



David Cameron MP
Leader of the Conservative Party

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Trust in politicians is very low at the moment – and I can understand why.

The expenses scandal has left many people feeling very angry with their elected representatives. Some MPs – from *all* parties – have done things that were wrong. **I don't care if they were within the rules – they were wrong.**

An apology, backed by action

I want to apologise for their actions. But more than an apology, you deserve action to put things right.

I've been saying that the expenses system needs changing for a long time. But as soon as I heard about the recent revelations, I knew that I had to take further action to put the Conservative Party's house in order straight away, rather than wait for the independent inquiry into MPs' expenses which is due to report later this year.

That's why I set up a scrutiny panel to review every excessive expense claim made by a Conservative MP and agree with them how much money they will pay back. I've been very clear: **anyone in my party who refuses to accept the decision of this panel will not be allowed to continue as a Conservative MP.**

I have also imposed additional rules on Conservative MPs above and beyond the House of Commons rules. They will have to:

- publish each and every expense claim online as they submit them;
- claim only for what is necessary to do the job – not for furniture, luxuries or the weekly shop;
- not 'flip' their first and second homes to maximise what they can claim on expenses; and
- pay Capital Gains Tax when they sell a home on which the mortgage interest payments have been paid by the taxpayer.

The heavily censored publication of MPs' expenses did nothing to improve the reputation of Parliament.

- We will do all we can to push the House of Commons authorities to publish the 2008/9 expenses as quickly as possible – and in an uncensored form.
- Only strictly private information, like MPs' phone numbers and bank details, should be blacked out.
- My Shadow Cabinet have been publishing their expense claims online since 12 May. From now on, I have asked them to include all significant correspondence and receipts.

This is a large but necessary task. All MPs must explain their past errors and account for them.

Telling the truth about the economy

Another reason people don't trust politicians is that they don't seem able to be straight with people. Instead of answering a simple question, they change the subject or reply with meaningless soundbites.

We've seen that recently in the debate about public spending. Gordon Brown's repeated denials that he is planning to cut public spending are making him look increasingly ridiculous.

We should have the confidence to tell the public the truth – that Britain faces a debt crisis.

Our national credit rating is under threat. Every international institution agrees that we now need to clear up the mess. Even members of the Cabinet agree, and the Chancellor outlined future cuts in the Budget. But Gordon Brown refuses to face up to what has gone wrong, and what everyone else agrees must be done.

The truth is that real spending plans will have to be cut whoever is elected. We have already set out some specific cuts a Conservative Government would make – like ID cards, burgeoning quangos, and the cost of politics. And we have set out whole areas we will radically reform to get better value for money – like education and welfare. We know that if you talk honestly to people about the spending decisions that need to be taken, they will respect you.

Your chance to vote for change

In a few weeks' time, there will be a by-election in Norwich North. That's your chance to send a message directly to Gordon Brown. After the expenses scandal and the years of spin, some people are saying they'll vote for a fringe party – or not bother voting at all. This reaction is understandable, but it is not the way to bring about change. **There's only one way to make sure Labour don't win in Norwich North – and that's to vote Conservative.**

We've got an excellent candidate in Chloe Smith. She's a Norfolk girl through and through, and she's been working hard for people in and around Norwich since she was first picked to be the Conservative candidate in January 2008.

I'm sure you'll be hearing plenty from her, and all the other candidates, over the coming weeks. But I wanted to start by sending you this survey which outlines her views on MPs' expenses – and which asks you for yours.

I hope you feel that the actions Chloe and I are taking go a long way to addressing your concerns. But we'd like to know for sure – and to hear if there's anything else we could do to restore your trust.

I would therefore be grateful if you would take a few minutes of your time to complete the survey and send it back in the envelope provided. And if you'd like to raise anything else with Chloe directly, please feel free to get in touch with her at the same address.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely,



David Cameron MP
Leader of the Conservative Party

RESTORING TRUST IN POLITICS



Message from Chloe Smith

Ever since the details of MPs' expenses were first published, people have been furious about the excessive, unacceptable and possibly illegal claims made by some of the people we send to represent us in the House of Commons.

