



House of Commons
Committee on
Standards and Privileges

**Conduct of Mr Michael
Foster (Worcester)**

Tenth Report of Session 2005–06

*Report and Appendices, together with formal
minutes*

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 13 June 2006*

HC 1223

Published on 14 June 2006
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£11.00

The Committee on Standards and Privileges

The Committee on Standards and Privileges is appointed by the House of Commons to oversee the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards; to examine the arrangements proposed by the Commissioner for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members' Interests and any other registers of interest established by the House; to review from time to time the form and content of those registers; to consider any specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests referred to it by the Commissioner; to consider any matter relating to the conduct of Members, including specific complaints in relation to alleged breaches in the Code of Conduct which have been drawn to the Committee's attention by the Commissioner; and to recommend any modifications to the Code of Conduct as may from time to time appear to be necessary.

Current membership

Rt Hon Sir George Young Bt MP (*Conservative, North West Hampshire*) (Chairman)
Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP (*Labour, Rother Valley*)
Rt Hon David Curry MP (*Conservative, Skipton & Ripon*)
Mr Andrew Dismore MP (*Labour, Hendon*)
Nick Harvey MP (*Liberal Democrat, North Devon*)
Mr Brian Jenkins MP (*Labour, Tamworth*)
Mr Elfyn Llwyd MP (*Plaid Cymru, Meirionnydd Nant Conwy*)
Mr Chris Mullin MP (*Labour, Sunderland South*)
The Hon Nicholas Soames MP (*Conservative, Mid Sussex*)
Dr Alan Whitehead MP (*Labour, Southampton Test*)

Powers

The constitution and powers of the Committee are set out in Standing Order No. 149. In particular, the Committee has power to order the attendance of any Member of Parliament before the committee and to require that specific documents or records in the possession of a Member relating to its inquiries, or to the inquiries of the Commissioner, be laid before the Committee. The Committee has power to refuse to allow its public proceedings to be broadcast. The Law Officers, if they are Members of Parliament, may attend and take part in the Committee's proceedings, but may not vote.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at: www.parliament.uk/sandp. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Dr Christopher Ward (Clerk), Miss Libby Preston (Second Clerk) and Miss Michelle Owens (Secretary).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to The Clerk of the Committee on Standards and Privileges, Journal Office, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6615.

Contents

Report	<i>Page</i>
Conduct of Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)	2
Introduction	2
Mr Foster’s Notification of a Change of Constituency Office Address	2
Mr Foster’s Annual Report	5
Appendix 1: Memorandum from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards	7
Appendix 2: Memorandum from Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)	29
Appendix 3: The Rules on use of the House emblem, House of Commons Stationery and pre-paid envelopes	31
Appendix 4: Mr Foster’s Annual Report	34
Formal minutes	38
Reports from the Committee on Standards and Privileges in the current Parliament	39

Conduct of Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)

Introduction

1. We have considered a memorandum by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards relating to a complaint against Mr Michael Foster, Member for Worcester, by Mr Peter Luff, Member for Mid-Worcestershire. The Commissioner's memorandum is reproduced at Appendix 1.¹

2. As the Commissioner explains in his memorandum, Mr Luff's complaint contained four specific grounds. However, for the reasons set out in his report, the Commissioner has only investigated and reported on two of them. The first of these relates to the alleged misuse of pre-paid envelopes by Mr Foster to send out a letter in similar terms to a substantial number of constituents, advising them of a change of constituency office address. The second relates to the inclusion of allegedly inappropriate material in an annual report funded from the Incidental Expenses Provision (IEP). We consider each of these separately below.

3. Prior to considering the Commissioner's memorandum, we invited Mr Foster's comments on it and these are reproduced at Appendix 2.² Mr Foster has co-operated fully with the Commissioner in his inquiry, but disagrees in both cases with the conclusions he reached.

4. We consider in turn below the two elements of Mr Luff's complaint on which the Commissioner has reported to us. Our consideration of these has also revealed in both respects what we consider to be significant shortcomings in the relevant rules, and in the guidance available to Members on their application.

Mr Foster's Notification of a Change of Constituency Office Address

5. There is no dispute as to the facts. Mr Foster maintained a database of constituents who had asked to be kept informed of his parliamentary activities. He used pre-paid envelopes and stationery provided at House expense³ to send them notification of a change in his constituency office address. The method he chose was to send each of them a letter with a copy of a calendar which included the new contact details. The inclusion of the calendar was described by Mr Foster as "a by-product for these particular correspondents": according to him, the vast majority of the calendars were delivered by volunteers, by hand and unaddressed.⁴

1 P. 7.

2 P. 29.

3 The cost of such stationery is met from the House of Commons: Administration Vote, whereas Members' allowances fall to the House of Commons: Members' Vote.

4 WE9, p. 27.

6. Mr Foster maintains that ensuring that interested constituents have up to date contact details for their Member of Parliament is part of the vital link between Members and constituents.⁵ We do not disagree with these sentiments, and note that nobody has sought to argue that advising constituents of a change of office address is not a proper Parliamentary activity on a Member's part. The principle of whether the cost of sending these letters could be publicly funded is therefore not in dispute; the issue is whether they could properly be sent using stationery and envelopes provided at the expense of the House itself, or whether the cost should have been borne by Mr Foster's IEP.

7. On 9 May, Mr Foster, although still convinced that his interpretation of the rules was correct, informed us of his decision to repay the House for the cost of the headed paper and 562 second class envelopes he had used to send out the new address details to constituents on his database, and to charge this against his IEP instead.⁶

8. We have drawn Mr Foster's decision to the Commissioner's attention and he has commented as follows:

“As I noted in paragraphs 8 and 40 of my report to the Committee on this complaint, a Member may use his IEP to meet the cost of stationery, plain envelopes and postage to convey surgery and contact details to his constituents. Had Mr Foster initially met the cost of his 16 December letter from his IEP in this way, there would have been no reason for me to report adversely to the Committee on this limb of the complaint.

The Committee may feel that Mr Foster's decision removes the need for it to adjudicate further on this aspect of my report.”

9. There is no question of Mr Foster having made inappropriate use of resources provided at public expense in sending out this mailing to constituents, and he had sufficient headroom in his IEP to fund this. We therefore agree with the Commissioner that Mr Foster's decision of 9 May to fund this mailing from his IEP removes the need for us to adjudicate further on this aspect of the complaint.

10. The Commissioner also commented:

“The Committee will recognise that Mr Foster continues genuinely to believe that his interpretation of the Stationery and Postage Rules is correct. The fact that, as this case has revealed, it is possible to reach quite different conclusions as to what is permitted and what is not permitted under the Rules is evidence of the pressing need for those Rules to be revised and clarified.”

We agree with the Commissioner.

11. The existing rules, which derive their force from approval by the Speaker on the advice of the Administration Committee, are reproduced in full at Appendix 3. Surprisingly, these

5 Appendix 2, p 29.

6 See also Appendix 3, p 31.

do not appear to be readily available to Members. Guidance on their content is, however, available on the House Intranet, and in a leaflet issued by the Serjeant-at-Arms, but in our view the rules themselves should be readily available.

12. The Commissioner has commented⁷ on the ‘evident complexity’ of the rules and that there is at the moment no single authoritative document to which Members and their staff can turn which sets out all the relevant considerations in plain language. We agree with him that there should be, not least because since the House extended the scope of the Code of Conduct in July 2005 to include misuse of facilities and services, complaints of such misuse (which include misuse of stationery) have been a matter for the Commissioner in accordance with Standing Order No. 150, and therefore for adjudication by us.

13. We recommend that both the Serjeant at Arms’ leaflet and intranet guidance on stationery be revised as soon as possible to set out, in full, the authoritative text of the existing rules, together with appropriate explanatory material, including any relevant case law. This would represent a start in providing for Members and their staff, both at Westminster and in the constituency, the authoritative guidance which the Commissioner rightly says is lacking at present. If Members are still in doubt as to the interpretation of the rules, they should seek advice.

14. However, this step alone will be insufficient to achieve the necessary standards of clarity and certainty. This is the first case we have dealt with involving allegation of misuse of stationery. It has revealed a number of uncertainties over the proper interpretation of what constitutes a circular and the scope of communications which can properly be described as ‘solicited’. **It is essential that these uncertainties are removed as soon as possible.**

15. From the introduction of pre-paid stationery in 1969, a key element in the regulatory regime has been the good sense of individual Members, reinforced by the limited rules which successive Speakers, together with the relevant Committees of the House, have laid down over the years. We do not believe that this framework needs to change now that the House has brought these matters within the scope of the Code of Conduct. We are also convinced that the alternative, of piecemeal and essentially arbitrary development of the rules through our own decisions in response to the chance mechanism of complaints, would not be a satisfactory alternative. Our role in this respect is to apply the rules laid down by the appropriate authority, not to make them.

16. We agree with the Commissioner that a single unified stationery and postage regime governed by one clear set of rules would reduce the scope for both deliberate and inadvertent misuse. This would undoubtedly be of benefit both to Members themselves, and to wider public confidence in the system. We are happy to work with the House of Commons Commission and the Administration Committee as appropriate to ensure that, whatever arrangements ultimately emerge from the current review, the rules are clear and capable of effective enforcement. However, whether or not a single unified regime results from the current review, we recommend that the

7 Appendix 1, para. 52.

existing rules are clarified as a matter of urgency in the areas we have identified in paragraph 14 above.

