

## **B. Making MPs Accept Normal Standards and Remuneration**

### 1. The Background of MPs

People believe in democracy and expect their elected representatives to demonstrate its ideals. Unfortunately politicians are not now generally seen as sufficiently experienced or competent for the offices which they hold, as operating in a trustworthy manner or as being in the job for the benefit of their constituents rather than for themselves. Voters feel let down by pronouncements which turn out to be spin, by a quest for publicity rather than for real change, by pledges which are not kept and by personal issues such as corruption and seemingly extravagant expenses. Many of these issues result from the generally little proper prior career experience which MPs have had before entering the House of Commons.

Joan Bakewell wrote in The Times in January 2009:

*"But it is the Commons that cries out for change. The electoral process is now so honed to serve the interests of political careers that MPs are growing more and more like each other. Learning the trade in university debating clubs, a year or two in a think-tank, then as political advisers, or rising through the grinding ranks of local councils, the political careerist is a clear type: focused and ambitious, fluent in the jargon of procedure and points of order, glib with amendments and early day motions."*

The current system of political parties does not allow MPs much opportunity to make known their individual judgments and one consequence of this reduction in the role of an MP is that the job now attracts less prestigious candidates. Historically many people decided to become an MP after a successful first career as a way of involving themselves in the life of the country and of giving back some of their experience. Nowadays such people tend to choose to move into the charity world or into retirement.

In contrast, most of those now seeking to become MPs, and most of the front benches of the three main political parties, are people who have only been in the "Westminster Village" since leaving college, working as research analysts, marketing advisers, journalists or in other similar capacities.

*"A political party is now a sort of glorified employment bureau for political careerists"*  
Jan Marijnissen

In writing in The Times about the likely attitude of many Labour MPs to what he described as "Gordon Brown's flailing leadership", Matthew Parris, a former MP, described how most MPs are more concerned with their own likely employment prospects than they are with their party's electoral prospects:

*"For the great majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party with no job in government, you can largely discount the issue of Labour losing power. So long as they retain their seats they keep the job they have - that of a backbencher. You may be sure that the most pressing thing on the minds of most Labour MPs this weekend is their own majority at the next election, not their party's."*

Even those MPs who have previously worked outside the immediate Westminster Village have tended to choose areas such as public relations rather than actually leading or managing in a charitable, commercial or public organisation. As a result such people tend to see the world mainly through the lens of short term media acceptance rather than longer term strategies and implementation.

People who would find it difficult to get a responsible job running the whole or part of any other significant organisation are suddenly given legitimacy by being selected by a political party and becoming MPs. A fair proportion of these, typically at least 40%, will subsequently become ministers. It is clear that there would be no likelihood of most of these people gaining an equivalent position in any other walk of life and it is therefore the endorsement of the political party label which gives them the opportunity for their apparent success in gaining a ministerial appointment.

An April 2008 study by the charity The Industry and Parliament Trust and the market research agency ComRes showed that only 21% of MPs had five or more years' experience in business management or financial services. The survey concluded: *"There is significant room for*

*improvement in the general business-friendliness of our legislatures” and noted that 80% of the British workforce is employed in the private sector which meant that Parliament had become seriously unrepresentative on this factor.*

A January 2009 letter to The Times from J. Anderson of London said:

*“We have, through our own apathy, allowed our government institutions to become increasingly corrupted by a cosy club of self-centered professionals who are more disconnected than ever from the real lives that most of us want to live.*

*If Britain wants real leadership in government, by honest and independent-minded individuals, who put the interests of their local constituents and their country above their own and those of their party, then voters need to take collective action at the next election to remove this cross-party crop of political cronies. We need to find a new way forward.*

*Overly powerful political parties, together with the professional “yes men” they select (to represent them not us), continue to destroy the integrity of our government institutions, to abuse our trust – and to erode the fabric of our society. We only have ourselves to blame.”*

## 2. The Behaviour of MPs

The legitimacy of Parliament depends on the trust which the public has in individual MPs and in the way in which all MPs conduct their personal and political lives. Trust is ‘a bet on the future contingent action of others’.

