



Sir Christopher Kelly  
Committee on Standards in Public Life  
35 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BQ

RECEIVED  
13 JUN 2009

E605

14 June 2009

Dear Sir Christopher

Thank you for your interest in shadowing me on Friday.

I waited until this had occurred before making my submission to your Committee, which I hope they will consider.

The principles of openness and transparency are paramount and in themselves behaviour changing.

However I believe that your Committee must go much further than Parliament is choosing to do and beyond merely transparency and effective auditing.

I believe that you must take account of unintended consequences of any changes, and in particular changes resulting in fewer MPs living in their constituency; secondly the danger that more vulnerable constituents will be further disenfranchised if MPs cannot reach out to them.

My work with retired coalminers is a classic case of why the Communications Allowance, or something comparable, is vital in renewing our democracy.

I believe that you must stop the following:

1. Payments towards mortgages with immediate effect
2. Payments for properties in constituencies from the start of the next Parliament
3. Payments for food and subsistence.
4. Payments to political parties for offices, staff or services

In addition:

5. Overnight stays in London should be based on actual expenditure, actual nights and limited to civil service out of London rates (eg D of H in Leeds)
6. Every MP should have to produce annual audited Office and Communications Costs accounts using an auditor from a list of recognised auditors



7. No staff should be located in property owned by an MP (eg in offices in homes)
8. All second jobs should be declarable, including government appointments
9. All overseas visits and costs should be made available through Parliament, including those paid by international bodies
10. Parliamentary computers should be removed from designated MP expenses and accounted for openly through standard Parliamentary accounts
11. Annual rail season tickets should be provided to all MPs
12. No payment should be made for car journeys to Westminster and an amount consolidated into salary for travel costs within constituencies
13. The maximum London overnight allowance should be £10,000 per year
14. Any capital gain from property ownership should be paid or repaid to the taxpayer
15. No consumer goods should be claimable through the London overnight allowance with immediate effect

I believe some detailed exchanges can assist in other areas and with the above:

- a) The London weighting should be paid to all MPs in lieu of any subsistence payments
- b) All staff related to MPs and all staff holding elected public office should be job evaluated independently (eg by CIPD) and immediately and appropriate action taken in they are found to overpaid or not carrying out the duties listed in their contract of employment.
- c) No staff should be required to be made redundant as a consequence of any changes
- d) MPs should retain the right to use public money to engage their constituents
- e) Standardised offices will create lowest common denominator MPs, doubtless well hidden from their constituents

Finally, I think that the principles of transparency and accountability are being confused a lot in the current scandal.

An MP ought to be able to do the job in a way that they choose. Any straight jacketing of the system will lead to even more anonymous, characterless MPs. Everything should be published and internally and externally audited. The principle should be simple: that you cannot line your pockets through being an MP.

I believe that it is easy to create and manage a system that does precisely this.

Yours Sincerely

JOHN MANN

Member of Parliament for Bassetlaw