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LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
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Our ref: NMP266678

21 July 2009

Dear Sir Christopher,

MPs' EXPENSES

During my oral evidence to you on 16 June I said that I would write to you on two specific points concerning travel to outer London and Home Counties and the London allowance.

Commuting

Though the Government has done a great deal to modernise the sitting hours of the House, the House continues to sit regularly until 10.30 pm or later on Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday and Thursday, the House sits till 8.30 pm and 7.30 pm respectively. Figures from the Department for Transport show that 77 per cent of commuters to outer London and Home Counties leave central London before 7 pm with only 7 per cent leaving after 8 pm. On Monday and Tuesday nights, the House might rise at 11 pm or later and several select committees meet between 9 am and 10 am the following day.

London Allowance

The figure of £7,500 London allowance was determined by the Members Estimate Committee in its Third Report of 2007-08 (HC 578), pp. 59-60. It consists of a London weighting of £4,000 per annum, reflecting the average across a range of public and private sector occupations, to reflect the actual additional cost of living and working in inner London throughout the year. In addition to this, the Committee calculated a net daily cost of £30 for each night on which the House sat late, consisting of £5-6 part-day subsistence and £25 for a taxi fare of up to six miles. Multiplied by the number of late sittings, this gave a net annual total £2,100, or £3,500 gross.

Yours

HARRIET HARMAN

Sir Christopher Kelly KCB
Chairman, Committee on Standards in Public Life