This trust can be damaged by the attitude of MPs at constituency level. In The Times in July 2008, Will Pavia described a letter written by David Clelland MP to one of his constituents telling him to “stick” his vote:

*“Mr Clelland, who has represented the people of Tyne Bridge in Newcastle for 23 years, has written to one resident informing him that he had no desire for his vote in the future. “I accept your offer not to vote for me again,” he wrote, in bold defiance of the usual conventions that exist in communications between elected representatives and their electorate. “I do not want your vote so you can stick it wherever best pleases you.”*

*Mr Clelland, 64, offered this advice in response to a letter from Gary Scott, 27, an IT salesman with concerns over civil liberties. Mr Scott was very disappointed with what he saw. “You vote with your party on pretty much every single issue,” he wrote. “It’s not your constituents you represent, it’s your party.”*

*Mr Clelland replied accusing Mr Scott of arrogance for thinking that “you . . . represent the views of the people of our community”. This, Mr Clelland wrote, was his job.*

*Mr Clelland is not the first Honourable Member to have allowed his true feelings to be heard. On announcing his intention to step down from Parliament, Tony Banks said that working with his constituents had been “intellectually numbing” and “tedious in the extreme”.*

*On another occasion an aide to Dari Taylor, MP, advised his boss that there was “no rush” to help a constituent who was a “snotty” woman who “hates the Government”. The advice was accidentally e-mailed directly to the constituent. Michael Stern, MP for Bristol North West until 1997, named one of his constituents as a “neighbour from hell”.*

Although there are many MPs who do not misuse their position, in the last forty years there have been a number of government scandals which have eroded people’s trust in MPs. These include the 1972 Poulson scandal when a Select Committee decided that the then Home Secretary and two other MPs had acted improperly. In the 1990s two Conservative MPs admitted they had accepted “cash for questions”, there were allegations about others accepting bribes and a number of personal scandals which led to the word “sleaze” coming into common use. More recently Peter Mandelson resigned twice from Tony Blair’s Cabinet for impropriety although he was subsequently reappointed by Gordon Brown.

*“All political parties die at last of swallowing their own lies”  
~ John Arbuthnot*

As a result of the political scandals during his Government, John Major set up the (Nolan) Committee on Standards in Public Life. The political scientist, Ivor Crewe, testified to that Committee.

*"There is no doubt that distrust and alienation has risen to a higher level than ever before. It was always fairly prevalent; it is now in many regards almost universal."*

Similarly Andrew Marr, the journalist, wrote in 1995:

*"Most people don't feel oppressed by their politicians, merely a bit contemptuous of them".*

Unfortunately the establishment of the Nolan Committee has not substantially increased public confidence. Surveys in 2004 showed only 16% of voters felt that standards in public life had improved, that only 17% of the public thought that MPs showed a "high moral code" and that only 27% trusted them generally.

The Nolan Committee's own 2008 research report states: *"There is evidence in the 2008 survey to suggest that satisfaction with standards of conduct in public office has declined since the last survey was conducted in 2006:*

- *More people rate standards of conduct of public office holders overall as 'low' in 2008 than in 2006*
- *More think that conduct has deteriorated over the past few years*
- *They are less confident that the authorities are committed to upholding standards of conduct or that public office holders will be punished for doing wrong*
- *They are less satisfied with the way in which Government ministers perform their jobs – in particular in the extent to which they keep in touch with what people think is important, tell the truth and use their power for their own gain"*

As Niall FitzGerald of Unilever put it: *"Trust can't be built in a one-off spate of advertising. It is built over the long term, on the basis not of communication but of action"*

A mood of discontent about the political system not only permeates the population in total but also exists amongst backbench MPs themselves. They wonder if their role is really a worthwhile one in the light of what they can actually achieve with the very little real power that they have while being constantly criticised over their behaviour and expenses.

### 3. The Voting Record of MPs

Many of the activities of MPs are difficult to measure objectively. However the right of MPs to vote is one of the primary purposes of their being in Parliament and therefore the voting record of MPs is of interest to the electorate and is public. In general it shows that MPs are not as assiduous in the decision lobbies as they may appear to claim.

There are a number of well known special reasons why MPs may not vote frequently. For instance the five Sinn Fein MPs refuse to take the Oath of Allegiance and are therefore unable to vote. Similarly the Party leaders tend to have low voting records. In the last session Gordon Brown attended only about 17% of the votes in the House of Commons and David Cameron only about 27%.

