

Julian Brazier Demands Apology and Retraction from Sunday Times

“Today’s Sunday Times contains the astonishing claim ‘Julian Brazier said his wife Katharine works in his Canterbury constituency office earning £33,840 – for a two day week’. This is untrue.

“On Thursday, a Sunday Times journalist rang me as part of a survey of MPs’ employment of family members. I told him that my wife worked two days a week for me, from home in the constituency. I refused to give her salary – I don’t give out the salary of any staff member – but said that it lay within the House of Commons Fees Office guidelines for her responsibilities and seniority, for the hours worked.

“After that the Sunday Times, for some reason, rang me repeatedly on Friday, in and out of meetings in my constituency, and eventually claimed that they had a leaked salary report and that, unless I accepted or denied it, they were going to publish a certain figure as my wife’s salary.

“This struck me as an odd way to behave, so I gave him short shrift. In this morning’s newspaper, they have almost *trebled* the figure they suggested on Friday *and* are attributing their astonishing figure to a statement from me.

“I believe that MPs are accountable to their constituents, and welcomed the publishing of personal expenses, but I don’t see why I should publish my wife’s salary. She and I are very happy, however, for the media to see the files etc for the voluminous amount of work she does for me in her part time role, providing the confidentiality of individual constituents’ cases is protected.

“My wife’s role is specified in a contract, filed with the House of Commons Fees Office in 1990, and includes organising all aspects of my constituency diary, including liaising with the local media, all casework with Canterbury City council, from housing to anti-social behaviour, all casework with Kent County Council (except Social Services) and all contact with a number of Government departments including Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

“I have asked the Sunday Times for a retraction and an apology.”