

Submission to Members of the Committee on Standards in Public Life in relation to your review of MP's Expenses:

Your document entitled "Issues and Questions" correctly indicates that "The starting point for it (the inquiry) has to be what the public want and demand from their MP's." It follows that you need to define the role of an MP.

There may therefore be a debate as to whether it is a full-time or part-time role. You only refer to this issue somewhat tangentially in your question 13: "Is it acceptable or desirable that MP's should be able to receive remuneration for activities outside parliament?" with emphasis on the secondary question of remuneration rather than the primary question of the time required for an MP to fulfil their responsibilities to the electorate.

To a neutral reader it is suspicious that there is no reference at all to the equally important parallel issue of an MP taking on additional and remunerated responsibilities, particularly Ministerial.

Surely the fact that MP's can take on such demanding executive responsibilities in addition to their responsibilities as MP's proves that an MP's role can only possibly be part-time? Otherwise their local electorate is being disadvantaged and there should be an election for an additional MP, which may be the appropriate solution?

I recognise that such a solution is outside your remit but your more limited solution nevertheless needs to deal satisfactorily with this question or else it will be flawed. You may need to cover separate categories of MP's, from those with no additional responsibilities to those with additional full-time executive responsibilities.

Let me jump to a simple solution regarding accommodation: A simple daily allowance for those MP's with constituencies a certain distance from Westminster is by far the best basic solution. Objections to a "clocking-in" system are spurious. Working a maximum of four days a week for a limited number of weeks a year in Westminster does not require any year-round allowance and such a system would not need to consider the individual circumstances of MP's other than the location of their constituency. The resulting shrinkage of the fees office could be used as an example to other government departments and agencies!

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you wish for any clarification of the above.

Yours Sincerely,

Robert Smart