favours the minorities (no such protection for the majority); g) bus lanes on our motorways; h) town road planning that creates more congestion and danger than it solves; i) HSE restrictions that go so far beyond the pail that it is almost impossible to get out of bed without breaking a law; etc. This list of stupid laws goes on forever. Until we get a properly run country, I for one don't want to pay our useless politicians any more wages.

In fact, I think it is true to say that this country gets by despite the politicians, not because of them.

7. Where reimbursement is made in respect of expenses such as the cost of running an office, should this payment continue to be made as an additional personal expenses allowance to MPs? Or could the payment be made directly by the House authorities or in some other way? Is there a case for more centralised procurement through the House of Commons authorities? If so in which areas might such procurement take place?

I have worked from home all my life. I have been severely restricted as to what I am able to claim tax free and that which I am unable to claim. I propose that all MP's work from home and are given the same tax free advantages as the rest of us. When they want to hold a surgery, the local Town Hall should make a room available to them free of charge – and I do mean free of charge – I do not mean to increase the local taxes to pay for it. All the local authorities can always find office space when it suits them.

8. What is the best way of providing recompense to those MPs who inevitably have to spend time away from their main home on Parliamentary business?

To make sure that they are limited in their ability to charge as discussed above in the above answers. To summarise, however;

- a) Hotel cost only granted on the day an MP is compelled to sit in the House until it is too late to get home by midnight.
- b) Mileage charge based upon shortest distance between home and 30 miles outside London and Inland revenue mileage rates
- c) All costs to be awarded on receipts only
- d) Parliament to make special deals with local London hotels to get rate down to Premier travel in charges (£50/night)
- e) Meals to be taken in the House (no restaurant meals to be paid for)
- f) All rail and air fares to be 2nd class only
- g) No other charges to be allowed

9. How much discretion should the system allow about issues like the designation of second homes?

None. If they already have 2nd home, no expenses should be allowed as they obviously travel between them anyway.

10. Is it acceptable that MPs should be able to employ spouses or other family members? If so,

what safeguards are necessary?

No. This is obviously open to uncontrollable abuse. All work carried out by external experts should be performed by those employed in the parliamentary system. There should be no need for an MP to use the services of a secretary except for House business. Executives like myself (Technical Director) have done without a secretary for years.

11. Should receipts be required to support all claims for reimbursable expenditure?

Absolutely and without exception.

12. What level of detail of expenses claims should be routinely available to the public without the need to make Freedom of Information Act requests for it?

None.

13. Is it acceptable or desirable that MPs should be able to receive remuneration for activities outside Parliament? If so, should that be reflected in any way in the treatment of their Parliamentary pay and expenses? Is there a need for further regulation or guidance on these activities?

No.

14. Should MPs be reimbursed for expenditure incurred on newsletters and other material designed to inform the public about their work?

No. They should keep their website up to date in their work hours, that can be done by writing updates and faxing them to a secretary attached to the House if they aren't capable doing it themselves.

Regards

K Dixon-Roche

Torquay, Devon

P.S. I seriously expect this effort to be a total waste of my time as the Labour party can't even adhere to its own manifesto, so I don't expect them to do anything with this publicity exercise, but at least it offers me the chance to get a few gripes off my chest.

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