17. **We and the Commissioner nevertheless have to interpret the existing rules in the meantime.** When our predecessor Committee recommended bringing misuse of facilities within the scope of the Code, it was not its intention that this should lead to a spate of complaints of minor and technical breaches of the rules relating to the use of stationery being subject to the full investigative procedure of the Code, culminating in some cases in a report to the House. It was to avoid this that it recommended, and the House subsequently introduced into the Standing Orders, a procedure designed to ensure that many cases, particularly those where any breach was minor or inadvertent, could be disposed of by the Commissioner without the need for this through and extension of the rectification procedure which already existed in relation to minor failures to register or declare interests.⁸

18. **We will be discussing with the Commissioner how this aim should be reflected in criteria, agreed between him and us, for determining whether complaints involving alleged misuse of stationery are dealt with by him under the rectification procedure, as distinct from being the subject of a report to us. When we have agreed these, we anticipate that the categories of case on which he will continue to report to us will include cases where there is clear evidence of an intention on the Member's part to breach the rules; there has been an evident failure by the Member to exercise good sense; there are significant sums of money at issue; there are new issues of practice or principle involved, on which the Commissioner wishes us to express a view; or where the Commissioner considers that the complaint could be dealt with under the rectification procedure, but the Member concerned does not agree with this.**

Mr Foster's Annual Report

19. Mr Luff alleged that Mr Foster's annual report, which is reproduced at Appendix 4, breached the rules on publications funded from the IEP in three respects.⁹ The Commissioner in his report, reflecting the view of the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), considered that it did so only in respect of one of these,¹⁰ the captions of three photographs that include explicit reference to the 'Labour Government', which Mr Terry Bird, Director of Operations in the DFA, considered had "strayed into party political comment".¹¹ Mr Bird told the Commissioner that DFA is minded as a result, following its usual practice in cases where it appears that inappropriate material has been included in an IEP-funded publication, to initiate recovery proceedings against Mr Foster in respect of the payment made from his IEP to cover the cost.

8 SO No. 150 (3) (b).

9 Appendix 1, para. 2.

10 Appendix 1, para. 48.

11 Appendix 1, para. 25.

20. Mr Foster maintains that the references in the captions to ‘the Labour Government’ are factual and not party political either in intent or in nature.¹²

21. We accept that Mr Foster did not set out to break the rules prohibiting the inclusion of party political material in an IEP-funded publication and note that he accepts, with hindsight that “it would have been better to have let the Department of Finance and Administration see the text first to iron out any matters of interpretation”.¹³ We understand why the Commissioner concluded that, in respect of each of the three captions, the sentence which includes a reference to ‘the Labour Government’, may be seen as party political in character. We agree with the Commissioner that Mr Foster was not in breach of the rules in relation to the two other aspects complained of.

22. In his evidence to the Commissioner, Mr Foster has drawn attention to a number of examples of other cases where both newsletters and websites include material which, if the subject of a complaint, might be adjudged to be party political in nature on the tests applied by the Commissioner and the DFA.¹⁴ We do not therefore believe that it would be right for us to single Mr Foster out in this respect.

23. We are aware of a case in the last Parliament where our predecessors upheld a complaint in respect of inappropriate material in a part-IEP funded publication, and repayment of the IEP element ensued.¹⁵ Whereas the current case might, at worst, stray over the border of what constitutes party political comment, it is clear from our predecessors’ report that the previous case involved a clearer, more deliberate transgression.

24. There are clearly significant differences of interpretation amongst Members as to the acceptable limits of party-related material that can properly be included in IEP funded material. The three sentences in this report referring to ‘the Labour Government’ do not appear to be outside the range of Members’ current practice. In these circumstances, we are not prepared to find Mr Foster in breach of the Code in this respect, nor do we consider that he should be required to repay the cost of his annual report.

25. These significant differences of view represent an unsatisfactory position from the perspective of those who have to enforce the rules, and need to be addressed. We intend to report further to the House on the general matter of publications funded from the IEP and will look at the scope for a tighter definition of permissible expenditure. In the meantime, we once again draw the attention of the House to the importance of ensuring high standards of propriety in the use of Parliamentary allowances, and reiterate Mr Speaker’s advice in his introduction to the Green Book that Members should seek advice in cases of doubt.

12 WE9, p. 27.

13 WE9, p. 27.

14 WE7, p. 25 and WE9, p. 27.

15 First Report, Session 2004-05 (HC 71).

Appendix 1: Memorandum from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Complaint against Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)	8
The Complaint	8
Relevant Provisions of the Code of Conduct and the House's Rules	9
My Inquiries	11
Mr Foster's Response to the Complaint	11
The View of the Serjeant at Arms	12
The View of the Department of Finance and Administration	12
Mr Foster's Further Observations	13
Findings of Fact	14
Conclusion	15
<i>Introduction</i>	15
<i>Conclusions on the Complaint</i>	16
<i>Circular Letter of 16 December 2005</i>	16
<i>Mr Foster's 'Annual Report'</i>	17
<i>Other Matters the Committee may wish to consider</i>	18
Written evidence received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards	20
1. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Peter Luff, 2 February 2006	20
2. Letter to a constituent from Mr Michael Foster, 16 December 2005	21
3. Rules on the use of Stationery, Post-paid Envelopes and the Crowned Portcullis from the Serjeant at Arms' Department, Summer 2005	21
4. Guidance note on the use of post-paid envelopes from the Serjeant at Arms' Department	22
5. Guidance note on circulars from the Serjeant at Arms' Department	23
6. Letter to Mr Michael Foster from the Commissioner, 8 February 2006	24
7. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Michael Foster, 20 February 2006	25
8. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Michael Foster, 1 March 2006	26
9. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Michael Foster, 29 March 2006	26

Complaint against Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)

The Complaint

1. On 2 February 2006 Mr Peter Luff (the Member for Mid Worcester) complained about an alleged misuse of House stationery, including post-paid envelopes, by Mr Michael Foster (the Member for Worcester). Mr Luff also alleged that Mr Foster's annual report to his constituents breached the rules on publications funded from the Incidental Expenses Provision (IEP) in that it contained material of a party political character. The text of Mr Luff's letter of complaint is at WE1.

2. The four specific grounds of Mr Luff's complaint were:—

- a) Mr Foster had used a post-paid envelope in October 2005 to send a constituent a circular in the form of a Parliamentary newsletter ("Update 9").
- b) Mr Foster had compounded his original error by sending the same constituent a second copy of the same newsletter in a post-paid envelope.
- c) Mr Foster sent the same constituent a separate communication consisting of a circular letter dated 16 December 2005 printed on House of Commons stationery together with a calendar in Labour Party colours and identical in style to his election literature. The calendar carried an imprint showing that it had been paid for through the IEP. The letter and calendar were distributed in a post-paid envelope. The text of the letter (but not the calendar) is at WE2.
- d) Mr Foster's annual report breached the rules on such publications funded through the IEP in that:
 - i) It promoted the Labour Party by containing a photograph of Mr Foster wearing a Labour Party rosette.
 - ii) Other photographs of Mr Foster among his constituents carried captions praising Labour Government achievements.
 - iii) It included a form inviting respondents to tick a box if they would like to receive a quarterly newsletter giving details of Mr Foster's work in Worcester and Westminster. Mr Luff argued that the form amounted to solicitation of a request to be contacted and thus was outside the rules.

3. Mr Luff had previously complained to the Serjeant at Arms, the officer responsible for administering the relevant rules¹, in relation to the first ground in November 2005, following which he had received an explanation that the constituent in question had

1 See paragraph 8 below.

indicated a wish to be kept informed of certain aspects of Mr Foster’s parliamentary work, and an assurance that in view of the complaint, the name of the constituent had been removed from Mr Foster’s database. Since the Serjeant had already examined this matter, I have not thought it appropriate to revisit it. As to the second ground, upon enquiry by me it seemed that this assertion is mistaken. Mr Luff has withdrawn this element of his complaint.

4. This report therefore focuses on the third and fourth grounds set out in paragraph 2 above.

Relevant Provisions of the Code of Conduct and the House’s Rules

5. On 13 July 2005, the House approved, on the recommendation of the Committee on Standards and Privileges², a revised Code of Conduct. This includes a provision that:

“Members shall at all times ensure that their use of expenses, allowances, facilities and services provided from the public purse is strictly in accordance with the rules laid down on these matters, and that they observe any limits placed by the House on the use of such expenses, allowances, facilities and services.”

The corresponding provision of the Code previously in force only applied to misuse of expenses and allowances. It had been a recommendation of the Committee that alleged misuse of facilities and services provided by the House should be brought within the scope of the Code.

6. In its report to the House recommending the new Code, the Committee said:

“We recommend that all complaints received by the Commissioner relating to alleged misuse of facilities and services should be referred by him to the appropriate House authorities for investigation of the facts. When they have reported back, he would decide whether to dismiss the complaint; investigate it further and report to the Committee on Standards and Privileges; or to request the authority concerned to secure appropriate financial reimbursement.”³

The present case involves both alleged misuse of a facility or service (stationery and envelopes) and of an allowance (the IEP). I have consulted closely both the Serjeant at Arms and the Department of Finance and Administration in relation to their respective interests.

7. The House makes available at public expense resources of official stationery and plain and post-paid envelopes for Members’ use in certain circumstances on Parliamentary business. I refer to this subsequently as ‘unlimited stationery’, in that there is, at present, no limit to the extent to which, provided he or she observes the relevant rules as to its use, a Member may draw on it. For other categories of permitted use, Members must pay for the resources themselves, although they can, if they wish, charge the cost to their IEP to the

² Official Report, 13 July 2005, cols 130 – 135.

³ Fourth Report of Session 2004-05, HC 472, paragraph 15.

extent that the resources have been used wholly, exclusively and necessarily on Parliamentary duties. In the remainder of this report I refer to this category of stationery as ‘paid-for stationery’.

