House of Commons
Committee on Standards and Privileges

Conduct of Mr David Blunkett
Second Report of Session 2004–05

Report and Appendix, together with formal minutes

Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed 20 December 2004
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)
Mrs Angela Browning MP (Conservative, Tiverton and Honiton)
Mr Wayne David MP (Labour, Caerphilly)
Mr Andrew Dismore MP (Labour, Hendon)
Rt Hon Derek Foster MP (Labour, Bishop Auckland)
Mr David Heath CBE MP (Liberal Democrat, Somerton and Frome)
Rt Hon Andrew Mackay MP (Conservative, Bracknell)
Mr Kevin McNamara MP (Labour, Hull North)
Mr Stephen Pound MP (Labour, Ealing North)
Mr Simon Thomas MP (Plaid Cymru, Ceredigion)

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 Jenny McCullough (Second Clerk) and Lisa Hasell (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.
Conduct of Mr David Blunkett

1. We have considered a memorandum by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards relating to the complaints against Mr David Blunkett, Member for Sheffield Brightside, by Mr Andrew Robathan, Member for Blaby, and others. The Commissioner’s memorandum is appended to this Report.

2. The complaints arose from an alleged misuse of a travel warrant. Mr Blunkett has accepted that he made an error in respect of the use of a warrant on one occasion, although the precise circumstances remain unclear. The records of the Department of Finance and Administration do not contain any evidence confirming Mr Blunkett’s admission and in particular there is no evidence that Mr Blunkett has used a spouse warrant.

3. Mr Blunkett has been shown a copy of the Commissioner’s full report, and has nothing to add.

4. We acknowledge that Mr Blunkett has accepted responsibility for his error, apologised for it, and repaid the sum concerned earlier this month.

5. Mr Blunkett attributes his mistake to an incorrect presumption that the rules relating to spouse travel had been extended to include partners when the corresponding rules for passes to the House of Commons were changed in 1997.

6. The Green Book as issued in April 2002 was clear (as is the current—July 2004—edition) that only spouses are eligible for free travel. Mr Blunkett should have been aware of this. The Green Book makes clear that Members are personally accountable for the use made of warrants, and the April 2002 edition specifically stated that they must not be transferred (nor the tickets for which they were exchanged) to other persons.¹

7. However, the April 2002 edition of the Green Book also implicitly recognised that members might, on occasion, use warrants for journeys by someone not entitled to use them and made clear that, in those circumstances, the cost of the travel could not be met from public funds and that Members would be required to reimburse the Department from personal funds.

8. As the Commissioner notes, it was Mr Blunkett’s responsibility to be aware of the rules of the House relating to spouse travel. Had he consulted the Green Book, it would have been clear to him that the cost of travel by Mrs Quinn could not be met from public funds and that he should have promptly reimbursed the Department for the cost of the ticket for which the warrant was exchanged.

9. We agree with the Commissioner that the complaints against him be upheld.

¹ The current edition says that warrants, and tickets bought with them, may only be used for ‘allowable journeys’.
Appendix: Memorandum from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

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Complaint against Mr David Blunkett

The Complaint

1. On 28 November, the Sunday Telegraph published a series of allegations concerning the Member for Sheffield, Brightside, the Rt Hon David Blunkett. One of these was that Mr Blunkett had given Mrs Kimberly Quinn “two first class rail tickets in August 2002 which are thought to have been assigned to him for his work as an MP”. A spokesman for Mr Blunkett was said to have admitted that Mr Blunkett had given Mrs Quinn the use of a rail ticket intended for a Member’s spouse.

2. The other allegations published by the paper concerned various actions said to have been taken by Mr Blunkett in his capacity as a Government Minister. They therefore fell outside the scope of the Code of Conduct approved by the House; investigation of them is outside the scope of my responsibilities. On 29 November it was announced that Sir Alan Budd would undertake an inquiry into the most serious of these allegations, concerning the granting of permanent residency to Mrs Quinn’s child’s former nanny, Ms Leoncia Casalme.

