

As a constituent in Enfield of the Rt Hon Joan Ryan MP, I wish to raise a few key points to go to Sir Christopher Kelly, the chairman of the Committee on Expenses.

I write under three headings

- Main Points
- Rented accommodation versus a bought second home

An expense cannot be a valid expense where the MP gets funding and retains anything as a result or ultimately derives a profit from selling it later - whether it be it a carpet, a second home or anything else. Likewise preferential treatment such as exemption from capital gains tax is a benefit, not an expense.

Therefore ANY money claimed as an expense where goods have been retained should be returned and paid back in full and the proceeds of that and of the sale of any property and contents once an MP stands down. No capital gains should be retained. Likewise in the Lords.

As Harriet Harman said last Wednesday in her Authority Statement to the House of Commons, following Prime Minister's Questions, MPs should serve the interest of good government and their constituents, not their own. Many members of the general public, including me, abhor an approach which gives benefits over and above the actual expenses of carrying out the duties of an MP.

RENTED ACCOMODATION VERSUS A BOUGHT SECOND HOME

One Conservative lady MP in the exchanges following Harriet Harman's Authority Statement to the House of Commons last Wednesday (whose name I do not recall) said that MPs should not have to take accommodation in London in rented "barracks" as she called them. That was her retort to many pundits and members of the general public who currently are saying MPs should reside in rented accommodation in London, not homes bought by them at public expense. She said that MPs should be able to have a proper family life, not military style hardships.

This is totally reasonable but I strongly propose not in a second home bought at public expense wherever the constituency may be located. I am sure the overwhelming majority view of the general public mirrors my view.

The family home should be in the constituency. Why then should MP have better recompense for working away from home than people working in the private sector who also work away from home? If, when taking up the constituency the MP does not live there, then move home at their own expense as people working in the private sector almost universally would have to do.

All MPs who wish to can then stay in London in furnished rental accommodation or, better still, halls of residence owned by Whitehall. They need not be like barracks nor five star rental properties, something in between. That saves a lot of public money, not only on the property but with every other living expense away from home almost all of which the need for then disappears entirely.

Regards,
S Felce
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