8. The Rules on the use of ***House stationery and post-paid envelopes*** (the Stationery and Postage Rules—promulgated by Mr Speaker on the advice of the Administration Committee and supervised and applied by the Serjeant—lay down purposes for which stationery in both these categories may and may not be used. The Rules—which have stood with minor amendments since 1984—prohibit the use of stationery and *plain* envelopes provided at the House’s expense (unlimited stationery) for unsolicited circulars and letters on constituency issues. Such circulars and letters are defined specifically to include communications concerning surgery or contact details. A Member may, however, use paid-for stationery for this purpose. The use of *post-paid* envelopes for circulars is not permitted in any circumstances, a fact which is confirmed by a separate guidance note on the use of such envelopes which is available to Members on the Serjeant at Arms’ section of the Parliamentary intranet.

9. The leaflet published by the Serjeant at Arms describing the Stationery and Postage Rules, as most recently issued in the summer of 2005, is at WE3, and the text of the guidance note on the use of post-paid envelopes, as posted on the Serjeant’s intranet site, is at WE4. Prior to the summer of 2005, the leaflet included a definition of a circular which read:

“For the purposes of these regulations the following are considered to be circulars:

(a) a letter sent in identical or near identical form to a number of addresses (whether or not it is individually signed and addressed) if it is unsolicited, ie if it is not sent in reply to queries or correspondence from the addresses;

(c) a letter sent in identical or near identical form to a number of addresses acknowledging replies to any letter, questionnaire or survey that itself was unsolicited.”

Unfortunately this definition was omitted when the stationery guidance leaflet was reissued in the summer of last year, but the omission was administrative, and did not reflect any change in policy. This is confirmed by the fact that the guidance note on circulars which is currently available to Members on the Serjeant at Arms’ section of the Parliamentary intranet includes precisely the same definition of a circular. A copy of this guidance note is at WE5.

10. The guidance for Members on ***publications funded from the IEP*** issued by the Department of Finance and Administration makes clear that:

“The allowances must not be used to fund party political activity or campaigning.”

Providing their publications meet the rules laid down, Members may meet the costs from their allowances without seeking approval from the Department (though they may seek prior approval if they wish). However, if the Department subsequently finds that the Rules have been contravened, the Member will be asked to repay any costs involved.

My Inquiries

11. On receiving Mr Luff's letter of complaint I wrote to Mr Foster inviting his explanation and response (WE6). Mr Foster was away immediately following his receipt of my letter but replied on 20 February vigorously rebutting the various grounds of Mr Luff's complaint and suggesting that it was vexatious in nature and the latest in a line of complaints by Mr Luff about his constituency neighbour.

12. The text of Mr Foster's response is at WE7. I have deleted from the text the names of the constituent and of a further neighbouring Member, Member A (not Mr Luff) to whom Mr Foster refers, as neither is germane to the resolution of the present complaint.

Mr Foster's Response to the Complaint

13. In reply to the complaint Mr Foster argued:

- a) His constituent had originally asked to be kept informed of his parliamentary work. Following Mr Luff's earlier complaint to the Serjeant at Arms (see paragraph 3 above), Mr Foster had instructed his staff to remove the name of the constituent from his database but this had not happened. He apologised for this mistake and for the fact that, in consequence, the constituent had received in error his letter dated 16 December enclosing a surgery notice and calendar.
- b) He had not breached the House's rules by providing constituents with an easy way to be kept informed, if they so wished, of his parliamentary activities. He pointed out that Mr Luff had, on his own web-site (itself funded through the IEP), a facility allowing those who wish to do so to seek further information, and argued that constituents who were reliant on the postal system should not be disadvantaged thereby.
- c) His annual report did not include party political content in breach of the rules on the IEP. The picture in the report of Mr Foster wearing a Labour rosette as a candidate at the 2005 General Election illustrated an event of importance in the year covered by the report, and was less blatant than a photograph in a neighbouring Member's (Member A's) equivalent document, which showed the Member concerned in front of a 'Vote Conservative' poster.

14. After considering Mr Foster's response, I wrote again to him asking:

- To how many people in addition to his constituent his 16 December letter and enclosed calendar had been sent;
- On what basis the recipients had been selected;
- Whether House of Commons post-paid envelopes had been used;
- Who had met their cost.

I also informed Mr Luff of the criticisms Mr Foster had made of him, giving him the opportunity to comment on them.

15. Mr Luff replied reiterating his main points and denying that his complaint was frivolous. In his view the complaint was important because Mr Foster was breaking the rules to reinforce his incumbency of his parliamentary seat, and to make the task of any challenger in unseating him more difficult.

16. Mr Foster replied (WE8) that the number of people who had received his December communication was around 562, i.e. the number of those on his database who had asked to be kept informed of his parliamentary work. House of Commons post-paid envelopes had been used.

17. Mr Foster maintained that the communication was not unsolicited, in the sense that the letter and calendar (which informed recipients of his change of office address and gave details of his constituency surgeries) had only gone to those who had specifically asked to be kept informed of his parliamentary work. He therefore considered the use of post-paid envelopes and House stationery provided at public expense (ie unlimited stationery) to be perfectly legitimate for this communication.

The View of the Serjeant at Arms

18. I have discussed Mr Luff's complaint, in so far as it relates to the use of House stationery and post-paid envelopes, with the Serjeant at Arms.

19. The Serjeant's view is that, under the Stationery and Postage Rules, unlimited stationery should not have been used by Mr Foster for the December letter. In his opinion, this fell within the accepted definition of a circular (see paragraph 9 above), for which paid-for stationery should have been used. Nor should Mr Foster have used post-paid envelopes for this communication, as their use for circulars is not allowed in any circumstances. As Mr Foster had not paid for the stationery either personally or out of the IEP, he was, in the Serjeant's view, in breach of the Stationery and Postage Rules on both grounds.

The View of the Department of Finance and Administration

20. I have also consulted Mr Terry Bird, the Director of Operations in the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), about those aspects of Mr Luff's complaint which relate to the content of Mr Foster's 2006 calendar and his annual report.

21. Mr Bird points out that the rules on the use of the allowances to pay for newsletters specifically preclude party political campaigning or comment.

“Both overt party political material (eg ‘Vote Labour/Conservative’) and comment which can clearly be construed as making a party political point are outwith the rules.”

22. Mr Foster did not seek the DFA's advice prior to publication of either his calendar or his annual report. On 12 December 2005, he was reimbursed £633.69 for the calendar and on 24 February 2006, £3,818.76 for printing and distribution of his report.

23. Mr Bird has examined the content of all three of the publications funded from Mr Foster's IEP which feature in Mr Luff's complaint. As regards his newsletter ('Update 9')

and 2006 calendar, Mr Bird does not believe that either of these breach the Department's guidance.

24. However, Mr Bird does have concerns about some of the content of the annual report. These concerns focus on the captions to the three photographs cited by Mr Luff in his complaint. The captions read respectively:

- a) *A Sure Start—Mike with Callum Norcott at the opening of the Sure Start nursery at the Fairfield Centre. "I was proud to be asked to open the nursery, which is part of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. It will be such an asset to the local community" he said. Sure start is a Labour Government initiative, designed to give young children the best possible start in life."*
- b) *"Supporting parents and children—Mike at the opening of the Tudor Way Children's Centre. This is another example of the Labour Government's investment in local communities. The scheme, based at Dines Green Primary School, will give support to parents and children and give a real boost to the drive to give every child the best possible start in life."*
- c) *"Henwick is 'state of the art'—At the opening of the new Henwick Halt GP surgery, Health Minister Dr Stephen Ladyman, said that this was one of the most state of the art surgeries in the country. The Labour Government's investment in the local NHS continues, with two more GP surgery projects in the City."*

25. Mr Bird says in relation to these captions:

"There is a degree of judgement required in assessing a newsletter, but our view on the three captions cited by Mr Luff is in accord with his assessment: namely, that by praising the current Government's actions in unambiguous terms, Mr Foster has strayed into party political comment."

26. Mr Bird does not consider the tear-off form on the final page of the newsletter to be a clear breach of the rules that would, by itself, warrant a decision to seek repayment of the IEP. Nor does he regard the use of colour and the photograph of Mr Foster wearing a rosette as overstepping the line into party politics. The use of colour on newsletters has never been disbarred:

"Although colour suggests a party affiliation, it is not the affiliation per se that we see as problematical."

27. Mr Bird concludes that in the light of his assessment it would be his Department's intention to recover from Mr Foster in full the payment made from the IEP to cover the cost of his annual report. Before taking any such step, however, he awaits a decision on the current complaint.

Mr Foster's Further Observations

28. Mr Foster has offered further observations in rebuttal of Mr Luff's complaint in a letter dated 29 March commenting on a draft of the factual sections of this report. The text of this letter is at WE9.

29. In respect of his letter of 16 December 2005, Mr Foster says that most of those who had asked to be kept informed of his Parliamentary activities had made the request to the former address of his constituency office. Telling them of the change of address was, in his view, a sensible and proper use of House stationery. The calendar he enclosed was not the main purpose of the mailing: most copies of it had been distributed separately by hand to his constituents.

30. As regards the wording of his annual report, Mr Foster concedes that with the benefit of hindsight, it would have been better if he had shown the text first to the DFA. However, the use of the term “Labour Government” is, he argues, purely descriptive and factual. It does not constitute party political comment. If it does, then many other Members have similarly breached the rules, sometimes in more flagrant ways, whether in their IEP—funded annual report or on their IEP—funded website. For example, the annual report of a neighbouring Conservative Member (Member A—referred to in paragraph 13 above) mentions “the Conservative controlled Worcester County Council”. It also makes more extensive use of Conservative party colours, and refers to a local Conservative Party website and e-mail address.