In the 2006-7 session there were just 221 votes. A fair measure of voting attendance might be to expect MPs to attend a minimum of 75% of the votes that take place. However a recent analysis published on the website [www.publicwhip.org.uk](http://www.publicwhip.org.uk) (and excluding for each party those who act as Speaker or Deputy Speaker) showed that of the 193 Conservative MPs, 177 (92%) of them failed to vote at least three quarters of the time. The equivalent figures show that of the 349 Labour MPs, 119 (34%) voted on less than three-quarters of the possible occasions and of the 63 Liberal Democrat MPs, 55 (87%) failed to achieve this level.

Websites such as [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) give detailed information for each MP about how they voted on particular issues, the subjects on which they asked Parliamentary questions, the committees to which they belong, their declaration of interests and their expenses. The website [www.revolts.co.uk](http://www.revolts.co.uk), run by Philip Cowley, gives further information about MPs' voting behaviour.

#### 4. Parliament as a Workplace

MPs have a privileged lifestyle at Westminster as Parliament is still located in what is legally a Royal Palace. Many of the normal laws of the land affecting ordinary citizens, such as drinking hours, do not therefore affect MPs' lifestyles.

The staff of the House of Commons itself averaged 1,696 during 2007-8, an increase of 12% from the 1,520 employed in 2003-4. These include around 200 in the Commons library and 300 in the catering department who provided 1,519,000 meals to MPs and their staff during 2007-8. The total cost of the House of Commons is about £200 million, around £300,000 a member in addition to their own costs (salary, pension, tax and expenses) of about £250,000, a total cost of over half a million pounds per MP per year or a total of £350 million.

During the 2007-8 session the House of Commons met for just 153 days (similar to the 146 days of 2006-7), an average of less than three days per week. The sittings lasted 1,201 hours. With the total cost of £350 million this means the expense of running the Commons was about £2.3 million per sitting day or £300,000 per sitting hour.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008 Queen's Speech to open the 2008-9 Parliamentary year has been mandated by the Government to be debated in 128 days of Parliamentary time, the shortest number of scheduled Parliamentary days since 1979. As no plans have been announced to decrease the costs of MPs or Parliamentary staff, and with salary and pension cost inflation for MPs and Parliamentary staff, this further 16% reduction in the number of sitting days means that the cost of the House of Commons will rise to more than £360,000 per sitting hour, about £100 per second or the average wage of a UK employee every four minutes.

The total costs could be cut by reducing the number of MPs. David Cameron has suggested a reduction of 60 as reported by Nicholas Watt of the Guardian in January 2009:

*"David Cameron would remove more than 60 MPs as part of a Tory plan to make parliament work more efficiently. Drawing on plans drawn up by Kenneth Clarke, the former chancellor, the Tory leader today pledges to introduce legislation in his first term as prime minister to cut the size of the Commons by 10%. There are currently 646 MPs, a figure that is due to increase to 650 at the next election.*

*Cameron tells today's Financial Times: "I think the House of Commons could do the job that it does with 10% fewer MPs without any trouble at all."... I believe in having seats that are the same size all across the country."*

*Cameron would reduce the number of Welsh seats from 40 to around 30 and would cut small inner-city constituencies. These changes would benefit the Tories."*

In 2005 the total UK electorate was 44,261,545 and the UK's largest constituency was the Isle of Wight with an electorate of 108,253. If all the constituencies were around the same size as the Isle of Wight then there would only need to be 409 MPs. This is closely in line with the actual 420 seating places in the House of Commons and would therefore allow each MP to have their own seat. Compared to the current 646 seats, this is a reduction of 235 MPs or 37%. This would give a cost saving in MPs' salaries and expenses of about £60 million plus additional House of Commons savings on catering and other costs of over £50 million.

