



House of Commons
Committee on Members'
Allowances

Minutes of Proceedings

Session 2009–10

Committee on Members' Allowances

The Committee on Members' Allowances is appointed by the House of Commons to advise the Members Estimate Committee on the exercise of its functions (which relate to charges on the Members Estimate), to advise the Speaker, the Members Estimate Committee and the Leader of the House on the potential development of the arrangements for Members' allowances, and to approve Practice Notes to be used in administering Members' allowances.

Current membership

Mr Don Touhig MP (*Labour Co-op, Islwyn*) (*Chairman*)
Liz Blackman MP (*Labour, Erewash*)
Mr Alistair Carmichael MP (*Liberal Democrat, Orkney and Shetlands*)
Mr Nigel Dodds MP (*Democratic Unionist, Belfast North*)
Mr Michael Jack MP (*Conservative, Fylde*)
Mr Thomas McAvoy MP (*Labour Co-op, Rutherglen and Hamilton West*)
Dan Norris MP (*Labour, Wansdyke*)
Mr John Randall MP (*Conservative, Uxbridge*)

Powers

The Committee's powers are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152G. These are available at www.parliament.uk.

Further information

Further information about the Committee is at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/cma.cfm.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Dorian Gerhold (Clerk), Rhiannon Hollis (Second Clerk) and Rowena Macdonald (Committee Assistant).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Committee on Members' Allowances, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3318.

Wednesday 18 November 2009

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Consequential changes following the planned suspension of Communications Expenditure

Resolved, That the Committee's advice to the Leader of the House is that Communications Expenditure should be only partially suspended, and that it should still be possible to claim for expenditure incurred after 1 January 2010 on posters and advertisements informing constituents of surgery times (subject to restrictions), for the maintenance of existing office equipment, and for fees for maintaining website domain names and technical maintenance of websites.

2. White Book on pay and allowances of Members who leave the House at a general election

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Members Estimate Committee asking it to make an early decision to publish the new edition of the White Book submitted to it in draft, so that Members leaving the House at the general election have time to plan.

3. Guidance to Members in the post-Kelly period

The Committee considered this matter.

4. Redaction of information to be published on Members' allowances

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Members Estimate Committee requesting that Members have the opportunity to appeal to the Members' Allowances Committee if they disagree with officials over the redaction of allowances information intended for publication.

[Adjourned to Tuesday 1 December at 11 am

Tuesday 1 December 2009

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Alistair Carmichael
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Communications Expenditure

Ordered, That the Chairman seek a meeting with the Electoral Commission to clarify the relationship between the new rules on Communications Expenditure and the rules on election spending.

Resolved, That, in the case (which the Committee considered in anonymised form) of a Member who wished to use Communications Expenditure to produce a pamphlet on Afghanistan and to circulate it to Members and opinion formers (rather than constituents), the Committee's advice was that the claim should not be allowed.

Resolved, That, in the case (which the Committee considered in anonymised form) of a Member who had not sought advance clearance for a newsletter and whose newsletter broke a number of rules, the Committee's advice was that the claim under Communications Expenditure should not be allowed.

2. Regular review of Green Book, Practice Notes and other guidance

The Committee considered this matter.

3. Review of past ACA payments

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Members Estimate Committee asking it to ensure that there is a full explanation of any sums recommended for repayment.

[Adjourned to Wednesday 9 December at 5 pm

Wednesday 9 December 2009

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Alistair Carmichael
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Communications Expenditure

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Members Estimate Committee recommending the following:

- That Members should not be able to claim any website expenses from 1 January, but should not have to repay any set-up costs previously funded from Communications Expenditure;
- That where contracts for material funded from Communications Expenditure for use on or after 1 January had been entered into on or before 23 November, cancellation costs should be payable, but any material delivered should not be used unless paid for by the Member;
- That Members should be able to continue to use printing equipment already paid for from Communications Expenditure after 1 January;
- that Members should be able claim for advertising joint surgeries with other elected officials, but only if they obtained prior approval from the Department of Resources.

2. Designation of homes for Personal Additional Accommodation expenditure

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Tuesday 12 January at 11 am

Tuesday 12 January 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Alistair Carmichael

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

2. Practice Note on purchase of equipment

The Committee approved a Practice Note on purchase of equipment.

3. Possibility of reduced rates for hotels

The Committee considered this matter.

4. Letters from Members about allowances relating to disabilities, broadband in homes, utility bills and ACA/PAAE for Members married to each other

The Committee considered this matter.

5. Publication of allowances information

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Members Estimate Committee about the shortness of the time allowed to Members to check the most recent tranche of allowances information before publication.

[Adjourned to Tuesday 19 January at 4.30 pm

Tuesday 19 January 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

2. Arrangements for handling allowances and other work relating to Members leaving the House after the election

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the House of Commons Commission expressing concern about the arrangements for handling allowances and other work relating to Members leaving the House after the election, in the light of the proposed transfer of House staff to IPSA.

[Adjourned to Monday 25 January at 4 pm]

Monday 25 January 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Tuesday 26 January at 11 am]

Tuesday 26 January 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Wednesday 27 January at 2 pm]

Wednesday 27 January 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Thursday 28 January at 11 am]

Thursday 28 January 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Monday 1 February at 4 pm]

Monday 1 February 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Tuesday 2 February at 11 am]

Tuesday 2 February 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Monday 8 February at 4 pm]

Monday 8 February 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

In attendance: Sir Ian Kennedy, Chairman, IPSA, and officials of IPSA.

1. IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Tuesday 9 February at 11 am

Tuesday 9 February 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Alistair Carmichael
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Allowances relating to disabilities

The Committee considered this matter.

2. Communications Expenditure

Resolved, That, in the case of a Member who had used Communications Expenditure to publish a newsletter after the cut-off date of 1 January, the Committee's advice was that the claim should not be allowed.

3. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

4. Notice period for rented accommodation

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Wednesday 10 February at 12.30 pm

Wednesday 10 February 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

Resolved, That the Committee approves the draft response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme.

Ordered, That the Chairman send to IPSA the Committee's response to IPSA's proposed expenses scheme.

[Adjourned to Tuesday 2 March at 11 am

Tuesday 2 March 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Thomas McAvoy

Mr John Randall

1. Requests to change designations of homes for Personal Additional Accommodation Expenditure

Resolved, That the Committee approves the request by Mr Anthony Steen to make his constituency residence his main home and his London residence his second home, subject to him having completed the declaration on Capital Gains Tax required by the Members Estimate Committee, having been satisfied that the circumstances described by him constitute an exceptional case and noting that the change would be consistent with his actual current circumstances.

2. Advertisements for surgeries

Resolved, That advertisements for surgeries funded from Communications Expenditure should not include photographs.

3. Notice period for rented accommodation

The Committee considered this matter.

[Adjourned to Wednesday 3 March at 4.15 pm

Wednesday 3 March 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. Requests to change designations of homes for Personal Additional Accommodation Expenditure

Resolved, That changes in home designations should take effect from the date of the Committee's decisions.

[Adjourned to Wednesday 30 March at 11 am]

Wednesday 30 March 2010

Members present:

Mr Don Touhig, in the Chair

Liz Blackman
Mr Michael Jack

Mr Thomas McAvoy
Mr John Randall

1. IPSA's proposed expenses scheme

The Committee considered this matter.

2. Future of the Committee

Ordered, That the Chairman write to the Leader of the House and other MEC members emphasising the continuing need for a Committee which can convey the views of Members to IPSA.

[Adjourned to a day and time to be fixed by the Chairman]