31. Mr Foster continues to maintain that Mr Luff’s complaint is vexatious (particularly when seen against the background of previous unfounded complaints by Mr Luff about Mr Foster) and that, in referring to his concerns about what might be described as the “incumbency effect” (see paragraph 15 above), Mr Luff has revealed its essentially political motivation.

32. Finally, in a subsequent e-mail, Mr Foster has commented in relation to the wording of his annual report on how, in his view, the assessment should be made as to whether or not something constitutes party political comment:—

“A test that should be applied, to treat all Members equally, is whether a form of words would be objected to if the party affiliation were reversed. For example, if a Conservative MP wrote ‘the Labour Government’s investment. . .’ would this be objected to by a member of either party? No, I don’t think so because there is no political motive inferred by the assessor. Similarly, if I had written ‘the Conservative controlled County Council has invested.. .’ would a complaint be made against me, again the answer is no. It is because the statement uses factual description, which does not convey an opinion or assessment that makes it acceptable to use in such cases. And on this basis neither [Member A] nor I have crossed a line into making party political comments.”

Findings of Fact

33. In December 2005, Mr Foster sent to some 562 of his constituents a circular letter informing them of a change of address of his constituency office, and enclosing a 2006 calendar with details of his regular advice surgeries. The letter was printed on Mr Foster’s House of Commons notepaper (the cost of which was not met from the IEP or by Mr Foster personally) and posted in post-paid House of Commons envelopes.

34. Mr Luff, the complainant, argues that the use of post-paid envelopes for this communication was contrary to the Stationery and Postage Rules in that these prohibit the use of this type of envelope for any circular. He is supported in this argument by the Serjeant at Arms, who is also of the view that Mr Foster should not have used stationery provided at public expense either. Mr Foster contends that since those to whom the communication was sent had asked to be kept informed of his parliamentary activities, the letter was not unsolicited and was therefore, in effect, not a circular. Telling the recipients of the letter of the change of his office address was, in his view, a sensible and proper use of House stationery.

35. In January 2006 Mr Foster published his annual report to his constituents, funded from his IEP, in the form of a ‘wrap-round’ addition to the local free newspaper. Mr Luff argues that, in a number of respects, this breached the guidance issued to Members by the Department of Finance and Administration about publications funded from the IEP. The Department disagrees with Mr Luff on a number of the arguments he advances but agrees that the captions to three photographs in the report cross the line into party political comment.

36. Mr Foster on the other hand, argues that his use of the phrase “Labour Government” in these three photograph captions is purely factual and descriptive. It does not convey an opinion or assessment, and therefore does not constitute party political comment.

37. Mr Foster believes that Mr Luff’s complaint is part of a pattern of unfounded criticism of him by Mr Luff. As such, Mr Luff’s present complaint is at best frivolous, at worst vexatious. It is, in any event, unjustified.

Conclusion

Introduction

38. A key element at the heart of this case is where the line is drawn between Members’ public and parliamentary persona, on the one hand, and their party persona on the other, and how these inter-relate. This is a very difficult area, which goes to the heart of how Members engage with their constituents. I am aware of evidence that there is both considerable uncertainty among a significant number of Members, and in some cases general dissatisfaction, about the interpretation and application of the rules on the use of House stationery and post-paid envelopes and, to a lesser extent, about where the boundary lies between accountability to constituents for political activities undertaken as the constituency Member of Parliament, and more general party political campaigning. Such uncertainties may lead to mistakes, or may heighten a temptation to press the boundaries, either out of a genuine feeling that the present rules are too restrictive and inhibit effective engagement between Members and their constituents, or for reasons of party political advantage, or both.

39. My function is to apply the rules that the House has laid down, and in the following paragraphs I give my assessment as to the merits of Mr Luff’s case on this basis. Having done so, and conscious of the current review of the Stationery and Postage Rules (which I welcome and hope will have a speedy and clear-cut outcome) by the House of Commons

Commission, advised by the Administration Committee, I offer some more general comments. Clear, readily accessible and unambiguous rules are essential for Members to be helped to avoid allegations of misuse; for their proper enforcement; and to ensure their credibility in the eyes of both Members and the public. From the concerns I have mentioned above, and from the evidence of this case, there is real doubt that the existing rules fully meet these tests.

Conclusions on the Complaint

Circular Letter of 16 December 2005

40. In relation to the **Stationery and Postage Rules**, Mr Luff's complaint focuses on Mr Foster's circular letter of 16 December 2005, printed on House of Commons stationery and distributed in post-paid envelopes. It is, I submit, clear from the material to which I have referred in paragraph 8 above that post-paid envelopes should not be used for circulars of any description. Nor should House stationery be used for unsolicited circulars and letters on constituency issues or for conveying surgery or contact details unless it is either paid for by the Member himself or the cost is met out of his IEP. Mr Foster neither paid for the stationery himself nor met its cost out of the IEP.

41. Mr Foster argues that because those who received his letter had previously asked to be kept informed of his parliamentary work, the letter was not in the nature of a circular but rather of a communication which had been solicited. He points out that those concerned had gone to some trouble to complete and mail the form which resulted in their names and addresses being added to his database.

42. Looking at the definition of a circular quoted in paragraph 9 above, there is no doubt that Mr Foster's letter of 16 December 2005 constituted 'a letter sent in identical or near identical form to a number of addresses.' Moreover its primary purpose, according to Mr Foster (see WE8) was to convey contact and surgery details, a class of communication specifically listed in the Stationery and Postage Rules as qualifying for printing and distribution using House stationery and plain (not post-paid) envelopes at a Member's own expense, ie paid-for stationery (see paragraph 8 above).

43. Is the fact that those on Mr Foster's database had asked to be kept informed of his parliamentary work sufficient to mean that, regardless of the fact that the letter they received was in standard form and in every other way a circular, the letter was solicited and therefore qualified for distribution in post-paid envelopes? I do not believe it is. First there is the point that such a communication appears to breach sub-paragraph (c) in the definition of a circular set out in paragraph 9 above, in that the form which constituents completed was itself contained in an unsolicited communication (as it was again in Mr Foster's recent annual report).

44. More fundamentally, the argument Mr Foster advances breaches the spirit of the present Rules which, on my reading of them, appear to be intended to ensure that House stationery and post-paid envelopes supplied by the Serjeant at public expense (unlimited stationery) are only used by Members for direct communication on parliamentary business, ie with constituents, in response to individual matters raised by them with Members, and

never for circulars.⁴ Filling in a form asking to be kept informed as to what the constituency MP is up to in Parliament is not the same as corresponding directly with them on particular matters of parliamentary or constituency interest or concern. To argue otherwise appears to represent a clear attempt to get round the restrictions imposed on the use of unlimited stationery and post-paid envelopes. Furthermore, even if Mr Foster's argument that the mailing was solicited were to be accepted, he would still be in breach of the rule explicitly prohibiting the use of post-paid envelopes to mail unsolicited items such as calendars.

45. For the reasons I have given, I recommend that Mr Luff's complaint in relation to the use of House stationery and post-paid envelopes in connection with Mr Foster's communication of 16 December 2005 be upheld.

Mr Foster's 'Annual Report'

46. In considering the issues raised by Mr Luff in relation to Mr Foster's annual report, I have in mind the approach the Committee adopted in a previous report in which the question of what constitutes party political activity or campaigning was addressed.⁵ In that report, the Committee commended the following statement in my memorandum appended to its report:⁶

*"In my judgement, party political activity or campaigning includes comment which is party political in character or motivated by party political considerations. This is particularly so where what is said does not flow directly and naturally from a factual account given to constituents of what their Member has been doing in a Parliamentary capacity. Even where it does, such comment should be expressed so far as is reasonable in non partisan terms."*⁷

47. Mr Luff suggests that Mr Foster's annual report infringed the rules on the use of the IEP to fund publications to constituents in that it included:

- a) A colour photograph of Mr Foster taken as a candidate during the 2005 General Election. The photograph showed Mr Foster wearing a Labour Party rosette;
- b) Captions to three photographs of Mr Foster which promoted the Labour Party by referring positively to Labour Government policies;
- c) A form inviting respondents to tick a box if they would like to receive a quarterly newsletter giving details of Mr Foster's work in Worcester and Westminster.

48. Taking these points in turn:

- a) I do not think the inclusion of the photograph of Mr Foster as a candidate is alone sufficient to breach the prohibition on the use of the IEP for party political purposes or

4 See WE3 and WE4

5 First Report of Session 2004-05 (HC 71)

6 Ibid, Paragraph 9

7 Appendix, paragraph 30

campaigning purposes. The photograph relates to a past event, not a current campaign, and the caption to it is unexceptionable. Mr Foster's political allegiance will be well-known already to his constituents and can in any event readily be deduced from other features of the report, such as the red portcullis emblem on the masthead.

- b) The three captions are a different matter. I share the view expressed by Mr Bird that these cross the line into party political campaigning, in that the sentences in them which I have highlighted in paragraph 24 above refer explicitly to initiatives by the "Labour Government". In a publication funded from the public purse whose purpose is to tell Mr Foster's constituents, in non-partisan terms, what he has been doing as their Parliamentary representative, I cannot see what purpose these particular references can be intended to serve other than to make a party political point. (I note in this connection that the only part played by Mr Foster in the events to which two of the three captions refer appears to have been attendance at the respective opening ceremonies.)
- c) I do not see anything in the rules or guidance relating to publications funded from the IEP which Mr Foster has breached by the tear-off slip which he included in his report.

49. I therefore recommend that Mr Luff's complaint against Mr Foster in relation to the content of his annual report be upheld in respect of the three photograph captions to which Mr Luff draws attention, but not in respect of the other aspects complained of.

