

Review of MPs' Expenses
The Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

4th June 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

I have been campaigning for openness and accountability in public life for many years, by trying to get all Public Bodies to hold an Annual Open Public meeting to issue their Annual Report and Accounts, for the Holders of Public Office to appear before the public to explain how they and their organisations have served the public during the past year. Sadly today many Public Bodies still do not hold Annual Open Public meetings to hold themselves accountable before the public they serve.

The Seven Principles of Public Life already adequately sets out how Members of Parliament and individuals holding positions in public office should behave. The public have been let down by some Members of Parliament failing to follow these principles and the system of monitoring failing to hold them accountable.

When information is in the public domain the holders of public office are accountable for their actions to the public. When information is hidden from the public there is no accountability. In a representative democracy society we are dependant on the trust placed in hands of the Members of Parliament we elect, without this trust our society cannot operate.

Recommendations

- a) All expenses of Holders of Public Office must be published in the future.
- b) MPs should not vote in future on their own salaries and expenses.
- c) MPs salaries should be linked to the salaries of specific pay grades in the civil service.
- d) Staff monitoring and paying only receipted expenses and a small flat rate overnight allowance should be employed by an independent Public Body .
- e) MPs office costs may be procured from the independent Public Body, where the Public Body can negotiate better prices for MPs, otherwise MPs should continue to manage their own expenses and recover the cost from the Public Body.
- f) Only MPs with constituencies that are not within commuting distance of Parliament should be paid expenses for overnight accommodation or second home allowances in London.
- g) Main homes should be within or close to constituencies.

- h) Second homes where applicable should be within commuting distance of Parliament.
- i) Second home allowances should only be paid when this is less expensive than overnight accommodation and is restricted to mortgage interest, and utility costs.
- j) Designation of second homes can only be changed with the approval by the Public Body and be notified at the same time to HMRC for Capital Gains Tax purposes.
- k) The Independent Public Body should pay MPs and their staff who have contracts of employment with the Public Body.
- l) Spouses and family members may only be employed if it can be demonstrated to the Public Body that they are the best people to do the job and have the qualifications and ability necessary to carry out the work.
- m) The Public Body should produce an Annual Report and Audited Accounts which should be published once a year and the heads of the Public Body should be available to answer public questions at an Annual Open Public meeting.
- n) All MPs expenses and receipts should be published on the internet after removing only personal information such as addresses and credit card numbers.
- o) MPs should be allowed to have earnings outside Parliament, but should declare the employment with a statement setting out how their outside earnings will not hinder their work as an MP and if the work will enhance their work as an MP.
- p) Resettlement Grants should not be paid when MPs are found guilty of misconduct.

I hope your Committee will be able to quickly set in place a suitable system to restore the public's faith in our Parliamentary system.

Yours Faithfully

V F Mather FCA