#### 5. MPs' and Ministers' Remuneration

An MP currently has an annual salary of £63,291. In addition London MPs also receive a London Weighting Allowance of £7,500 which was increased by 157% from the previous figure of £2,916 in a Commons vote on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008. This was reported by the London Evening Standard:

*"Thirteen government members including Harriet Harman will get an inflation-busting pay rise next year, the Evening Standard can reveal. They are among 26 London MPs whose Commons*

*pay will increase by up to 9.4 per cent from 1 April under a deal voted through before the summer recess. The cash bonanza flies in the face of the Government's official policy of pay restraint - and will benefit ministers who have voted to hold down pay for police and nurses.*

*Altogether the MPs will get increases of about £6,000 each next year, made up of the annual rise that all MPs receive plus a huge one-off increase in the pay top-up that MPs with London constituencies are allowed to claim.*

*Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell voted for it, however, as did Justice Minister Bridget Prentice and Labour whip Siobhain McDonagh. All three support the Government's policy of holding down public sector pay to around 2.5 per cent.*

*The TaxPayers' Alliance condemned the rises. Spokesman Mark Wallace said: "Next time these ministers say they understand what ordinary people are going through, everyone should remember they have protected themselves from the soaring cost of living, while the rest of us foot the bill."*

Ministers receive a separate salary in addition to the salary of £63,291 received by them as MPs. The additional rate for the four key levels of minister is:

	<u>£</u>
Prime Minister	128,174
Cabinet Minister	76,904
Minister of State	39,893
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State	30,280

However ministers have to be fully committed to their official duties and therefore have less time for their constituencies. They are also of course prohibited from actively scrutinising or criticising Government policy in Parliament. This used to be recognised by the Top Salaries Review Body with ministers only receiving two thirds of the MPs salary in addition to their ministerial salary. This practice has however been discontinued and ministers now receive both full salaries.

A similar anomaly relates to MPs from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who have less of a constituency workload because many of the areas of most interest to their constituents such as health and education are no longer the responsibility in those nations of the Westminster Parliament and are dealt with by their local representatives.

In addition to the 646 Westminster MPs there are now 129 MSPs in Scotland, 108 MLAs in Northern Ireland and 60 AM/ACs in Wales and these 287 people and their staffs take on a lot of the constituency workload previously undertaken from Westminster. In a Commons debate in July 2007, former Conservative Party leader Michael Howard said "*Devolution in Wales and Scotland has already created two classes of MPs*". The then Liberal Democrat leader Sir Menzies Campbell said reform was "*long overdue*" and he called for a "*constitutional convention*" to discuss changes.

These anomalies all need to be reviewed independently so that there is a proper salary structure for backbench English MPs, for MPs who are from one of the devolved nations, and for MPs who are also ministers, with an agreed relationship between their respective remuneration packages.

## 6. MPs' Expenses and Allowances

*"Faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him"*  
~ Samuel Johnson

The issue of expenses is a particularly sensitive one for many voters. It has become clear that MPs have become used to using taxpayers money, even within the rules, in a way which would never be sanctioned in any other charitable, commercial or public organisation. This includes housing expenses when other housing is available, relatively excessive personal purchases (the John Lewis list) and the employment of relatives without any proper independent selection procedure or appraisal.

Examples of fiddling expenses outside the rules include one Conservative MP who wrongly claimed over £90,000 in housing allowances. Another was involved with a firm which offered paid tours

and dinners at the Palace of Westminster in clear breach of the rules. However in both cases the MPs concerned just announced their retirement and were not fined or subject to any criminal sanctions

In addition to their £63,291 salary, Members can claim the following annual allowances:

	<u>£</u>
Staffing Allowance	100,205
Pension Provision for Members' staff	10,020
Additional Costs Allowance	24,006
Incidental Expenses Allowance	22,193
Communications Allowance	10,400
IT equipment	<u>5,000</u>
Total	<u>171,824</u>

The House of Commons Library provides the following further information about MPs' traveling, termination and pension expenses:

