

T: Dixon

Chichester

Sir Christopher Kelly
Chairman
Commons Committee on Standards in Public Life
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Tel:
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29th July 2009

Dear Sir Christopher

Taxpayer funding of MPs "partners"

I am writing to request that the Commons Committee on Standards in Public Life considers whether it is ethical for MPs to use taxpayer funds to pay for their boyfriends and/or girlfriends share of joint house purchase or mortgage costs.

The current version of the parliamentary Green Book (March 2009) states: *"Members are not prevented from taking out a joint mortgage but only joint mortgages with a Member's spouse/civil partner/partner will be fully covered by PAAE."*

The definitions on page 66 state: *"Partner means one of a couple, whether of the same sex or of the opposite sex (the other being a Member) who although not married to each other or civil partners are living together and treat each other as spouses."* Earlier Green Books did not recognise this recently introduced definition.

As far as I am aware, the taxation and benefits systems both recognise spouses and civil partners but not "partners". This definition appears to have been introduced purely for the financial benefit of the boyfriends/girlfriends of MPs.

I hope that the Commons Committee on Standards in Public Life will agree that if the taxation and benefits systems do not recognise "partners" then MPs should be expected to live by the same rules.

If the committee supports this view, will it please ensure that the Green Book is amended accordingly and will it also consider whether any monies received as a result of this "rule" should be repaid to the taxpayer?

Finally, if the boyfriends/girlfriends of MPs have received taxpayer funding of their mortgage (outside marriage/civil partnership) then they leave themselves open to public scrutiny. As taxpayers, we are entitled to ask if they paid tax on their parliamentary windfall?

Will the Commons Committee on Standards in Public Life please ensure that the tax rules governing such payments are correctly identified and made public?

Yours sincerely

