

Dear Sir Christopher,

Over a period of years, many large organisations have developed systems for controlling expenses claims. There seems little point in starting afresh for MPs. I worked for twenty years as a senior manager in ICI, then for the NHS and later was self employed. The same principles were used in these very different situations.

General Expenses.

The principle here seems to be simple and clear. MPs should be able to claim for expenses necessarily incurred in carrying out their work. The standard should be the same as for the rest of us - they should be able to pass the test of stringent examination by the Inland Revenue. If an MP considers the expenditure to pass this test and be significant enough to be worth claiming then receipts should always be provided whatever the size of the claim.

Simple examples of what is acceptable should be provided. For example, claiming the cost of travelling to work from the MPs London address would not be acceptable, travel to visit a non-London constituency would be. Travel incurred as part of the job should be claimed - by car at the AA rate, by train or plane in a defined class, hotel accommodation again at a defined level, say four star AA.

Support staff and resources

All controversy would be avoided if each MP were provided with offices, one at Westminster, one in the constituency, appropriately equipped and if the staff were recruited, employed and therefore paid by the civil service. It would be acceptable if MPs were one of the panel who appointed the staff to ensure that they were compatible. Party offices should be absolutely separate.

Housing

Simple rules again are not impossible.

London MPs, if when elected they do not live in London will presumably move to London. They should be allowed to claim reasonable expenses incurred in buying and moving to a London address - estate agent's and solicitor's fees; removal expenses; interest on any bridging loans; for a reasonable time, personal expenses incurred living in London while selling their previous house; expenditure on soft furnishings incurred because of the move (carpets and curtains which no longer fit) but not any expenditure on the new house itself or on its fittings - these are already included in the purchase price of the house and any improvements will be reflected in its value and sale price and should be borne by the MP. It is possible that as, for example, family circumstances change they wish to move the family home but any expenses incurred in doing so they should bear themselves.

Non - London MPs, when elected must choose whether to make their main home in London or their constituency and declare their choice but like the rest of us it should be normal for them to move to live near their main place of work i.e. London. They should be allowed to claim the same reasonable expenses incurred in buying and moving to their chosen address. Again, it is possible that as circumstances change, they may wish to move the family home but any expenses incurred in doing so they

should bear themselves. They will clearly additionally need accommodation in their constituency at weekends or perhaps in London during the week. For this a standard daily rate should be claimable to cover all expenditure incurred in board and lodging.. MPs can then choose how they live, in a flat or a hotel or at their own additional expense by buying a second house. I would suggest one exception. Should they choose to stay with friends or family a different and lower rate should apply, enough to cover a gift for an occasional day or the additional expenses the friend or family member incurs.

Yours sincerely,

T Turrill