Other Matters the Committee may wish to consider

50. In assessing this case, as others, I have sought to weigh the evidence, on its merits, alongside the Rules currently in force. I have not thought it appropriate to take into consideration either Mr Foster's suggestion that the complaint is part of a politically motivated pattern of criticism of him by Mr Luff or his suggestion that other Members may also have breached the Rules in various respects.

51. When it too has reached a conclusion on whether or not the complaint should be upheld and in what respects, the Committee may, however, wish to decide what weight, if any, to attach to these points before it decides its overall assessment of the case.

52. One point I myself would wish to draw to the attention of the Committee is the evident complexity of the Stationery and Postage Rules (quite apart from any issues there may be about their substance). It cannot be satisfactory either that, as my attempt to summarise the relevant requirements in paragraphs 7-9 above indicates, at the moment there is no single authoritative document to which Members and their staff can turn which sets out all the relevant considerations in plain language in one place.

53. As to the substance of the Rules, this case amply illustrates, in my view, why the current review of them, to which I have referred in paragraph 39 above, is so timely. Mr Foster himself has, in conversation, drawn my attention to what he considers to be an anomaly between the Stationery and Postage Rules and the Rules on the use of the IEP, in that under the latter Members may meet the cost of certain circulars from the IEP but under the former stationery and envelopes provided by the Serjeant at Arms at public expense may not be used for the same purpose.

54. I realise that some Members may also think it odd that, if the Committee agrees with my conclusions on Mr Luff's complaint, Mr Foster is permitted to include in his annual report a tear-off slip on which constituents can register their interest in being kept informed of his Parliamentary activities, but cannot then use stationery and post-paid envelopes provided by the Serjeant to send circular mailings to those constituents. (He can, of course, either pay for such mailings himself or meet the cost out of his IEP.) More generally, some Members may argue that if the present Stationery and Postage Rules are interpreted as I have done in this case, their effect is to inhibit them in effectively discharging proper Parliamentary functions.

55. The key point in relation to both these concerns is that stationery funded through the IEP is subject to the overall cash limit applying to that allowance, whereas unlimited stationery provided by the Serjeant to each Member for certain parliamentary purposes is not at present subject to any limit in terms of quantity or value. There is thus a clear incentive for Members to maximise their use of unlimited stationery. This will inevitably lead to difficulties in interpretation on where the boundaries properly lie. This is what, in essence, lies at the root of this case.

56. The answer to this problem lies, though, not in trying to circumvent the rules, but in amending them so as to provide clarity and to remove any real inhibition they may impose on Members' ability properly to discharge their Parliamentary functions. In my submission, this case not only illustrates the need for greater clarity in the Stationery and Postage Rules but also for a more fundamental rethink of the present arrangements. Both the extent of any confusion among Members about what is or is not permissible and the consequent scope for deliberate or inadvertent misuse would be significantly reduced if, instead of the present arrangement under which Members can both order stationery for certain parliamentary purposes from the Serjeant without limit and fund certain other types of use of stationery and postage from their IEP, all Members were subject to a single, unified regime, governed by one set of clear rules, in respect of all their communication costs as a Member. Whether this regime was an entitlement or a cash-limited communication allowance (which Members could, if they so wished, supplement from their IEP), its introduction would provide greater clarity than exists under the existing fragmented arrangements, and thereby aid compliance with whatever rules the House thought appropriate to govern this area.

57. Such a change in the system could be coupled with a review of the existing rules on stationery use, not only to improve their clarity but possibly also to give Members some greater flexibility about how they can use the facilities and allowances provided by the House to communicate with their constituents on matters relating to their representative roles and functions. I hope that the House of Commons Commission will be prepared to consider this alongside other proposals as part of its current review.

4 May 2006

Sir Philip Mawer

Written evidence received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

1. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Peter Luff, 2 February 2006

MICHAEL FOSTER: MP FOR WORCSTER; misuse of Incidental Expenses Provision and franked envelopes

I do not like reporting my colleagues for abuse of the rules on the use of the IEP and stationery but I have received complaints from individuals in Worcester which, as a member of the Administration Committee, I feel I must report.

I had occasion to report Mr Foster to the Serjeant-at-Arms last year for misuse of franked envelopes. He had used a franked envelope to send a constituent a circular newsletter. The newsletter itself appeared to be properly printed and funded outside the IEP, but the use of the envelope was simply wrong. I considered this a clear breach of the rules and was very sorry when the Serjeant felt able to conclude only that the evidence proved one such abuse—the sending of one circular to the individual who had complained. Mr Foster's defence was that his office had understood the complainant had indicated that she wanted to be kept informed of his parliamentary work, and that her name would now be removed from the list of such people.

The rules are unequivocal—franked envelopes may not be used under any circumstances for circulars and Mr Foster was, in my judgement, extremely lucky to escape serious censure. I enclose (a rather poor quality) copy of the Serjeant's final letter on the subject dated 9th December 2005.

However, despite these events, Mr Foster has compounded his original error by sending the same complainant two further circular items—a subsequent edition (or, if I am right, a second copy of the previous edition!) of the parliamentary newsletter and, in a separate envelope, a circular letter together with a calendar in Labour Party colours and identical in style to his election literature, funded through the IEP. Both mailings were distributed in second class franked envelopes. Interestingly, the reverse of both envelopes bears a rubber stamp impression with a return address—a clear indication that they were part of a large distribution and that returned envelopes would be used to correct a significant mailing list.

This of itself would be a worrying and apparently large breach of the rules. However, there is a further significant matter that I must also draw to your attention following complaints made to me.

Last week Mr Foster used the IEP to produce his annual report—a “wrap-around” on a local free newspaper, “The Worcester Standard”. This is a perfectly acceptable distribution method, but the contents fall well short of the standards the rules demand.

First, in four separate ways, the publication promotes the Labour Party. Mr Foster is seen wearing a Labour Party rosette (the original is in colour, of course), and three of the extended captions to the photographs (Page 2, “A Sure Start” and page 3 “Supporting Parents and Children” and “Henwick is ‘State of the Art’”) praise Labour government achievements.

These breaches alone would deserve action, but it is the form on page 4 that compounds the error and, in my view, explains how Mr Foster generates his lists of constituents who request that they “be kept informed of Mr Foster's parliamentary work”, to quote the Serjeant's letter. Respondents are invited to tick a box if they “would like to receive a quarterly newsletter giving details of his work in Worcester and Westminster”. This is solicitation of a request to be contacted—and copies a similar tactic used by Mr Foster with local schools some years ago which he was rightly forced to abandon. Such solicitation is outside the rules as Mr Foster well knows from that earlier experience.

The methods used by Mr Foster to promote not only his own name but also his party are contrary to the rules of the House and I urge you to investigate activities which put other local political parties and candidates at a severe disadvantage and simply use public funds for entirely inappropriate purposes.

I enclose copies of all the relevant items, but I have, at this stage, retained the originals. I would of course be happy to meet you and to give you the originals if that would be helpful.

2 February 2006

Mr Peter Luff

2. Letter to a constituent from Mr Michael Foster, 16 December 2005

As someone who asked to be kept up to date with Parliamentary matters, I do hope you find my correspondence useful. You may be aware that I moved my constituency office during the summer. The full details are on the attached calendar, which also gives details of my regular advice surgeries, different ways you can contact me about local or national issues, I am only too happy to hear from you.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. I am looking forward to working with you in 2006.

16 December 2005

Mr Michael Foster

3. Rules on the use of Stationery, Post-paid Envelopes and the Crowned Portcullis from the Serjeant at Arms' Department, Summer 2005

House of Commons stationery is provided at public expense and is therefore subject to a set of rules approved by the Speaker, on the recommendation of the Administration Committee. The same applies to use of the Crowned Portcullis, the principal emblem of the House. In each case application and interpretation usually rests on the good sense of individual Members, with supervision and enforcement by the Serjeant at Arms.

When can original House stationery and post paid envelopes* be used at public expense?

- In solicited reply to written contact from constituents
- In solicited reply to names and addresses on petitions addressed directly to the Member
- In response to direct contact (eg doorstep, public meetings, surgeries)
- Unsolicited items such as newsletters, cards and calendars must not be included with solicited mailings
- Members are advised to keep accurate records of any such contact.

*Post paid envelopes should be safeguarded to prevent misuse and not be overprinted in any way. Spoilt envelopes should be sent back to the Postmaster for refund of postage.

When can original House stationery and plain envelopes be used, at a Member's own expense? **

- For unsolicited circulars and letters on constituency issues
- Questionnaires or surveys that are 'politically neutral'
- In response to answers from surveys/questionnaires
- For surgery/contact details
- Welcome to new constituents letters
- To send any type of greeting card
- Correspondence of All Party Groups which include people who are not Members of Parliament.

**Please note some circulars and their distribution costs can be claimed through Incidental Expenses Provision (IEP). Members should check with Finance and Administration Department.

When can original House stationery and envelopes NOT be used?

- Personal, business or commercial correspondence
- In connection with fund raising for a political party
- Advocating membership of a political party
- Supporting the return of somebody to public office.

How can stationery be ordered?

Members and their staff can order stationery for Parliamentary or constituency offices from the House of Commons Stationery catalogue or on line at [***](#). This will be delivered the next working day to Westminster or any other designated UK address. Serjeant at Arms' staff can provide complete stationery ordering packs,.

Can post-paid envelopes be used for overseas addresses?

Only for BFPO numbered addresses. Post-paid envelopes valid for European destinations are available from the stationery catalogue.

Are there special rules for times when Parliament has been dissolved?

Yes—House stationery, House emblems and post-paid envelopes must not be used during the period of dissolution. In correspondence ex-Members must not use the title MP or the House of Commons address until the day after Polling Day if re-elected.

