

John G. Weaver

Woodbridge

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25<sup>th</sup> June 2009


The Secretary  
Committee on Standards in Public Life  
35 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BQ

Dear Sir or Madam

**Committee on Standards in Public Life**

Would you please pass the enclosed letter to Sir Christopher Kelly, who, I understand, is Chairman heading the Committee investigating and reporting on a new system for controlling and monitoring the expenses of Members of Parliament.

Yours faithfully

 G. Weaver

John G. Weaver

Woodbridge

25<sup>th</sup> June 2009

For the attention of Sir Christopher Kelly,  
Chairman  
Committee on Standards in Public Life

Dear Sir Christopher,

Having been appointed by The Prime Minister to head the committee that is charged with investigating and reporting on a new system for the payment of expenses for Members of Parliament, I felt compelled to write, outlining my concerns. These include suggestions for a system that I consider could be implemented towards a fairly immediate resolution and one that might not take too long to introduce.

The situation is dire and the current system is indefensible, especially when it seems that it might have been abused by those lacking any sense of moral behaviour while allegedly trying to line their own pockets at the taxpayers' expense. Any MPs who may have been involved, should be brought to order and made to repay all their ill-gotten gains and be subject to sanctions and the rule of law. They should not simply feel they have a clean bill of health by having made repayment. Any such MPs should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves, although most do not seem to be in an apologetic frame of mind at present. An observation based on those that I have seen making comments on television and from what I have read in the press!

The solution is simple and can easily be introduced, following best practice in the private sector.

There should be no payments whatsoever for second homes, which, after all, appear to be the reason the expenses system may have been abused, along with apparently weak administration in the fees office monitoring the expenses claims.

There should be no need for second homes, merely a system for overnight out of pocket expenses. All that is needed is for those MPs who reside, say fifty miles outside Westminster, to be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses during their stay close to Parliament. These should cover hotel bills for bed and breakfast and lunch or dinner whilst away from their constituency home, which should be registered from records when they took up their role as an MP, or with any subsequent moves notified to an independent monitoring authority. Reimbursement of travel expenses actually incurred from this registered home, should be made for air, rail, bus, tube or taxi fares, or a mileage allowance applied in line with HMRC rules at a maximum of 40p per mile for the first 10k miles annually and 25p thereafter. There should be no direct payment for food and other purchases.

Bands of reimbursement can readily be established for acceptable levels of costs for overnight accommodation, setting the maximum that can be claimed for relevant daily expenditure, with any excess for more extravagant charges to be paid exclusively from the MPs' own personal funds. Should an MP decide to stay in more expensive hotels, then any charges over the standard levels of allowances for B&B and dinner must be solely for the MP's own personal account and not down to the taxpayer to fund.

Each and every item claimed should be supported by a paid receipt, even for taxi fares, with tickets on public transport used as evidence where applicable. There must be no return to 'cosy letters' imploring the administration fees office to make payment for anything else and no other items of expenditure should be considered outside of these rules, apart from an entertaining allowance strictly in line with ministerial or committee responsibilities. No 'overseas junkets' with partners should be allowed. I accept that some MPs may have a need to travel to investigate what is happening in other countries, regions or areas, but prior approval of such trips should be subject to higher level agreement, with ground rules set down and trips made without partners accompanying, unless on Government business and for reasons of protocol connected with their hosts.

Such a system with strict adherence to submission of receipts and ticket counterfoils as proof of payment is all that is needed, attached to a detailed expenses form completed by the claiming MP on a monthly basis.

It is time to bring some sense of reality to the situation, with no more fallacious excuses of "having done anything outside the rules". A return to sound ethics and moral judgement is now required and all expenses monitored by a truly independent body with tight control at all times. Expenses payments, after all, come solely from taxpayers' money and the MPs' are working on behalf of the voting public.

Another change is also desperately needed. That is to put a stop to the final salary 'gold plated' pension scheme and change this for a money purchase scheme, letting MPs take their chance in the 'lottery' of their cumulative pension pot like the vast majority of the hard working British public in the private sector. After all, MPs should not be regarded as something special, as they are merely elected representatives from the general public and should not receive more favourable treatment than the electorate they represent.

I hope that my suggestions might have a sympathetic hearing in your deliberations and that an equitable resolution of this whole affair is found in fairly quick time.

I would, of course, appreciate any comments you may feel able to make in response to the foregoing.

Yours sincerely

John Weaver.