3. On 30 November, Mr Andrew Robathan (the Member for Blaby) wrote asking me to examine the allegation concerning the rail tickets. A copy of Mr Robathan’s letter is at WE1. On the same day, I received by fax letters from 2 members of the public—Mr A G D Macleod and Mr M Leech—making inter alia the same request (WE2 and WE3). I have received 12 similar letters of complaint from other members of the public, as well as 53 other letters or e-mails either pressing me to inquire into other aspects of Mr Blunkett’s conduct or commenting on the allegations against him. Many of these raise issues beyond my immediate terms of reference, for the reason I have given in paragraph 2 above.

4. On 1 December it was reported in the press that Mr Blunkett had admitted giving Mrs Quinn a first-class rail warrant and had accepted that this was a breach of the House’s rules. The Daily Telegraph, for example, quoted a spokesman as saying on Mr Blunkett’s behalf:

   “Having examined the detailed rules today he [Mr Blunkett] realises he has made a genuine mistake and will be repaying the cost of the ticket to the parliamentary authorities and apologises for the mistake.”.

5. Paragraph 84 of the Guide to the Rules on the Conduct of Members says that the Commissioner “would not normally regard a complaint founded upon no more than a newspaper story or a television report as a substantiated allegation”. However, in two cases the Committee has endorsed a decision by me to investigate a matter following the appearance of potentially serious allegations backed by clear evidence in the press. In proceeding in this instance I had in mind the guidance given by the Committee in these
earlier cases and the reported admission by Mr Blunkett’s spokesman that a breach of the House’s rules had indeed occurred.

**Relevant provisions of the Code and the Green Book on Allowances**

6. The Code of Conduct includes a provision that:

“No improper use shall be made of any payment or allowance made to Members for public purposes and the administrative rules which apply to such payments and allowances must be strictly observed.”

7. At the time when the journeys concerned were alleged to have been made, the Green Book (which sets out the rules on Members’ allowances, etc) stated that Members’ spouses and children up to the age of 18 were each entitled to claim reimbursement in respect of up to 30 single journeys each year between London and the constituency or the Member’s home. There was no mention of Members’ partners or friends. That remains the position today.

**My Inquiries**

8. I therefore wrote to Mr Blunkett on 2 December drawing his attention to the complaints I had received and to the relevant provisions of the Code and the Green Book. I asked him to give me a full and complete explanation of what had occurred; to confirm if he accepted that he had broken the House’s rules and had offered to repay the money involved; to say how many rail warrants were involved and when; and to indicate whether this was the only occasion on which a breach had occurred involving Mrs Quinn and the allowances and facilities provided to Mr Blunkett as a Member or whether there were others. A copy of my letter is at WE4. At the same time I invited the House’s Department of Finance and Administration to confirm its understanding of the position from its records.

9. Mr Blunkett replied on 8 December. A copy of his letter is at WE5. The key points are:

a) In August 2002, as alleged, he had used a voucher for a spouse for a return ticket from Kings Cross to Doncaster.

b) He accepted responsibility for his error in using the voucher and confirmed that he had repaid the relevant amount (£179) on 1 December.

c) He had not used vouchers for a spouse on any other occasion or applied for any other House-provided facilities for Mrs Quinn, such as a House of Commons pass.

d) He wished to repeat his profuse apology for “what was an unacceptable but genuine error”.

10. As to how the error occurred, Mr Blunkett gave the following explanation:

“I am afraid I had wrongly presumed that when the rules were changed for spouse passes to the House of Commons and for Ministerial travel for spouses to include partners, that this had also been changed in relation to vouchers for rail travel. (It had been some considerable time since my divorce and I am afraid this contributed to my
being unfamiliar with the procedures.) I considered Ms Fortier, as she was then known, to be my partner although she remained married to someone else given that she was 8 months pregnant with my child.”

11. The facility for a Member’s spouse to have a pass allowing access to the Palace of Westminster was extended to partners in 1997. Enquiries of the Cabinet Office confirm that the Ministerial Code says in respect of the travelling expenses of spouses/partners:

“The expense of a Minister’s spouse/partner when accompanying the Minister on the latter’s official duties may occasionally be paid from public funds, provided that it is clearly in the public interest that he or she should accompany the Minister.”

12. The Director of Operations in the Department of Finance and Administration, Mr Terry Bird, informed me on 13 December of the outcome of the Department’s check of their records. He confirmed that they had received a cheque for £179 from Mr Blunkett on 6 December in reimbursement for the value of a journey which the Department understood from Mr Blunkett’s office to have been taken from Doncaster to London on or around 19 August 2002. Mr Bird sent me a list of warrants recorded by the Department as having been used by Mr Blunkett over the period 1 January 2002 to 31 March 2004. This list is reproduced at WE6. It does not record any journey involving travel between Doncaster and London Kings Cross on or around 19 August 2002.

