

E278

From: J. KIMBERLIN
Sent: 20 May 2009 23:28
To: Inquiry
Subject: Simple idea for solution to expenses policy

Having written to my MP he has suggested I submit my suggestion to you for solving how to implement a fair and open system for MPs expenses.

The following proposal is a very straight-forward, uncomplicated and clear proposal for how, in future, MPs claim expenses, which I would like you to consider.

The solution is a rate per mile, payable per week, based on the distance from the Palace of Westminster to the centre of the constituency. Just that.

The rate will increase annually in line with RPI.

The rule about spending some time per week in the constituency will remain in place.

This solution has the benefit of the following:

- No claims for travel between Westminster and constituency
- No debate about unfairness of distance from Westminster
- No debate about needs or not for second homes
- No debate about providing accommodation near Westminster
- Reduction in paperwork to administer the system
- No claims for food, living expenses, rent or mortgage
- Immediately implementable
- Seen as fair by the general public

MPs will decide themselves how they spend the allowance.

Some examples:

Working out the exact rate per mile will need to be calculated by individuals with knowledge of the needs of MPs, but say for example this is set in 2009 as £1 per mile per week.

A London MP, whose centre of their constituency is 10 miles from the Palace of Westminster, gets £10 per week. This will cover the cost of travel between the constituency and Parliament, should the MP choose to spend the allowance in this way.

A Midlands MP, whose centre of their constituency is 100 miles from the Palace of Westminster, gets £100 per week, which will cover travel or the individual may decide to stay 1 or 2 nights in a hotel.

An MP whose centre of their constituency is in Cornwall, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and is therefore say 400 miles from the Palace of Westminster, gets £400 per week. This will pay for a flight and 3 or 4 nights in a hotel. 52 weeks at £400 per week amounts to £20,800 p.a. which is close to the £22,000 currently mentioned in the press so perhaps the £1 per mile is not too far from the right answer.

If £1 per mile is not right, perhaps £1.50 or £2 or whatever is right. The important fact is the simple calculation based on distance from constituency to Westminster, not on miles actually travelled.

Simple, effective and transparent, removing all the controversy around what can and cannot be changed.

Will it be fair? It is certainly fairer than the current system where different MPs make different claims depending on either how honest they are or what they think they can get away with.

What about MPs who need to fly between their constituency and Westminster? With cheap air travel no exception needs to be made.

Why linked to RPI? This will remove the annual discussions about what rate of increase is right and as MPs have influence over the cost of living in the UK this seems fair.

When calculating the exact rate per mile, it should be taken into account that most people who work have to bear the cost of getting themselves to work and to feeding themselves. The rate should cover the costs of having to cover 2 locations and moving between the 2.

That is why this solution will eradicate all other needs for debate around what should be allowed. So, a rate per mile from the centre of the constituency to Westminster, and nothing else, is the best way forward.

I hope you will give this proposal a considered review and think of how it will work instead of thinking of reasons why it will not work.

Kind regards

J Kimberlin

22/05/2009