



House of Commons
Committee on Standards

Nadine Dorries

Fourth Report of Session 2013–14

Volume II

Written evidence

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The Committee on Standards

The Committee on Standards 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 Kevin Barron MP (*Labour, Rother Valley*) (Chair)
Sir Paul Beresford MP (*Conservative, Mole Valley*)
Mr Robert Buckland MP (*Conservative, South Swindon*)
Rt hon Tom Clarke MP (*Labour, Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill*)
Mr Christopher Chope MP (*Conservative, Christchurch*)
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Mr Peter Jinman (*Lay Member*)
Fiona O'Donnell MP (*Labour, East Lothian*)
Mr Walter Rader (*Lay Member*)
Heather Wheeler MP (*Conservative, South Derbyshire*)
Dr Alan Whitehead MP (*Labour, Southampton Test*)

The following were also Members of the Committee during the Parliament:
Annette Brooke MP (*Liberal Democrat, Mid Dorset and North Poole*)

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/standards.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Eve Samson (Clerk), Danielle Nash (Second Clerk) and Miss Christine McGrane (Committee Assistant).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to The Clerk of the Committee on Standards, Journal Office, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6615

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Written evidence received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

- 1. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr John Mann MP, 29 May 2013
[attached to Report (HC 806) as Appendix 2]**
- 2. Letter to Ms Nadine Dorries MP from the Commissioner, 3 June 2013**

I would welcome your help on a complaint which I have received from Mr John Mann MP about a possible failure by you to register a financial interest.

I enclose a copy of the complainant's letter of 29 May. In essence, the complaint which I have accepted is that you failed to register a payment you received for participating in a television programme, "I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!".

Paragraph 13 of the Code of Conduct approved by the House on 12 March 2012 provides for the following rule for the registration of interests:

"Members shall fulfil conscientiously the requirements of the House in respect of the registration of interests in the Register of Members' Financial Interests..."

The rules on the registration of Members' financial interests are set out in the Guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members. Paragraph 11 of Chapter 1 of the Guide sets out the purpose of the Register:

"The main purpose of the Register of Members' Financial Interests is "to provide information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a Member receives which might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions, speeches or votes in Parliament, or actions taken in his or her capacity as a Member of Parliament." The registration form specifies twelve Categories of registrable interests which are described below. Apart from the specific rules, there is a more general obligation upon Members to keep the overall definition of the Register's purpose in mind when registering their interests."

The duties of Members in respect of registration include the following in paragraph 13:

"Members of Parliament are required to complete a registration form and submit it to the Commissioner within one month of their election to the House (whether at a general election or a by-election). After the initial publication of the Register (or, in the case of Members returned at by-elections, after their initial registration) it is the responsibility of Members to notify changes in their registrable interests within four weeks of each change occurring."

Paragraph 15 of the Guide provides as follows:

"Members are responsible for making a full disclosure of their interests, and if they have relevant interests which do not fall clearly into one or other of the specified categories, they are nonetheless expected to register them, normally under Category 11."

The Register requires the registration of remunerated employment in Category 2 (Remunerated employment, office, profession, etc). Paragraph 24 of the Guide provides as follows:

"All employment outside the House and any sources of remuneration which do not fall clearly within any other Category should be registered here. Members must register under this category the precise amount of each individual payment made, the nature of the work carried on in return for that payment, the number of hours worked during the period to which that payment relates and (except where disclosure of the information would be contrary to any legal or established professional duty of privacy or confidentiality) the name and address of the person, organisation or company making that payment."

A Resolution of 30 April 2009, amended on 7 February 2011, provides that such payments must be registered where their value exceeds one tenth of one per cent of the current Parliamentary salary (currently £66) or where the cumulative value of payments from a single source exceeds 1 per cent of the Parliamentary salary (currently £660) in a calendar year.

I would be grateful for your comments on this complaint in the light of this summary of the relevant rules. In particular, it would be helpful to know:

1. whether any fee was paid for your appearance on this programme, and if so the amount(s), the date(s) on which payment was received, and to whom the payment was made;
2. whether you considered at any time registering an interest in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and, if so, why you did not do so.