13. Mr Bird told me that in view of this, the Department had checked their records of every Parliamentary travel warrant used from 10 August to 14 October 2002. They had also failed through this exercise to match Mr Blunkett’s repayment with a recorded journey using a warrant signed by him.

14. Mr Bird suggested that the discrepancy might be accounted for by the nature of the rail warrants system:

“The House has three types of warrant: for Members, their spouses and for Members’ staff. These are essentially books of foils which can be exchanged for a rail ticket at a station or booking office. Each of the three warrant types has to be endorsed by the relevant Member for it to be valid and normally in advance of the journey. The rail companies send an electronic copy of the foil to the House for payment via a processing centre. The return of the electronic foil copies is not systematic insofar as their return depends on the speed of handling at each stage. Most are received within about four weeks of the day of use, but a few are received long after this period.”

15. Mr Bird said that thousands of warrants are used for Parliamentary business in the course of a year. Searching the Department’s records of them was a time-consuming process. Without more precise information as to the date the journey in question was taken, he was reluctant to go beyond the search of all Parliamentary warrants used between 10 August and 14 October 2002 which his staff had conducted.

16. As regards the warrants which the Department had recorded as having been used by Mr Blunkett, Mr Bird said that nothing in relation to these warrants raised any concerns, although he conceded that scrutiny of returned warrants by itself would not provide a wholly adequate means of providing such assurance. (The Department is currently considering possible alternatives to the warrant system.) He was also able to say that there
was no indication from the Department’s records of any misuse of other Parliamentary allowances in respect of Mrs Quinn:

“... I asked my staff to review claims by Mr Blunkett to look for unusual expenditure or patterns of expenditure. None has been brought to my attention.”

17. The absence of clear evidence from the Department’s records as to when precisely the journey in question took place, as to its nature and as to the precise type of warrant used led me to write to Mr Blunkett on 14 December to see if he could shed any more light on these points. On 16 December Mr Blunkett replied:

“All I have is a recollection of using a spouse’s warrant for a return journey. The reason that August 2002 came up at all is because that was the allegation from Kimberley Quinn in the Sunday Telegraph of 28 November which triggered this investigation.”

18. In the course of my inquiries I was also in touch with Mrs Kimberly Quinn’s solicitor, Mr Alan Finlay. On 15 December Mr Finlay told me that Mrs Quinn did not wish to give me evidence in relation to the matter before me.

Findings of Fact

19. The complaints against Mr Blunkett allege that he misused two first class rail tickets in August 2002 which had been assigned to him for his work as an MP. Mr Blunkett rapidly accepted the truth of the allegation and has repaid to the House £179, the then cost of a first class return ticket between London Kings Cross and Doncaster.

20. The House’s Department of Finance and Administration has no record of a travel warrant having been used by Mr Blunkett which precisely matches the description of the journey which forms the basis of the complaints. However, it is possible that the warrant was not returned from the rail company concerned, was returned by the company and not attributed to Mr Blunkett, or otherwise simply slipped through the Department’s recording arrangements. Even if the warrant was to hand, study of it alone might confirm the basis underlying the complaints but would not necessarily do so.

21. Whilst there is some uncertainty about the precise date on which the warrant was used and about the nature of the journey involved, Mr Blunkett has a recollection of using a spouse’s warrant for a return journey from Kings Cross to Doncaster. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, the evidence he has given me on this point must be conclusive. No evidence has been supplied to me which would establish any other instance of misuse of Mr Blunkett’s Parliamentary allowances.

Conclusion

22. Travel warrants supplied to Members in their parliamentary capacity are not available for use by their partners or friends. Mr Blunkett has admitted misusing a warrant on one occasion. This is a clear breach of the House’s rules and therefore of the Code of Conduct. Although Mr Blunkett has offered an explanation of this in which he has drawn attention to some differences of approach regarding the facilities to be accorded partners, it was his responsibility to understand the House’s rules and to ensure that his use of the rail warrant
was appropriate. I therefore recommend that the complaints against Mr Blunkett in respect of the rail warrant should be upheld.

