

Following the publication of the Standards and Privileges Committee's eleventh report of the session 2009-10 which dealt with Liberal Democrat self referrals relating to Dolphin Square I am writing to you to offer my apology to the House, in accordance with the committee's ruling.

In 2006 I accepted an offer to surrender the lease on my flat. I moved to cheaper accommodation and the full costs of moving were taken from the surrender payment. The Commissioner has confirmed that there was no extra burden on the public purse as a result of my actions. I paid capital gains tax and then used the remaining money to top up my staffing budget over the next two years and other parliamentary related expenses. The committee agreed that my actions did not lead to an increased cost to public funds.

I regret not taking advice from the Department of Resources. This was an unusual situation which was not covered by the rules and I understand that the Department sought advice from the Clerk of the House. However, given that I am now aware that three MPs were given advice that it was in order to accept the money I have no confidence that I would have been given the appropriate advice. That said, I must take responsibility for not checking the situation for myself.

I accepted the money in good faith, making the assumption that doing so would be no different to an MP profiting from a tax payer funded mortgage. The Commissioner and the Committee disagreed and concluded that the two situations were different.

I accept that I made an error of judgement in not consulting on the matter and in my interpretation of the situation. I also agree with the Commissioner that it is a shame that the advice given to the department of Resources was not promulgated as we should then have "been able to avoid the difficulties which have now come to light".

I therefore apologise to the House and hope that other honourable Members submit themselves to the same scrutiny. I will also comply with the ruling with regard to payment of a proportion of the sum to the House authorities.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Gidley MP.