- Members are currently provided with corporate travel cards that may be used to purchase travel tickets, for journeys by rail, sea or air on Parliamentary business. These cover journeys within the triangle of home, constituency and Westminster. Members may also use parking spaces, for which no charge is made, in the Parliamentary car park. Journeys may also be made by the spouse, and children under the age of 18, of a Member between London and the constituency and/or London and home by rail, air or sea. In addition MPs have a car mileage allowance of 40p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p thereafter, a motorcycle allowance of 24p per mile and a bicycle allowance of 20p per mile, all available in the same triangle as the other travel allowances. Costs of journeys outside this triangle, on Parliamentary business, may also be reimbursed if the Member notifies the Operations Directorate at least three days in advance – the three day rule may be waived in exceptional circumstances.
- Members are also reimbursed for the cost of traveling on Parliamentary duties between the United Kingdom and any European Union institution in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg or the national Parliament of a member of the Council of Europe or the European Union or of any candidate member of the EU. The scheme allows the aggregate of the cost of a return business class airfare from a London airport to one of the designated destinations and twice the corresponding civil service class A standard subsistence rate in operation.
- A "Resettlement Grant" is paid to assist with the costs of adjusting to "non-Parliamentary life" to any person who ceases to be an MP at a General Election, based on age and length of service, and varies between 50% and 100% of the annual salary payable to an MP at the time of the Dissolution.
- A "Winding-Up Allowance and Resettlement Grant" of up to one third of the annual Staffing Allowance and Incidental Expenses Allowance is paid for the reimbursement of the cost of any work on Parliamentary business undertaken on behalf of a defeated or retiring Member after the date of cessation of Membership.
- MPs get a pension accruing at 1/40<sup>th</sup> for every year of service (so after 20 years, for instance, they get half their salary as an inflation-proofed pension) for which they pay 10% of salary and the Government pays 26.8%. This compares with a 1/60<sup>th</sup> civil service scheme.

In July 2008, the House of Commons voted against proposals to limit and regularise their expense claims, as reported by Sam Coates of The Times:

*"Parliament's reputation took another battering yesterday when MPs threw out plans to overhaul their expenses, insisting on their right to buy kitchens, televisions and sofas on the taxpayer. Plans for rigorous external audits, a reduction of the threshold of receipts from £25 to zero and a ban on furniture or home improvements were all thrown out by MPs who voted against the plan by a majority of 28.*

*The £24,000 allowance for maintaining a second home will now remain in place and the major elements of a six-month review, set up after the Tory MP Derek Conway was found to be wrongly*

*paying his son, will be ditched. MPs will now only be subject to internal checks, while more generous proposals for MPs' offices were approved.*

*Nick Harvey, the Liberal Democrat who drew up the reforms, said: "An opportunity to put our house in order and be seen to put our house in order has been passed up. They took all the nice bits but not the ones they didn't like. They took the spoonful of sugar but refused the medicine."*

Sir Christopher Kelly, the chairman of the independent Committee for Standards in Public Life, said that the vote could cause "even greater distrust of the political class".

As well as the reforms being defeated by 172 to 144, 325 MPs, including the Prime Minister, did not vote at all. An analysis of the vote shows that the abstentions were spread across all of the parties:

	<u>Against Reform</u>	<u>For Reform</u>	<u>Tellers /Sp.</u>	<u>Abstain</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% Abstain</u>
Lab	149	52	2	147	350	42.0%
Cons	20	54	1	118	193	61.1%
LDem	0	35	1	27	63	42.9%
Other	3	3	1	33	40	82.5%
Total	172	144	5	325	646	50.3%

The number of abstentions in either of the two major parties would have been enough easily to overturn the majority vote against reforms.

In January 2009, Harriet Harman announced that despite the long-running campaign to put MPs on the same basis as other public officials in providing details of their expenses, a special Statutory Instrument would be enacted to allow MPs to hide this information. This was reported by David Hencke of The Guardian as follows:

*"Ministers are poised to exempt all MPs and peers from having to publish details of their expenses, only weeks before MPs were due to be forced to disclose more than 1.2 million receipts covering claims for the last three years.*

*The move next week will allow parliament to nullify all the long-fought victories by campaigners and journalists to force MPs to publish details of all their individual receipts for their second homes, including details of what they spent on furnishings, maintenance, rent, mortgage payments, staffing, travel, office staffing and equipment.*

*The changes will be retrospective and all pending requests for more information under the Freedom of Information Act will be blocked. The changes will put MPs and peers in a special category as the only paid public officials who will not have to disclose the full details of their expenses and allowances. In Scotland, MSPs are required to declare all of their expenses to the Scottish parliament.*

*Harriet Harman, leader of the house, is understood to have pressed for the change after being lobbied by the Conservative 1922 backbench committee and the parliamentary Labour party committee, which both wanted to stop the release of the information*

*Matthew Elliott of the TaxPayers' Alliance said: 'It is an absolute disgrace that the government is going to such absurd lengths to keep MPs' expenses secret from the very people who pay the bills. These desperate measures will only harm parliament's standing by making people wonder what it is that politicians have to hide.'* "

