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Norfolk

12<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Dear Sir Christopher Kelly,

I am writing to you as Chair of the Committee reviewing Members of Parliament (MPs') expenses and re-evaluating the rules regarding MPs', claims for expenses.

As a member of the public and a tax payer I wanted to send in my views on the subject, I am aware some sessions are in public but I am unable to attend and therefore wanted to send this letter.

I trust this is satisfactory to you.

In my opinion no public servant should be out of pocket for doing their job, but neither should they profit from the public purse just for doing their job.

I do not think second homes should be allowed, I realise that MPs' have to stay in London to do their job, but where they stay should be public owned and paid for, and they should not profit from these homes. Inventories should be taken so it is clear what belongs to the public and what is the individual's own property. Their constituency homes should be funded by themselves, we all have to pay for our accommodation. If there comes a time when these second homes were no longer needed the public would benefit from any profit in the sale of these homes. If just overnight stays were required hotels could be claimed for, but again three star hotels should be sufficient, costs should be minimised as the tax payer would be paying.

Travel expenses should be claimed only in the course of their duty and only second class travel; if they choose to travel first class they should pay the difference themselves and evidence that.

Food and drink should not be claimed, this is not an extra because of the job you do, and you would eat and drink anyway.

All claims should be receipted, or evidence supplied, and should be available for public viewing if required. The audit trail should be clear and a separate body, which includes ordinary members of the public should be on the review body, this same body would need to agree extraordinary claims and be able ask to see claims made, and receipts at any time.

All claims, salary, pensions etc in relation to their job should be published, as they are with other public sector bodies, with the person's name and job role included, other personal details should not be necessary.

Second jobs should not be allowed, I would think being in the public services is a full time job, and conflicts of interest could result in bias.

Any help with tax returns, book keeping etc should only be allowed in the duty of their business as with all business dealings.

The running costs of offices etc should be claimed for but only the necessities.

The public should also know what hours are put in by MPs', how often they spend in their constituencies and how often they meet with their public, at meetings or at 'surgeries'. This would, in my opinion, give the public a more rounded insight into the role of an MP.

Working in the public sector is a privilege but it is not an easy role and requires commitment, and a desire to assist others, especially the vulnerable in society.

I think the term honourable should be kept, but I also think that members should be reminded what that means.

Once the new rules are suggested they should go out for public consultation to ensure the public agrees or has the chance to give their opinions, which should be taken into consideration, and again members of the public on any committee that finally agrees the go ahead for the new rules.

All those who have agreed to step down should do so now, not wait so they can get even more money from the public purse.

Personally I think these rules should apply to all public service workers.

The above is my personal opinion, as a taxpayer and member of the public. I hope the comments are considered along with the opinions of others.

Yours sincerely,

C: Belshaw