What are the rules for use of the Crowned Portcullis?

The Crowned Portcullis is a royal badge and its use by the House has been formally authorised by licence granted by Her Majesty the Queen. The designs and symbols of the house should only be used for appropriate purposes and not when it might be wrongly regarded or represented as carrying the authority of the House when this is not the case.

Can Associated Parliamentary Groups use the Crowned Portcullis?

Those which include people other than Members of Parliament may use stationery other than original House stationery, subject to the same rules as those applying to Members and their use of Original House Stationery for circulars.

Where can I get further information about supplies of House of Commons stationery?

From the House of Commons Stationery Helpdesk or the Senior Office Keeper.

Who can advise me on appropriate use of House of Commons stationery?

If in doubt please telephone the Serjeant at Arms office.

4. Guidance note on the use of post-paid envelopes from the Serjeant at Arms' Department

Post Paid Envelopes

- Members are reminded of the regulations for the use of post paid envelopes. They should not be used:

- a) For correspondence of a business or commercial or personal nature;
 - b) For the correspondence of parliamentary groups which include persons other than Members of Parliament;
 - c) In connection with fund-raising for the benefit of a political party, or supporting the return of any person to public office;
 - d) FOR CIRCULARS OF ANY DESCRIPTION. Members should take particular note that even if costs of a specific mailing may be recoverable through the Office Costs Allowance, [now the IEP] (OCA Factsheet 1 dated September refers) post paid envelopes should not under any circumstances be used for the purposes set out in that factsheet.
 - e) Internal mail. Please note that letters to any Government Department are deemed internal and do not require postage. This service is run by the Government IDS and it is very helpful if envelopes are marked VIA IDS.
- For further information the leaflet Use of House Emblem, House Stationery and post paid envelopes is available from Outbuilding Reception Desks and the Serjeant at Arms Office x3070.

Members should note that post paid envelopes are charged at the appropriate rate as soon as they are supplied. They should be safeguarded to prevent misuse.

5. Guidance note on circulars from the Serjeant at Arms' Department

Circulars

- Members who wish to send out circulars may purchase original House stationery, or, at their own expense may photocopy or by other means reproduce such stationery which may include the Crowned Portcullis, whether or not associated with the words House of Commons.
- Such circulars may not be used:
 - a) for correspondence of a business, commercial or personal nature; or
 - b) in connection with fund raising for the benefit of a political party, advocating the membership of a political party, or supporting the return of any person to public office.
 - c) An Associate Parliamentary Group which includes persons other than Members of Parliament may make use of House emblems on stationery other than original House stationery.
- For the purposes of these regulations the following are considered to be circulars:
 - a) a letter sent in identical or near identical form to a number of addresses (whether or not it is individually signed and addressed) if it is unsolicited, ie. if it is not sent in reply to queries or correspondence from the addresses;
 - b) common-form coming of age greetings cards or letters, or equivalent communications sent to new constituents;
 - c) A letter sent in identical or near identical form to a number of addresses acknowledging replies to any letter, questionnaire or survey that itself was unsolicited.
- For further information the leaflet Use of House Emblem, House Stationery and post paid envelopes is available from Outbuilding Reception Desks and the Serjeant at Arms Office x3070.

6. Letter to Mr Michael Foster from the Commissioner, 8 February 2006

Complaint by Peter Luff MP

I enclose a copy of a letter and enclosures I have received from Peter Luff MP in which he complains, on behalf of others, that you have misused post-paid envelopes supplied by the House and have also breached the rules on publications funded from the Incidental Expenses Provision (IEP).

Specifically, Mr Luff alleges that:

1. you have used post-paid envelopes to send unsolicited communications to various people in your constituency. These include a parliamentary newsletter (which may or may not have been identical to one about which Mr Luff had previously complained to the Serjeant at Arms) and in a separate envelope, a circular letter together with a calendar funded through the IEP;
2. your recently circulated newsletter to constituents, again funded through the IEP, breaches the rules in that it promotes the Labour Party and includes a form through which constituents are invited to tick a box if they “would like to receive a quarterly newsletter giving details of [your] work in Worcester and Westminster.” Mr Luff argues that this amounts to solicitation of a request to be contacted, and that such solicitation is also outside the rules.

When the House revised the Code of Conduct for Members in July last year, it adopted a recommendation of the Committee on Standards and Privileges that alleged misuse of facilities and services provided by the House should, like misuse of allowances, be within the scope of the Code. The Code accordingly now includes a provision that:

“Members shall at all times ensure that their use of expenses, allowances, facilities and services provided from the public purse is strictly in accordance with the rules laid down on these matters, and that they observe any limits placed by the House on the use of such expenses, allowances, facilities and services.”

As you know the administration of House stationery rests with the Serjeant at Arms and of the Incidental Expenses Provision with the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). I am therefore writing to the Serjeant and to the Controller of Operations in the DFA (Mr Terry Bird) to invite their comments on Mr Luff's complaint.

I should be grateful if, in parallel, you will let me have your own explanation of the circumstances which have led to the complaint and your response to the points Mr Luff makes. To help you in this process I am enclosing a copy of the leaflet on stationery, post-paid envelopes and use of the crowned portcullis produced by the Serjeant and of the guidance note on publications funded from the IEP issued by the DFA.

You may also find helpful the enclosed note of guidance for Members who are the subject of a complaint, which sets out the procedure I follow when investigating a complaint.

If, having read this material, you have any questions about what is required or would like a word, please do not hesitate to ring me on the number above.

I look forward to receiving your reply. It would be helpful to have this, if possible, by the end of the forthcoming half-term recess.

8 February 2006

Sir Philip Mawer

7. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Michael Foster, 20 February 2006⁸

Complaint by Peter Luff MP

Thank you for your letter of the 8 February detailing two specific allegations made by Mr Luff. Both of these I will address, in addition I will in response point out the continued vexatious nature of complaints made against me either by, or in conjunction with Mr Luff.

Firstly, the use of post-paid House of Commons envelopes to send an unsolicited communication to people in my constituency. This matter was dealt with by the Serjeant at Arms office in November 2005. I pointed out that *** had contacted my office requesting to be kept informed of my parliamentary work. Such a request did not involve merely ticking a box as Mr Luff wrongly suggests, but when *** responded she also supplied her e-mail address. This is not someone who accidentally wants me to contact her, but makes a conscious effort to do so.

Her motives may not of course have been genuine, but I was not able to ascertain this at the time. Obviously by not raising the matter with me, but with Mr Luff, the political nature of the motive becomes clear.

I did assure [the Assistant Serjeant at Arms] of my intention to remove *** from my database. I instructed my staff accordingly, (see attached e-mail). I was dismayed, to put it politely, that she received a letter dated 16 December with a surgery notice and calendar. She should not have. My staff believed they had deleted her name, but for whatever reason it had not been removed. I accept, as office holder, responsibility for this and apologise to you and the Serjeant at Arms for this error.

However, I would point out that I am accused of re-sending a Summer Update with this letter. I did not. My covering letter makes reference to a change of office address, and an enclosure of a calendar with useful numbers and a reminder of my contact details. It does not refer to a Summer Update report. Why would I re-send a piece of literature to someone who had complained about receiving it previously? I mention this, as I suspect this person has misinformed Mr Luff, accidentally or not.

Mr Luff has form on this front. In January 2000 he complained to your predecessor, Elizabeth Filkin, about an alleged abuse of Parliamentary stationery, brought to his attention by a Mr Russell Hughes. Having checked this out, it was found that Mr Hughes was an entirely fictitious character and when I checked his address, he apparently lived in a house that didn't exist either. I heard no more from Ms Filkin about this complaint.

In 2004 a complaint was made to [the then Assistant Serjeant at Arms] by my Conservative opponent at the 2005 election. This referred to a letter dated 11 December 2003, allegedly sent in a House of Commons envelope officially franked on 11 November 2003. Peter Luff refers to this in his submission to you. [The then Assistant Serjeant at Arms] replied to the complainant. I was not given a copy of the letter, but it did point out the obvious inconsistency in the dates which formed the basis of the complaint.

On the second specific allegation, that of encouraging solicitation of a request, I find this complaint puzzling. It appears by offering an easy way for my constituents to be kept informed of parliamentary, not political activities, I am somehow breaking House rules. My constituents would have to complete a request form, tick a box, put it in an envelope, buy and place a stamp on it and send it to me. This process, I suggest is a very active one on behalf of those who return the slip. Interestingly, and I use this example not to engage in any form of tit-for-tat. I did call up the website of Peter Luff MP the morning I received your letter of complaint (Copy enclosed). As you can see it is a site funded through the Incidental Expense Provision. It has the very same facility on the home page, the ability to request information. It would be an entirely unacceptable situation to have different classes of constituents—those with email who can have a simple reply mechanism funded through IEP, and those who have to use the postal system. Given Mr Luff's complaint about promotion of the

8 The enclosures are not reported.

Labour Party, which I reject, if your attention is also drawn to the very political nature of the website, from my photocopy that may also be of interest to you.

It is fair to say that I am disappointed Mr Luff and I do not have any form of healthy working relationship, I wish it were otherwise, but I am too busy to engage in any form of personal vendetta. To get a flavour of the nature of this relationship, I have enclosed correspondence sent to the Speaker to seek advice on how best to deal with Mr Luff's desire to "have real fun" by campaigning actively in my constituency.

