

Hi

I heard Sir Christopher Kelly on Radio 4 this afternoon and feel that his department may like to read letters I have sent to the PM and to my local MP, Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells). In passing, as I mentioned her, I also sent a copy of the PM letter to Barbara Follett MP.

Clearly, something constructive has to be done to put right the abuse that is now prevalent and my idea, in one word is to TENDER for expenses expected to be incurred when becoming an MP.

This method is used all over the world, particularly for construction projects – so is nothing new.

An alternative, mentioned in the news today, is to engage yet another body to supervise payment made and no doubt to ensure that future payments are acceptable. This has at least two faults:

- a) It will cost a great deal of money in staff costs and no doubt premises; Savings are unlikely;
- b) MPs will continue to try to abuse the system and will 'test' the new authority to see what they can get away with.

By TENDERING for a post or job, the tenderer is normally obliged to think VERY carefully before adding costs 'willy-nilly'.

The LOCAL party office would discuss potential costs with its prospective MP and would have access to tenders from other potential Members. If candidate A would not accept a lower or adjusted tender, then candidate B may have a better overall chance of being able to offer a service to constituents – for a lower overall cost.

I think another idea, to increase basic salary, is utter madness as this will engender higher hidden costs such as pensions etc.

Letters sent to the PM and to Greg Clark are attached.

Please would you pass my message onto an appropriate 'ear'.

Regards

M Gaze

Tunbridge Wells Kent

9 May 2009

The Right Honourable Gordon Brown PhD PC MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Dr Brown

I received a response from your office, today, from Mr S Caine, in response to my note about running the UK as a tax haven to put an end to the drain of entrepreneurs - for which many thanks.

You are in deep trouble again, this time over expenses. The other parties will get the same stick, too. I attach an apt cartoon from The Times, today. I know you could see this one coming and promoted a £150 attendance allowance. May I suggest that this would have opened the floodgates from the Unions who would suggest their members would 'require' an 'allowance' for attending (say) a cab atop a crane! May I promote a really practical and WORKABLE alternative?

All prospective MPs have to be selected by their local party offices. It is at this time, and before any election is held, that prospective MPs should have to submit their TENDER for expenses. The tender would be for a fixed price [subject only to RPI increases] and, if selected to stand for parliament, the incumbent would have to live with the suggested cost of living in London. Clearly the MP for Hull would have a very different level of potential expenses than the member for Putney. It would be foolhardy to pad a tender with charges for multiple TVs, for example.

The responsibility for arranging the tender would lie with the local constituency offices throughout the country. During the selection process, prospectives would have their tenders examined and would have to support their claim [before local committee]. I would suggest that the chosen candidate for the election would **not** necessarily have to offer the lowest tender...but it would need to be competitive. Mrs Barbara Follett MP, for example, might promote herself with a £nil claim as she has a husband who must well be able to support his wife with great ease – and probably has a central London apartment in any case. So, each and every MP will have different circumstances and the TENDER method will take that into account. The Green Book is an open invitation for the public to be taken for a ride – by MPs who are proving themselves to be canny.

I speak with considerable experience of having to survive by the tender process. My firm won the contract as principal landscape contractors for the Jubilee Gardens, opened by HM in 1977 - as but one example. Our base was in Gloucestershire, so costing had to account for London living.

I returned, recently, from Berlin having visited the Bundestag. I enclose a copy of a page from Facts: The Bundestag at a glance. (Last updated 2006) I am sure the Treasury could come up with a UK costing. Might be interesting.

Yours sincerely

Tunbridge Wells Kent

10 May 2009

Greg Clark MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Clark

Thank you for your recent letter in response to one penned earlier to the PM. I have, again, written to his office and a copy of the correspondence is enclosed. I am positively NOT a Labour Party supporter but it would serve no useful purpose to rant at Dr GB.

He put forward a really stupid idea to give an MP a handout of £150 for attendance. Once established, this would have had a massive impact upon trades unions trying to gain for their members – “lets have some of that, too...”

I feel the concept of all potential parliamentarians of all persuasions and stature (commoners and Lords alike) should have to prepare and to present a Tender to their local party executive setting out the costs they see as would be fit to charge for carrying out their duty.

The Tender Document would be fairly substantial and not at all dis-similar to documents prepared by architects and local authorities before a construction project is started. So, it will not take rocket science to prepare suitable Tender Documents. Completion by a prospective MP should not be challenging – just a matter of carefully calculated arithmetic with the guidance of the format set out in Tender. No doubt some accountants will line up to help completion (at the prospective’s own expense). The suggested charges would of course be fixed price but possibly subject to RPI increases, and only for the duration of the term, up to 5 years.

I would expect there to be different sections relating to London housing and the cost of staying away from home as there are many methods available. One might rent a flat; may purchase a suitable apartment on mortgage; may buy outright; may stay in a hotel from time to time. The cost of these options would vary considerably. In the end, it may prove obvious to the candidate and to the local party committee which is to be preferred. If a more expensive route is favoured, then the elected MP must meet the commitment out of his own pocket.

A Tender would eliminate the foolishness of some who have charged several televisions, Tampax packets, dismal magazines and films and household expenses that should be met, outright, from their normal salary.

The public has now had quite enough and a new departure has to be laid and this method will not take long to establish AND before the next election – hopefully very shortly.

Yours sincerely

M M Gaze