The Guardian commented in an Editorial:

*"Parliamentarians are obviously entitled to privacy. They are also right to worry that some requests aim to tarnish the reputation of all politicians. But for MPs to seek to hide from rules that they have imposed on every other public body is a mistake*

*Rewriting the law to keep the money but limit scrutiny is no way to win back trust."*

However, as reported by Jon Ungoed-Thomas in The Sunday Times, the government eventually backed down as a result of public lobbying over the Internet:

*"When the television correspondent Martin Bell became an independent MP, he was astonished to discover the laxity of the expenses system. He said he was invited to "sign a cheque to myself every month right up to the limit". The High Court ruled in a case last year that details of claims by 14 MPs should be disclosed. The High Court ruling implied that details of all MPs' expenses claims would have to be made public. So the government decided on its plan to exempt the records from freedom of information laws. It underestimated the backlash. Unlock Democracy, the campaign group, took an advertisement in The Times describing the move as "shameless". Thousands of people signed online petitions and MPs were bombarded with letters and e-mails condemning the move.*

*Details of all MPs' expenses claims between 2004 and 2008 should now be published (with certain personal information removed). From the claims of the 14 MPs whose expenses have already been released, it emerged that Margaret Beckett, now housing minister, used public funds to help with gardening bills at her home and Barbara Follett a Labour minister married to Ken Follett, the millionaire author, paid for window cleaners."*

In February 2009 Ben Russell reported in The Independent that Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, was under investigation:

*"The Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, is being investigated by the parliamentary sleaze watchdog over her expenses claims for a second home.*

*John Lyon, the parliamentary commissioner for standards, asked Ms Smith for a formal response to allegations from her neighbours that she often spends just two nights a week at the London address she classes as her main home. Ms Smith's declaration that her primary residence is her sister's house in south-east London, where she pays £100 a week rent for a room, has allowed her to claim £116,000 in second-home allowance over five years for her family home in Redditch, Worcestershire, where her husband and children live."*

An Editorial in The Daily Telegraph in February 2009 was entitled *Humbug of politicians with their allowances* and said:

*"It is rare for a week to go by nowadays without fresh evidence emerging of politicians milking their generous, self-regulated, systems of allowances and expenses for all they are worth. Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, continues to insist she "abided by the rules" when designating her sister's home in south London where she lodges as her main residence, thus enabling her to claim up to £24,000 a year in housing allowance. Michael Ancram, the former Conservative chairman, says that he only claims "what I have always been told I am entitled to claim" after eyebrows were raised over a £20,000 payment that included, among other things, the cost of clearing moss from his garden.*

*Here we have one of the few areas of genuine cross-party consensus at Westminster. MPs of every stripe cleave to the idea that their allowances are there to be claimed, regardless – it seems – of whether they cover genuine outgoings. These are the same people who have led the protests against bankers' bonuses, failing to see the humbug in this when they themselves table hefty, six-figure expenses claims each year that are subjected to only the most perfunctory of checks because, as honourable men and women, MPs are expected to maintain the highest standards of probity.*

*There is a common thread running through all this and that is the desuetude of the notion of public service. The time when a man or woman would make their mark in one walk of life before going into politics to use the experience so gathered to "put something back" is long gone. Unfortunately, when politics is treated as just a career, not a calling, it is inevitable that many of*

*its practitioners will slip into the habit of chiselling what they can out of it. Gordon Brown yesterday called for a return to "traditional" banking values where bankers are the "servants not the masters". Substitute the word political for banking and MPs for bankers and that is a sentiment we would all enthusiastically endorse."*

It is essential that MPs are seen as operating under the same constraints as apply to their electorate in terms of their salaries and expenses, especially as public money is involved. The civil service has a clear policy on salaries and expenses.

The Jury Team Governance Proposals therefore include that all MPs should be subject to the same regime as senior civil servants.

An independent commission would be established to decide which grade of civil servant is currently equivalent to an MP and salaries and expenses would then be increased for MPs in line with the average for all employees in the country (not in line with civil service pay as MPs have direct control of this).

MPs, ministers and their political staff should be paid according to civil service pay scales, should have any expenses approved only in line with established civil service guidelines and must act according to the Nolan Principles that apply to all public bodies.