Mr Luff also alleges that I have used the IEP to promote, in his words, my name and the Labour Party in my annual review. This is frankly ridiculous. It cannot be against the rules of the House to promote or mention the name of the sitting MP, however often, in any report. Yes, I am pictured wearing a red and yellow rosette on a story about my re-election, an event that is of importance in the 2005 Annual Review. It does require a reading aid to actually read what the rosette says. The naked eye cannot make out the words. Interestingly, I modelled my report on that produced by the same publisher, but for a neighbouring colleague ***. As you can see, hers goes much further and is clearly seen with a banner saying Vote Conservative with her re-election story. Has Mr Luff made a complaint about this too?

Given the issues and content of his own website, funded through IEP and that of his own party colleague, I find the complaints made against me to be not only frivolous, vexatious but also highly hypocritical. I do hope you can see my frustration at the nature of the complaint. Mr Luff actually concedes the real motivation behind his action when he says that my activities put "other local political parties and candidates at a severe disadvantage". This shows his primary consideration to be party political and adds weight to my view that his complaint is vexatious.

In conclusion, I do accept my responsibility for sending *** a letter in December 2005 that she should not have received, and I again apologise for this. I hope you will accept this was not intentional and you can be assured this has caused my staff real angst and upset. But on the second allegation, I reject the complaint that I have abused House rules and hope that, through this investigation, a stop can be put to the vexatious and in some cases, fabricated complaints and I will be allowed to get on with my work without future distraction.

20 February 2006

Mr Michael Foster

8. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Michael Foster, 1 March 2006

Thank you for your letter of 28 February.

On the specific questions about the communication sent in December, the number is no more than 562. The figure is the current total of those who have contacted me and asked to be kept informed of my work as their MP. The number posted in December may have been slightly less than 562, but I don't have the precise information available.

These people were in effect self-selected. They had specifically requested to be kept updated with my work, as I maintain, *** had originally done. The letter as you know informed people of my change of office address as well as giving details of my surgery times. House of Commons post-paid envelopes were used, they were posted 2nd class.

I consider this communication to be perfectly legitimate use of post-paid envelopes, informing people, who had specifically asked to be kept informed, of my change of address and giving my surgery details.

1 March 2006

Mr Michael Foster

9. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Michael Foster, 29 March 2006

Thank you for your letter of the 28th March and for sight of the draft report into the complaint made against me. I have a few observations and comments that I would like the committee and yourself to consider.

On page 5, paragraph 12 my letter of reply has been sent to members of the committee, but not the enclosures. I feel that the content of the Annual Report produced by [Member A], with clear references to “Vote Conservative” and particularly in the light of the comments made by Mr Bird, reference to “Conservative controlled Worcester County Council” needs to be made available to the committee. As does further material which I have enclosed today.⁹

On page 7, paragraph 15, Mr Luff does not deny his complaint is vexatious. Indeed, he confirms what he said in his original complaint, that his motivation for the complaint is political. Commenting on incumbency and reference to a challenger unseating me are made. This should be pointed out to the committee. I also feel that previous complaints, which were entirely fabricated, should be referred to especially as they are mentioned in Mr Luff’s original complaint. Mr Luff’s motives in making this complaint are also evident in that a journalist was notified of the complaint being made several weeks ago, and if you remember I sought your advice on what comment would be made by your office.

Paragraph 17 refers to my defence of a letter sent on 16th December. It is important to note that the vast majority of those who asked me to contact them had done so to my old office address. Therefore to inform them formally of the change of address was a perfectly legitimate use of House stationery and what many would consider to be good business practice. The calendar was enclosed as a by-product for these particular correspondents. The vast majority of calendars purchased (10,000) were delivered by hand, unaddressed by volunteers.

On page 9, paragraph 25 Mr Bird acknowledges that a degree of judgement is called for. And in this sense, in hindsight, it would have been better to have let the Department of Finance and Administration see the text first to iron out any matters of interpretation.

However, the use of the term “Labour Government” is made as a factual statement. We do not have another Government. Referring to the Government’s “investment” is not a party political comment, it is meant as investment in the financial sense. The story relates clearly to this. Similarly, “initiative” is used in the sense of new policy. Had I prefaced “Labour” with an adjective of praise such as “fantastic” or “brilliant” then this would have been party political comment. As an accountant I am by nature a numbers man, and did not appreciate that “investment” would be construed as political comment.

Other members, and this is where [Member A]’s annual report is relevant, clearly have similar views. In her report, she writes;

“[Member A] joins the celebrations with County Council leader [Mr X] when the Conservative controlled Worcester County Council turned down the planning application for a huge rendering plant at Mayfield Farm, Hopwood”.

It is a statement of fact that Worcestershire County Council is Conservative controlled. I can't deny this, nor did I think of complaining about it on these grounds. Had [Member A] inserted a comment of praise before the word “Conservative” then this would have been different.

I have also scoured a few other sources to highlight what I mean, and perhaps the committee and the DFA would like to comment on them, in the light of the complaint made against me.

[Member B], website funded through IEP, clearly featuring “Conservative” with the party emblem (enclosed);

[Member C], website funded through IEP, an article “only a united Conservative Party” and repeated use of the word “Conservative” (enclosed);

[Member C], website again, featuring comment on “Labour’s culture of complacency on pensions” and repeated use of “Labour” in a critical sense (enclosed);

9 The enclosures are not reported.

[Member C], website again, article with numerous mentions of new party leader and criticisms of Labour and Gordon Brown (enclosed);

[Member D], website—identical content (enclosed);

[Member E] ditto;

[Member F] ditto;

[Member G] ditto;

Paragraph 26 makes reference to the use of colour in my annual report. Although not an issue for the DFA, I feel it important to make the point that my report is not in party colours and there is at least as much blue as red. In stark contrast to the report of [Member A] which is bold and bright blue in backdrop, and gives reference to local Conservative Party website and email. Further proof I believe that my report was not designed to promote political party support.

As with previous correspondence, I hope this letter can also be shared with the committee.

29 March 2006

Mr Michael Foster

Appendix 2: Memorandum from Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit a Memorandum for consideration along with Sir Philip's report.

As you will see from the conclusions drawn by Sir Philip in his report—his Para. 38—the rules on Stationery and Postage use are very difficult to interpret and can lead to mistakes. Sir Philip welcomes the current review of Stationery and Postage Rules which he hopes will offer clearer guidelines and less ambiguity than at present. This is reinforced in the final line of Para. 39 where Sir Philip suggests “there is real doubt that the existing rules fully meet these tests.”

With this in mind I would like to address the issues raised under Complaint No. 1—the use of pre-paid postage. I would suggest that there is a very fine line between unsolicited and solicited communications and I stand by my original comment that a very important function of an MP, especially in today's climate of political disinterest, is to communicate and keep his constituents fully informed. Information on a change of address, for constituents who have requested to be kept informed of my parliamentary work, is part of the vital link between MP and constituent and I feel a genuine communication, not a circular.

I would also add that for the interest of the Committee, my Incidental Expense Provision for 2005/6 has not reached its limit by some considerable amount and any suggestion that my use of stationery was to avoid use of my IEP is unfounded.

Secondly, Complaint No. 2—the issue of the Annual Report, Sir Philip has recommended that a complaint be upheld against what I consider a factual description in a caption. In making his judgement, Sir Philip states that he cannot see the part played by me in the activities being described. I am very disappointed that at no point have I been asked what role I played in the three stories. Had I thought it relevant or had I been asked I would have written an essay on my involvement in each of the three cases. But Members would appreciate that the process side of their work does not make for exciting reading, let alone lend itself for a caption for a photograph. That is why I had been asked to officially open the nursery, not just be “in attendance” as Sir Philip puts it. The fact that I was at the time a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Department of Education having served under the Children's Minister was also relevant to me being asked to perform the official opening ceremony. Exactly the same principles apply to the other two examples.

As I have said in the evidence submitted, I do not consider the captions to be “party political” and I have suggested an objective test that could be applied to such assessments in the future. By comparison with Annual Reports and other IEP funded material I have sent to Sir Philip in the course of this complaint, I feel the recommendation made to the Committee will lead to an avalanche of future objections that will have to be considered by the Committee. Sir Philip has assured me that the Committee will see the examples I have submitted of other IEP funded material that will fall foul of this recommendation if accepted. I do believe a line can be drawn between a description of fact and making a party

political point. I trust the Committee will look at some of the material and accept that many more Members will soon have complaints made against them if Mr Luff's complaint is upheld. Sir Philip in Para 48 in rejecting one of Mr Luff's complaints, makes the point that my political allegiance is well known to my constituents. I agree, but I would add that the political control of the Government is doubly well known, and as such it is hardly a campaigning or party political comment, but a statement of fact. There would be far more uncertainty over the political control of say a local council. So describing the political control of a local council could be construed as a campaigning or partisan point compared to the description of the Government that is merely factual not an opinion.

I am also disappointed, although I can partly understand why, that in reaching his conclusions Sir Philip did not think it appropriate to consider that Mr Luff's complaint was politically motivated, particularly given that Mr Luff's initial letter of complaint makes reference to incumbency of office and its effect upon challengers. I would also submit the history of our relationship, including previous complaints using fabricated names and address of alleged constituents of mine, and the fact that at least one local journalist was briefed by Mr Luff about his complaint (a point I did raise with Sir Philip in conversation) all suggest a political motivation for the complaint.

Throughout the investigation, I have co-operated fully and openly with Sir Philip in the knowledge that I have acted in a manner expected of a Member of Parliament, in corresponding with constituents in a genuine and open manner and in trying to effectively engage with my constituents.

In conclusion I would like to endorse the comment in Sir Philip's report—Para. 56 that the answer to problems which have been highlighted in this case, will be resolved by amending the present rules to provide clarity and remove ambiguity that will enable MPs to properly discharge their Parliamentary functions—which is what I have been trying to do.

