



# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Elliott Hall

17 July 2013

*Ellie Hall*

## **F13-260 Freedom of Information Request - Internal Review**

Thank you for your response to our reply of 25 June to your FoI request of 31 May. You were dissatisfied with the reply, and it has been reviewed.

You gave an example in your original request relating to transport for Simon Burns MP, and we explained that this was provided for him in his capacity as a Minister and therefore not a benefit for which the House of Commons is responsible or on which it holds any information.

Your wider request was for details of "any benefit to an MP, since May 2010, where an expense claim has not been generated". The original response listed some examples of the services we provide for Members for which they are not charged. In my view that was an honest attempt to answer your wider question.

It is clear that information is not held in the form in which you appeared to be seeking it in your original request. You will appreciate that where there is no claim made, no record is likely to be generated.

In your follow-up request you express disbelief that the House of Commons does not hold information on the cost of running itself. Indeed it does, and this information is published. There are many things available to Members such as office accommodation in Westminster, telephone land lines in Westminster, the services including research services of the House of Commons Library and the provision of stationery, photocopying and IT equipment which might be included in the definition of "benefits", though most of these are in the nature of the typical facilities an employee might receive in their place of work to enable them to do their work. MPs also have access to a wide variety of publications produced by the House itself and by the Government. In their day-to-day work at Westminster they are assisted by the staff of the House in a whole variety of ways, from supporting their work on select committees to providing them with food and drink (for which they pay).



Members of select committees may travel on committee business. The costs of such travel can be found in the relevant sections of the Sessional Returns, which can be found here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmsetret.htm>. Beyond these details there is no information held on how these benefits are accessed by individual Members of Parliament.

The best source of information on the types of services provided to support Members of Parliament in their work is provided in the annual reports and accounts of the House of Commons Commission, the statutory body which runs the the House of Commons Administration and its staff. (Staff employed by individual Members of Parliament are funded through the allowances system which is not run by the House of Commons.)

The most recent detailed accounts can be found here

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-resources/administration-annual-accounts-486.pdf>

and a broader overview of the costs of running the House of Commons can be found in the Commission's annual report here:

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-commission/commission-annual-report-2011-12.pdf>

These documents represent the most detailed information held on the cost of providing support to Members of Parliament beyond their salaries and allowances. I hope this information therefore answers the question you put in your response to the first enquiry.

If you remain dissatisfied with our response, you may appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

ham inwards  
M.

A J Walker

Director General of HR and Change