



Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner
for Standards

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From the Commissioner

16 July 2007

Mr P Simmonds
The Granary
West Street
Great Somerford
Wiltshire SN15 5EH

Dear Mr Simmonds,

JAMES GRAY MP

Thank you for your letter of 10 July, in which you ask if I "exonerated" Mr Gray of the complaint against him of alleged misuse of Parliamentary allowances.

I do not normally comment on cases which I have considered but in view of the circumstances of this one I believe it to be in everyone's interest that a clear account is given of the outcome.

As often in life, the position is more complex than media reports either way of the outcome might suggest.

The complaint against Mr Gray essentially fell into two parts:

1. that in the period up to her illness in the Spring of 2005, Mrs Sarah Gray did not do work which would have justified Mr Gray paying her from his Parliamentary allowances.

The evidence available to me did not support this first and main part of the complaint.

2. that if Mrs Gray did no work in the following period (ending earlier this year), she must have been paid fraudulently.

The available evidence indicated that, in the period before she returned to full-time work in 2006, Mrs Gray's sick pay entitlement was such that no overpayment occurred in this period.

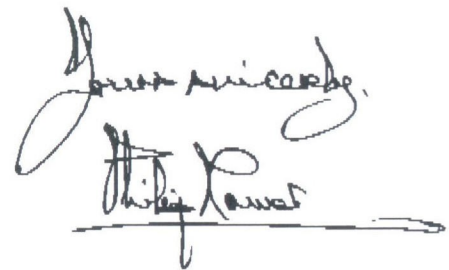
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The evidence available suggested that some overpayment did occur during the period October 2006 to February 2007 when Mrs Gray and her husband were separating and discussing the ending of her employment by Mr Gray. Although Mrs Gray continued to undertake some work during that period, it was not sufficient to warrant her continuing to receive full-time pay. On that ground, and to that extent only, I upheld the second, lesser aspect of the complaint.

Mr Gray has acknowledged the overpayment and apologised for it, pointing out the difficult circumstances he and his wife faced at that time. He has agreed arrangements to repay the sum involved with the House's Department of Finance and Administration.

I hope this clarification of the position is helpful. For the sake of completeness, I should add that in January of this year I received a complaint that Mr Gray had misused House of Commons stationery when writing to members of his local Association. The evidence available did not support that complaint.

In view of the desirability of the same clear account of events being available to everyone, I am copying this letter to Mr Gray, to the complainant and to the Chairman of the North Wiltshire Conservative Association.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sir Philip Mawer', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Sir Philip Mawer