8 May 2006

Michael Foster MP

Appendix 3: The Rules on use of the House emblem, House of Commons Stationery and pre-paid envelopes

Use of the House Emblem

1. The principal emblem of the House is the Crowned Portcullis. It is a royal badge and its use by the House has been formally authorised by licence granted by Her Majesty the Queen. The designs and symbols of the House should not be used for purposes to which such authentication is inappropriate, or where there is a risk that their use might wrongly be regarded, or represented, as having the authority of the House.

Use of the House of Commons Stationery and pre-paid envelopes

Introduction

2. House of Commons stationery provided at public expense must not be used for purposes which are not properly a charge on public funds, and the designs and symbols which authenticate communications from Members should not be used for purposes to which authentication is inappropriate. The following rules have been approved by the Speaker on the recommendation of the Select Committee on Administration. *Their application and interpretation must initially, however, rest on the good sense of the individual Members.* In normal circumstances supervision and enforcement of the regulations are a matter for the Serjeant at Arms.

Original House Stationery

3. Original House stationery which is provided at public expense should not be used for the following purposes:—

- a) communications of a business or commercial nature;
- b) personal correspondence, other than in modest quantities;
- c) correspondence of Associate Parliamentary Groups which include persons other than Members of Parliament;
- d) in connection with fund raising for the benefit of a political party, advocating membership of a political party, or supporting the return of any person to public office.

4. Original House stationery should not be used for circulars of any description.

Circulars (see also 4 above)

5. Members who wish to send out circulars may purchase the original House stationery, or, at their own expense, may photocopy or by other means reproduce such stationery which

may include the Crowned Portcullis or the Royal Arms, whether or not associated with the words 'House of Commons'.

6. Such circulars must not be used:—

- a) for correspondence of a business, commercial or personal nature; or
- b) in connection with fund raising for the benefit of a political party, advocating the membership of a political party, or supporting the return of any person to public office.
- c) An Associate Parliamentary Group which includes persons other than Members of Parliament may make use of House emblems on stationery other than original House stationery, subject to this and rule 5 above.

7. For the purposes of these regulations the following are considered to be circulars:

- a) a letter sent in identical or near identical form to a number of addressees (whether or not it is individually signed and addressed) if it is unsolicited, i.e. if it is not sent in reply to queries or correspondence from the addressees;
- b) common-form coming-of-age greetings cards or letters, or equivalent communications sent to the constituents;
- c) a letter sent in identical or near identical form to a number of addresses acknowledging replies to any letter, questionnaire or survey that itself was unsolicited.

Pre-paid Envelopes

8. The pre-paid envelopes supplied for Members' use should **not** be used:

- a) for correspondence of a business or commercial or personal nature;
- b) for the correspondence of parliamentary groups which include persons other than Members of Parliament;
- c) in connection with fund-raising for the benefit of political party, or supporting the return of any person to public office;
- d) for circulars of any description (including those referred to in paragraph 7 above);
- e) for internal mail;
- f) for overseas mail, other than to BFPO numbered addresses, see paragraph 10 below.

9. Members are asked to note that pre-paid envelopes, postcards and plastic mailers are charged for as soon as they have been supplied. They should be safeguarded in order to prevent misuse and may not be overprinted in any way.

European Destinations

10. A post-paid envelope valid for European destinations is available.

Dissolution

11. House stationery, House emblems and pre-paid envelopes should not be used during the period of dissolution. In correspondence ex-Members should not use the title MP or the address of the House of Commons until the day after Polling Day.

March 2006

Appendix 4: Mr Foster's Annual Report

Note: This is a scaled down reproduction, the original newspaper pages were approximately A3 Size.

The Worcester Standard

Thursday, January 26th 2006 Week 4, 35p where sold

Standard

ADVERTISMENT FEATURE

Michael Foster MP-Worcester

Free bus travel for pensioners



In February 2005, Mike re-introduced a Bill in Parliament to give pensioners free bus travel, not just half-price fares. In March, in his budget speech, the Chancellor announced that £350 million was to be allocated to fund free bus travel for over 60 year-olds. The scheme will start in April 2006, and represents a culmination of a two-year campaign by Mike.

Protecting the sauce



Mike worked with Lees and Parnis after a food scare involving a well-known bottled sauce. He is seeking protection for the famous "Worcester Sauce" and to ensure that any products that are not up to the standard of the original are not sold. He believes it is good enough for Welsh lamb and French air bagne, it is also good enough for Worcestershire, as

Fighting the Superbug



Following numerous stories about MRSA and other hygiene issues, Mike spent time with local hospital stations highlighting the importance of clean, well-maintained wards and advice to patients, visitors, and staff. At one of our local hospitals, Mike and I visited the ward to see the new dispensers that every staff member should carry with them, as well as having the gel dispensers outside the entrance to wards.

Contact Michael Foster, your Member of Parliament at: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Advertisement Feature



Michael Foster MP-Worcester



Education

Schools are a diary regular



Mike makes a point of having regular visits to schools in his diary. Here he is seen discussing the work of Parliament with pupils from Bishop Perowne school. Working with him, the pupils have won the right to concessionary ticket prices at the local Vue cinema chain.

Lifelong learning



Mike is joint Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Further Education and Lifelong Learning. Here he is presenting a petition signed by over 60,000 students, staff and supporters calling for the funding gap between schools and colleges to be closed. The petition was sent to the Prime Minister. Shortly afterwards, the Government announced major steps to close the gap, benefiting local students at Worcester Sixth Form College and Worcester College of Technology.

University of Worcester!



Mike joins in the celebration with students at the University of Worcester. He has worked closely with the university and has lobbied senior Ministers as part of the long campaign to get full university status granted.

A sure start



Mike with Caitlin Norcott at the opening of the Sure Start nursery at the Fairfield Centre. "I was proud to be asked to open the nursery, which is part of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. It will be such an asset to the local community" he said. Sure Start is a Labour Government initiative, designed to give young children the best possible start in life.

Advertisement Feature



Michael Foster MP-Worcester



Out & About

New Chamber premises



Mike Foster pictured with Christine Jones, the Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive, at the official opening of the new Chamber premises in Blackpole. Mike said "I work closely with the Chamber on business issues affecting the area, and I was delighted to be asked to officially open the new offices."

Cripplegate park saved



Mike was very happy to back the campaign, and urged local residents to "stand up to the City Council" over plans to build a car park on Cripplegate park. The City Council, faced with huge strength of feeling on the issue, backed down and scrapped their plans.

Supporting parents & children



Mike at the opening of the Tudor Way Children's Centre. This is another example of the Labour Government's investment in local communities. The scheme, based at Dines Green Primary school, will give support to parents and children and give a real boost to the drive to give every child the best possible start in life.

Henwick is "state of the art"



At the opening of the new Henwick Halt GP surgery, Health Minister Dr Stephen Ladyman, said that this was one of the most state of the art surgeries in the country. The Labour Government's investment in the local NHS continues, with two more GP surgery projects in the City.



Advertisement Feature

Michael Foster MP-Worcester



World Cup bid



Mike meets England legend, 1966 World Cup hat-trick hero Geoff Hurst. They discussed England's chance in 2006 and our bid to host a future World Cup in England.

Re-elected



Mike was honoured to be re-elected last May by the people of Worcester for the third time. "I will continue to work hard for all the people of the City" he said.

Special thanks to Newsquest and Observer Standard Newspapers for the use of their photographs. This publication has been funded from the Incidental Expense Provision for Michael Foster MP. Published by Observer Standard Newspapers Ltd.

Children in need



Mike pictured here with Dave Bradley having just completed his walk for Children in Need. Mike joined Dave to walk the first few miles through his constituency.

New Years Day at Choice



Up bright and breezy on New Year's Day, Mike joins the team at Choice, hospital radio for the Royal Worcestershire hospital, broadcasting to patients and staff.

ARE THERE ANY ISSUES WHICH CONCERN YOU?

Please give details:

Name:

Address:

Tel: Email:

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS SECTION TO: MICHAEL FOSTER MP UNIT 17D, SHUB HILL INDUSTRIAL ESTATE WORCESTER WR9 9EL
PLEASE TICK THIS BOX IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER GIVING DETAILS OF HIS WORK IN WORCESTER AND WESTMINSTER

Contact Michael Foster, your Member of Parliament at: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Formal minutes

13 June 2006

Members present:

Sir George Young, in the Chair

Mr Kevin Barron

Mr David Curry

Mr Andrew Dismore

Mr Brian Jenkins

Mr Elfyn Llwyd

Mr Chris Mullin

The Hon Nicholas Soames

Dr Alan Whitehead

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report [Conduct of Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 20 read and agreed to.

Paragraphs 21 to 23 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 24 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 25 read, amended and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report, as amended, be the Tenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Several Papers were ordered to be appended to the Report.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Report be reported to the House.—(*The Chairman.*)

[Adjourned till Tuesday 27 June at 10.30 am

Reports from the Committee on Standards and Privileges in the current Parliament

Session 2005–06

First Report	Conduct of Mr Jonathan Sayeed	HC 419
Second Report	Conduct of Mr John Horam	HC 420
Third Report	Conduct of Mr Tony Baldry	HC 421
Fourth Report	Pay for Standing Committee Chairmen	HC 568
Fifth Report	Electoral Administration Bill: Simplification of Reporting Requirements	HC 807
Sixth Report	Mr Stephen Byers (Matter referred on 19 October 2005)	HC 854
Seventh Report	Conduct of Mr George Galloway	HC 1067
Eighth Report	Conduct of Mr Mark Lancaster	HC 1144
Ninth Report	Lobbying and All Party Groups	HC 1145
Tenth	Conduct of Mr Michael Foster (Worcester)	HC 1223