As the local Conservative candidate in this by-election, I want to make it clear to you that I will not play the system. I will not bend the rules. I will not break the law. Instead, I will abide by the standards that politicians expect others to live by. I will stick to the strict rules set out below.

I want you to treat this as a contract between us. If I'm elected as your Member of Parliament in this by-election, I will serve you for less than a year before a general election has to be called. If I break any one of these rules, you should vote me out when you get the chance.

Chloe Smith

Chloe Smith

Conservative Candidate for Norwich North

MPs' expenses: my contract with you

I, Chloe Smith, the Conservative candidate for Norwich North, promise to:

- publish on my personal website details of all of my personal expenses incurred as your Member of Parliament;
- publish on my personal website details of all of my office expenses incurred as your Member of Parliament;
- publish on my personal website details of all donations of more than £1,000 to either Norwich North Conservative Association or to me, in line with Electoral Commission rules;
- appoint a local firm of auditors to approve my expenses accounts at the end of every financial year;
- open up my unedited expenses claims to local newspapers at the end of every financial year;
- never claim for food;
- never claim for furniture or household goods; and
- meet my own tax liabilities – such as stamp duty – without claiming them from the taxpayer.

Survey

Please answer the 10 questions on both sides of this form and return it in the envelope provided.

MPs' expenses

1. How important is the need to reform MPs' expenses and restore trust in politics compared with issues like the economy, crime and the NHS?

- More important About the same Less important Not important

2. Which party leader has responded best to the MPs' expenses scandal?

- Gordon Brown David Cameron Nick Clegg None of them

3. MPs currently receive a 'Communications Allowance' of £10,000 a year to communicate with their constituents via leaflets, websites etc. David Cameron thinks that this activity shouldn't be funded by the taxpayer. Do you agree?

- Yes No Don't know

4. MPs are currently given an allowance to employ their own staff. Some people have suggested that MPs' staff should be employed by the House of Commons authorities to provide an independent check that they are doing the work they are contracted to do. Do you agree?

- Yes No Don't know

5. After the next Election, there will be 650 MPs each representing about 70,000 electors. David Cameron has argued that we don't need that many MPs, and that we should cut the size of the House of Commons. Do you agree?

- Yes No Don't know

P.T.O.

A new politics

6. David Cameron has argued that the abuse of MPs' expenses is part of a wider problem of people in positions of power looking after their own interests, rather than the people they are meant to serve. What do you think of the following proposals he has made?

a) Making the House of Commons debate certain topics or proposals if enough signatures are collected asking them to do so:

- A good idea A bad idea Don't know

b) Involving members of the public, not just party members, in the selection of each party's candidates for general elections:

- A good idea A bad idea Don't know

c) Supporting the return of social and employment laws from the European Union (EU) to our national control, requiring a referendum to approve any further transfers of power to the EU, and having far more detailed scrutiny in Parliament of EU legislation and spending:

- A good idea A bad idea Don't know

d) Replacing the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights which spells out the extent and limit of rights more clearly and ensures that any new rights are agreed by elected politicians, not unaccountable judges:

- A good idea A bad idea Don't know

e) Requiring Parliament to approve any plans to commit British troops to combat:

- A good idea A bad idea Don't know

7. Do you think there should be a 'recall' power to allow local people to force a by-election if they are unhappy with their current MP, but do not want to have to wait until the next general election to have their say?

- Yes No Don't know

The next general election

8. Do you agree that a general election should be held as soon as possible?

- Yes No Don't know

9. We're interested in whether people's answers to the above questions depend on which party they support. Would you mind saying how you currently think you will vote at the next election?

- Conservative Labour Liberal Democrat Green
 UKIP BNP Other (please specify):
 Undecided – Conservative or Labour Undecided – but not Labour
 Undecided – but not Conservative Won't vote

And finally

10. Is there anything else that could be done to restore your faith in politics?

If you'd like to hear more from us by email, please fill in your address below:

Email:

Can you help during the by-election campaign?

- I would like to help Chloe's campaign
 I will be voting Conservative in the by-election
 I can display a Conservative poster during the by-election



Data Protection Act 1998: returning this survey acknowledges that you consent to this information being held by the Conservative Party. We will not pass your personal details on to third parties. If you do not wish us to use the information you have provided please tick this box