

4 June 2009

THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE - INQUIRY INTO MPS' EXPENSES

Having worked for three years for an MP although not since 1998 when allowances were considerably less generous, I wish to suggest a number of changes to the arrangements for MPs' expenses:

1. All MPs' staff paid by the House of Commons should have their names and salaries made public. Their names are to a large extent in the public domain already through the register of staff interests for those who have a Commons pass. This should become universal and include their salaries.

Such a change is especially necessary if and when such people are employed by the Commons itself. However I do think this proposal is unwise and will draw the House into unending disputes which should be left to individual MPs to settle. It will also make it difficult to resist inevitable staff demands to go into a final salary pension scheme like MPs, and away from private providers.

2. The MPs final salary pension scheme should however be closed as it is inappropriate for members to have a privileged aristocratic scheme which is denied now to almost everyone outside the public sector. It also make it nearly impossible for that public sector privilege to be addressed in the future if MPs so benefit from it.
3. Most of the departing and resettlement allowances should be scrapped or based on statutory redundancy requirements. They are far too generous and discriminate against members and staff who depart at other times. If an MP is defeated he should not be rewarded. The people have spoken.
4. The Additional Costs Allowance or cost of staying away from one's main home should be restricted to those who have a constituency no part of which is within 25 miles of the Palace of Westminster. Twenty miles is too close nor should those who have a bit of their constituency more than 20 miles away be able to claim this allowance.

It should also only be payable for or toward accommodation within 25 miles of Westminster not anywhere else. If a new MP happens to have a home in London already without a mortgage, taxpayers should not pay towards it in any way.

5. The Communications Allowance for newsletters and other material "designed to inform the public about their work" should be scrapped as it simply promotes self-publicity and creates unfair advantages in the constituency for a sitting MP, as opposed to other candidates.
6. The allowances for centrally purchased stationery and associated postage costs are a remnant of the past and are also exploited for self-promotion or maxing

expenses. They too should go. The House provides stationery and freepost envelopes in large quantities as it is (or did).

7. MPs (and Peers) who are MLAs should get no salaries or expenses from Stormont. If they can do both jobs, their Commons' staff (and allowances) can do the same. Stormont had a proportion of its work transferred to it from Westminster but that work used all to be done by MPs so there is no new or extra constituency work created.

MLAs' salaries and expenses are also drastically over-generous and should be cut by half.

My evidence may be published if so wished.

Yours sincerely

J Dudgeon