23. In evaluating what penalty if any is appropriate in this case, the Committee may wish to give attention to the following points.

   a) A spokesman acting for Mr Blunkett admitted the use of a rail warrant when the allegation was first raised;

   b) Mr Blunkett has himself subsequently recognised his error in using the warrant, accepted responsibility for it, apologised and repaid the sum concerned;

   c) No evidence has been submitted to me, nor has any been uncovered by the Department of Finance and Administration, of any other instances of abuse by Mr Blunkett of the allowances provided by the House.

24. The Committee will no doubt also wish to have in mind the outcome of other cases in which breaches of the House’s allowances regime have been established.

20 December 2004

Sir Philip Mawer
Written Evidence received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

1. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Andrew Robathan MP

I have been very concerned to read that the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, gave Kimberley Quinn two first class tickets to Sheffield, paid for by the Parliamentary Fees Office. It appears this is correct, since Home Office spokesmen have been saying that he considered it acceptable since Mrs Quinn was his “partner” at the time. I understand that the money has been repaid.

As you would be aware, the travel concession is only available to children and spouses. I note that Sir Alistair Graham, Chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, has said that he believes you should conduct an inquiry into this and other complaints against David Blunkett.

I feel particularly strongly about this since I know that there are members of the armed forces that have been court martialed and sacked for fiddling their travel expenses in some way or another and indeed I believe police officers have as well. That probably includes Metropolitan Police officers, for whose conduct David Blunkett is directly responsible.

I hope you will be able to investigate this and I look forward to hearing from you.

30 November 2004

2. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Adam Macleod

I would be grateful if you would investigate the following allegations against Mr Blunkett which, if true, would appear to breach the Rules of the House and the Ministerial Code.

a) That he gave a lady who was not his wife two first class rail tickets which were assigned to him for his work as an MP.

b) That he used his government chauffeur to drive a lady who was not his wife to his home in Derbyshire.

c) That he took a lady who was not his wife to Spain accompanied by four security men and a driver, with much of the cost met by the taxpayer.

30 November 2004

3. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Mark Leech

I write to lodge a formal complaint for your investigation against David Blunkett MP.

The basis for the complaint stems from allegations made in The Daily Telegraph on 28 November 2004, a copy of which I attach for your information.

The allegations are that Mr Blunkett:

- “Fast-tracked” a visa for his lover’s Filipina nanny in order to allow her to stay in Britain indefinitely.
- Shared confidential security information with Mrs Quinn, in what a friend of hers described as “pillow-talk”. This included advice to her parents to avoid Newark airport, in New York, hours
before a security scare and giving Mrs Quinn advance knowledge of police raids in Manchester that led to the death of an officer in January, 2003;

- Ordered a policeman to stand outside Mrs Quinn’s Mayfair home to safeguard her against anti-capitalist rioting that had been expected during a May Day demonstration;

- Gave her first-class rail tickets in August 2002 which are thought to have been assigned to him for his work as an MP;

- Put pressure on the American embassy to issue a temporary passport for William Quinn in May 2003, so that Mrs Quinn and her son could join him on holiday in France;

- Used his government chauffeur to drive Mrs Quinn to his home in Derbyshire for weekend trysts;

- Took Mrs Quinn, the publisher of *The Spectator*, to Spain for a wedding, accompanied by four security men and a driver, with much of the cost allegedly met by the taxpayer.

**30 November 2004**

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**4. Letter to Mr David Blunkett from the Commissioner**

**Complaint By Mr Andrew Robathan MP And Others**

As you will know, I have received complaints from Mr Robathan and a number of members of the public about your alleged misuse of 2 first class rail tickets supplied to you in your capacity as an MP. I enclose a copy of the letter dated 30 November which I received from Mr Robathan, and of letters dated 30 November which I received from Mr A D G Macleod and Mr M Leech. There have been subsequent letters from other members of the public.

A number of the letters I have received have asked me to investigate allegations about your conduct which have recently appeared in the press in addition to that relating to the alleged misuse of rail tickets. As these allegations appear to concern your actions as a Government Minister, they are outside my remit and I have so informed those who have written to me.

