

I should like to make the following proposals to Sir Christopher Kelly and his Committee for consideration when suggesting MPs allowances. My suggestions seem, to me, to have several merits, that I shall add at the end.

This email should be read as an outline proposal of principles. Detailed work would need to be done to “flesh out” these proposals before adoption.

Commencing with the next Parliament, all MPs allowances should be abolished. MPs should be regarded as self-employed contractors to their electorate. For the entire Parliament, and for one Parliament only, MPs should be paid a monthly rate that would take into account the location of their constituency and the number of constituents. This sum would be fixed for the entire Parliament. MPs would be expected to fund everything from the monthly contract fee, *including*:

- Their pension arrangements
- Their office rental and costs
- Their communications expenses
- Their regular travel costs within the UK, but excluding foreign travel required for their duties, fact-finding etc
- The costs of their employees
- Their constituency costs

The list is not exhaustive: in effect, MPs would have to run their operations as any other self-employed person does, and they would have to adhere to all pertinent legislation such as Health and Safety requirements, pension provision, maternity and paternity leave arrangements etc.

Since all allowances would be abolished, the need for those persons manning the expenses office would become redundant, and the taxpayer would save on their costs. Policing of expenses claims would revert to HMRC, a body well-equipped to do so. (Note, because of the turnover, they would all be VAT registered, and would have to collect VAT receipts to support their claims.)

There would be no termination allowance. If the electorate boots them out at the next election, they will be regarded as having been sacked for failure to meet their contractual obligations to their constituents. They will have to save out of their contracted rate to prepare for the possibility.

After the next Parliament, candidates would be expected to tender for the job. On the ballot paper would be a figure which would be the candidate’s monthly tender price so that the electorate would see not only what the candidate was offering, but also how much he would charge. The experience of the next Parliament would provide plenty of information to allow candidates at subsequent elections to make reasoned tender offers.

These are the principles. I accept that some work needs to be done to arrive at a reasonable monthly stipend for the first Parliament under this system.

Now, just some of the (many) advantages:

- Simplicity – what could be simpler than a fixed monthly payment? –and they’d learn to live within their means!

- Control – knowing that the sum is fixed for a whole Parliament, MPs minds would concentrate on making sure inflation is controlled.
- Control – having to conform to the laws they pass would make them think before they vote.
- Control – knowing that HMRC would be checking their accounts and their expenses, they would be less likely to “forget” things.
- Accountability – knowing that they would have to make provision for their own retirement, and potential redundancy, they would control their costs.
- Savings – knowing that they would be involved in an open tender in future, they would ensure they implemented efficiency and productivity improvements.

I would be delighted, at my own expense, to come and expand further on these simple suggestions.

D G Bruce