

BOB BLACKMAN MP
Member of Parliament for Harrow East



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Peter Davis,
Compliance Officer for IPSA,
4th Floor,
30, Millbank,
London
SW1P 4DU

Your ref: C1415-011
Our Ref.: BB/NB/3604
24th February 2015

Dear Mr. Davis,

Re: Mileage Claims

Further to your letter of 28th January 2015 and the publication of your report, I have the following comments. On your failures to accept legitimate evidence:-

1. You have ignored my very specific submissions on the routes taken and the explanation for these routes. I made a detailed submission to you on 1st December 2014, providing maps, distances and justification for journeys taken where necessary, which you failed to take into account at any point. Given the repetitive nature of most of my journeys, it was incumbent upon you to consider this information and you have demonstrably not done so.
2. Despite suggesting that alternative routes could be taken for the journeys that I have taken, you have not responded to my repeated requests for you to supply what these might be. I therefore have no means to examine this claim and to use my extensive local knowledge to analyse this based on daily congestion hotspots, road works, traffic calming or similar.

I reiterate that I have claimed for the mileage actually incurred and that the claims are compliant with the IPSA Expenses Scheme. On your ruling:-

3. I note that you have now moved away from a requirement to take the most direct route and claim that I have not accorded with the "general principles" of the IPSA Scheme. Presumably this is because there is nothing in the IPSA Scheme to justify your arbitrary decision to reduce all of my claims for a period of 20 months by an arbitrary percentage.
4. I note that it appears that this percentage takes the sum that you are claiming back to just over the £1,000 mark which is of course more interesting from a publicity perspective. You have made your publication 90 days before a General Election, which presumably had the desired effect from a media standpoint.

I further reiterate that if these rules are to apply to me then they should be applied to every MP. If you have plans to add a requirement that is not currently specified in the scheme or in any guidance issued by IPSA, I look forward to reading it, but note that this cannot be applied retrospectively for me alone as this would mean treating me differently to all other MPs and therefore be a very obvious direct discrimination.

I have accepted the following in terms of repayments:-

5. On the dispute over claimed home to office mileage, you have declined to take into consideration my clear explanation of the journeys on the particular days in question, but as I am unable produce detailed evidence beyond what has already been given, I have no choice but to acquiesce in this category. I note that these total **£56.70** on the basis of my submission.
6. On party political events, I have already accepted that these particular journeys should not have been made, have apologised for the error and agreed to repay the money accordingly. I note that these total **£82.80** on the basis of my submission.
7. Regarding your supposition that, on the strength of other people's tweets, I have claimed for journeys that are party political, I note that you declined to even look at my street surgery casebook which suggests that you have failed to properly evaluate the evidence. However, in order to draw a line under this section of the report, I extremely reluctantly agree to repay the sum of **£97.65** in this category.

I do not accept the following section of your report:-

8. On claims using standard mileage, you have ignored my very detailed submission of journeys that I undertake and the routes chosen. Worse, you have pre-judged the issue and refused to properly consider the evidence that I have presented. You have then chosen to reduce all of the journeys I have undertaken by an arbitrary percentage over a 20 month period. This is draconian and, more importantly, has no basis in the requirement on you to ensure that claims are in line with the IPSA Scheme. You have never justified this percentage.
9. I make clear that I have captured every single journey made in my diary, on spreadsheets which are updated at least every week and at the earliest opportunity and provide maps showing the journeys made. All of these journeys are compliant with the IPSA Scheme as published. All of the claims have been submitted to IPSA, have been paid, and IPSA has not queried a single claim for me since 2011.

I absolutely maintain that these routes are the most cost effective possible based on local traffic conditions and the need to ensure that journeys are of a predictable duration to arrive at the appointed time. My claims are provably compliant with the Scheme and so therefore you should withdraw your damaging and entirely unwarranted allegations at this junction.

Finally, I understand that, having embarked on and publically announced this investigation, it is in your personal interest to back up this decision with findings of wrongdoing that will generate a good headline for IPSA. Therefore I'm sorry to report that I will absolutely be maintaining my innocence in this matter to my constituents, to the Commission and on the floor of the House if necessary.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Blackman MP
Harrow East