

Hi

I would like to give evidence on Q5 of the issues paper on MPs expenses.

It seems perfectly reasonable that the cost within a reasonable limit- (perhaps determined by an annual independent valuation exercise on behalf of the commons, of an archetype property size and location for each household composition type) should be met by the state. However the fundamental problem at present, as I understand it, is that MPs get the benefit of the effective subsidised purchase of the property after they have left office. A recently retired MP of a northern town with very low house prices told me how, by selling his second home in London allowed him to massively trade up in his retirement to a very comfortable rural location, completely out of reach, had he had to rely solely on the disposal of his main (constituency) home. Effectively he profited (legitimately at present) from the system of making it easier for him to carry out his parliamentary duties, after he had ceased to have parliamentary duties.

My suggestion is that a full legal charge should be placed upon any property acquired as a second home, in favour of the commons estate. When an MP leaves office that property is either bought by the MP who must pay full open market value for it from the commons estate, thus releasing the charge, or the property is sold on, in which case all proceeds revert to the commons.

I suggest that it is not sufficient to simply recover mortgage interest payments made, as this does not tackle the issue of equity increases (a direct additional benefit for MPs arising out of the provision of a second home to do their job.) The presumption should be that homes are provided for the tenure of MPs stay in the commons, not as additional assets for the MP. I suggest that MPs should not be allowed to make payments beyond the interest they reclaim as a genuine expense.

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