The Code of Conduct for Members approved by the House includes a provision that:

“No improper use shall be made of any payment or allowance made to Members for public purposes and the administrative rules which apply to such payments and allowances must be strictly observed.”

The Green Book on Members’ allowances etc says that Members’ spouses and children up to the age of 18 are each entitled to up to 15 return journeys each year between London and the constituency or the Member’s home. There is no mention of Members’ partners or friends.

According to a report in the Sunday Telegraph of 28 November, it is alleged that you gave Mrs Kimberley Quinn the use of 2 first class tickets in August 2002 which had been assigned to you for your work as an MP. The same report says that a spokesman acting for you acknowledged that you had given Mrs Kimberly Quinn the use of a spouse’s rail ticket.

More recent reports in the press for 1 December say that you have admitted giving Mrs Quinn a first-class rail warrant and have accepted that this was a breach of the House’s rules. A spokesman is quoted as saying on your behalf:

“*Having examined the detailed rules today he [Mr Blunkett] realises he has made a genuine mistake and will be repaying the cost of the ticket to the parliamentary authorities and apologises for the mistake.*”

(Daily Telegraph, 1 December).
In accordance with the procedures for investigating complaints laid down by the House, I am writing to ask you for a full and complete explanation of what has occurred. If you have indeed accepted responsibility for a breach of the House’s rules and offered to repay the sum involved, it would be helpful if you would confirm this. Please could you also say how many tickets or rail warrants were involved and when, and whether this is the only occasion on which a breach occurred or whether you are aware of any others involving Mrs Quinn and allowances or facilities provided to you as a Member.

I enclose a note setting out the procedure I follow in relation to these matters. If you or one of your senior staff wish a word, please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

As this matter involves a potential abuse of the House’s rules in relation to allowances, I am copying this letter to the Director of Finance and Administration Mr Andrew Walker. I am also asking Mr Walker to check the Department’s records and confirm the Department’s understanding of the position to me.

When I have heard from you and the Department, I will decide what other action is appropriate. I appreciate that you will probably want this matter resolved quickly and a speedy reply will therefore be helpful. It may also be helpful if I mention that the Committee on Standards and Privileges next meets on 14 December.

I look forward to hearing from you.

2 December 2004

5. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr David Blunkett

I understand perfectly that it is necessary for you to conduct this investigation and of course I am happy to cooperate with all that is required.

I have accepted responsibility for my error in respect of the rail voucher and indeed I repaid the relevant amount—£179—on 1 December. I enclose my letter to the travel office which followed a discussion with them about how they wanted me to deal with it.¹

In August 2002, as alleged, I used a voucher for a spouse for a return ticket from Kings Cross to Doncaster (the allegation was in relation to 2 tickets—I am assuming that 2 single tickets were being referred to, constituting the return ticket, as no one was travelling with us at the time).

I did not use vouchers for a spouse on any other occasion.

I’m afraid I had wrongly presumed that when the rules were changed for spouse passes to the House of Commons and for Ministerial travel for spouses to include partners, that this had also been changed in relation to vouchers for rail travel. (It had been some considerable time since my divorce and I’m afraid this contributed to my being unfamiliar with the procedures.) I considered Ms Fortier, as she was then known, to be my partner although she remained married to someone else given that she was 8 months pregnant with my child.

I can confirm that I did not apply for any other facility, including a House of Commons pass.

I want to repeat again my profuse apology on what was an unacceptable but genuine error.

8 December 2004

¹ Not appended by the Commissioner.
### 6. List of Parliamentary rail warrants used by Mr Blunkett between 1 January 2002 and 31 March 2004

David Blunkett Warrants—Period 01/01/2002–31/03/2004

**MP Travel**

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*Source: Department of Finance and Administration, House of Commons*

1 BAA is the train company’s code for a first class return ticket.
Formal minutes

Monday 20 December 2004

Members present:

Sir George Young, in the Chair

Mrs Angela Browning          Mr Kevin McNamara
Mr Andrew Dismore             Mr Stephen Pound
Mr Andrew Mackay              Mr Simon Thomas

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report [Conduct of Mr David Blunkett], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 9 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

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

Ordered, That the memorandum from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards be appended to the Report.

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

* * *

[Adjourned till Tuesday 18 January at 9.30 am.]
## Reports from the Committee on Standards and Privileges in the current Parliament

### Session 2004–05

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