

Submission to the Committee on Standards in Public Life

from Brian H. Donohoe MP (Central Ayrshire)

To be emailed to: Inquiry@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk

I wish to devote my submission to addressing the most fundamental issue that has been identified by the Committee: namely whether or not MPs should be able to determine the level and nature of their own remuneration.

It is my view that MPs' remuneration should be taken completely out of members' hands. Instead it should be handled just like that of any other person in the UK. I believe such a move would immediately and dramatically increase public confidence in the political system, since the so-called 'gravy train' would have been derailed.

In practice this means an MP's salary and any applicable allowances should be determined by an independent body such as the Committee on Standards in Public Life on which no sitting MP can serve but MPs must be given the right to make submissions for consideration. The guiding principle must be that remuneration levels must be seen to be fair to the public, whilst still being sufficient to attract the most appropriate people into the House of Commons. At the same time an independent Arbitrator would be appointed.

An MP's pay and their expenses should be determined in relation to the job they do. In setting appropriate levels, the independent body should make comparison with legislative bodies in other democracies, as well as in other sectors within the UK.

Historically, MPs' remuneration has eroded in real terms. Many members feel aggrieved about this, and to a large extent this forms the backdrop to the recent controversy.

All areas of potential confusion must be clarified. For example, the basic rules for an MP are set out in the 'Green Book', but there is also what has become known as the 'John Lewis' list, against which allowances claims are supposedly measured. Despite sitting on the Administration committee I have yet to see this 'John Lewis list'. I believe that every single regulation that regulates any aspect of MPs' remuneration must be highly visible, clear and fair to all interested parties.

This proposal may undermine the 'Sovereignty of Parliament' but in order to restore confidence and respect in the Country is essential and must be binding for all time.

***Submitted by Brian H. Donohoe MP (Central Ayrshire)
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