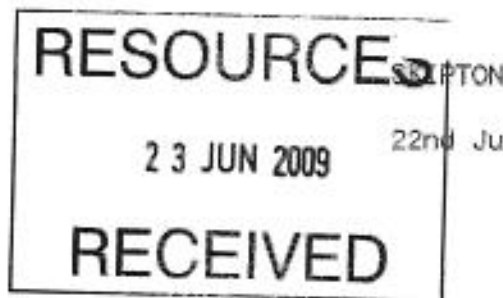


Telephone

The Head  
Parliamentary Fees Office  
Houses of Parliament  
Westminster SW1A 0AA



E665

Dear Sir/Madam

MEMBERS' EXPENSES

It seems to me that there is a way out of some of the current mess, which is already used by some organisations in the country. I suggest that time should be found to draw up rules on the lines of the following, to be implemented from the start of the next Parliament:

1. a Constituency Member's Housing Trust be set up for every constituency, the trustees being the agents of the four largest political parties operating in that constituency.
2. the Trust will purchase, furnish and maintain in the constituency a house of appropriate size for a family, and purchase or rent a small flat located within easy travelling distance of Westminster, to be used by whoever is the elected MP.
3. the Parliamentary Fees Office will pay to the Trust the costs of purchase/renting, furnishing and maintaining these properties and their gardens, and pay the council tax and metered water, gas and electricity costs.
4. the MP will be responsible for all other costs, claiming from PFO whatever allowances Parliament agrees can be claimed.

Such an arrangement does away with the option for switching first and second homes and claiming for furniture and fittings, and also allows the member's private home to be anywhere in the country without discrimination.

However, a clause in the Trust Rules should require the MP to state, within three months of being elected, whether he/she will occupy either constituency house or Westminster flat during that Parliament. If not, the Trust should be permitted to let it on a short tenancy ceasing no later than two months before the next election, giving time for it to be refurbished before the newly elected MP may wish to occupy it.

Yours faithfully  
Stephen Hogben