I would also be grateful for a copy of any contract or agreement signed by you in relation to this programme.

Any other points you may wish to make to help me with this inquiry, together with any relevant documentary evidence, would be most welcome.

I enclose a note which sets out the procedure which I follow.¹ I am writing to the complainant to let him know that I have accepted his complaint. In due course I will publish on my parliamentary webpages that I am conducting this inquiry and the general category in which it comes. I will not be commenting further on its progress.

It would be very helpful if you could let me have a response to this letter within the next three weeks, ie by 24 June 2013, or earlier if that is convenient. If there is any difficulty about this, or you would like a further word about the process, please contact me at the House.

I would be most grateful for your help on this matter.

3 June 2013

3. Letter to the Commissioner from Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 11 June 2013

Thank you for your letter and the copy of the complaint made by John Mann MP. As part of my response, I have enclosed a flow of emails between my Parliamentary Assistant, [name] and [the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests].

We fulfil conscientiously the requirements of the House in respect of the Registration of Member's Financial Interests and in addition to [my Parliamentary Assistant] emailing [the Registrar], I followed up his enquiries with a telephone call during which I assured [the Registrar] that should I at any time become remunerated via my company, I would inform her immediately.

I have not been paid a fee. All fees for work I am commissioned to undertake are without exception paid to Averbrook Ltd. All contracts with commissioning companies are confidential and commercially sensitive and therefore, I am afraid I am unable to meet your request.

I thought it may be useful to provide you with some of the facts re the IAC programme as a rebuttal to the media hype. For part of the time I was away, Parliament was in recess. I missed no Government legislation and no Government votes. It was the first time during the year that I had been abroad and away from either my constituency or Westminster.

Many MPs have outside interests, either as company directors, chairmen, publishers, non execs, lawyers and even a doctor and a dentist. Outside interests that are pursued when Parliament is sitting.

¹ Not included in the written evidence

I am aware that my outside business interests, which involve writing for numerous media outlets and media appearances are more visible to the public, however, I am sure you will agree this does not mean a different set of rules apply to my business.

From my interpretation of the guidelines, I have two objectives to fulfil: The first is to register my company, which I have done for the purpose of transparency even though as yet it is not required for me to do so. The second is to notify you should I receive any remuneration, which I have not.

If you feel there is something I have failed to do in terms of compliance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

11 June 2013

4. Enclosure to Ms Nadine Dorries MP's letter of 11 June 2013: E-mail from the office of Ms Nadine Dorries MP to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests, October 2012

From the office of Ms Nadine Dorries MP to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests, 4 October 2012

Nadine has recently been made a director and secretary of a registered company: Averbrook Ltd. Company number 02928407.

Currently, her earnings from this are nil. We will of course update the register as soon as this changes, in the meantime could you let me know what other information is needed from Nadine about this position and company for the register to be complete?

From the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests to the office of Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 4 October 2012

Thank you. It all depends on the exact arrangements:

If Ms Dorries is going to draw a salary from this position, it should be registered as a remunerated directorship (Category 1). Each payment will need to be registered, subject to the usual threshold. (If Ms Dorries will be paid only through dividends these do not require registration.)

If Ms Dorries has shares, and these are more than 15% of the issued share capital or they are worth more than £66,000, these should be registered under Category 9 (shareholdings).

Ms Dorries would need to provide a few words about what the company does for the Register, and we would also need its address if this is a remunerated directorship.

Feel free to give me a call to discuss if that is easier.

From the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests to the office of Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 18 October 2012

I am writing to follow up the exchange [above].

We are preparing a Register to be published next week, so if Ms Dorries has anything which needs registration, it would be helpful to receive it as soon as possible.

From the office of Ms Nadine Dorries MP to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests 18 October 2012

Thanks for chasing this up.

The company is called Averbrook Limited and is a Writing and Media Consultancy. Nadine is the Director, Secretary and whole owner of the company but has not as yet received any payment from it since it has literally just been set up in the past few weeks and hasn't done anything yet.

Is that enough information for the time being? We will let you have the company address as soon as Nadine receives a payment, the only reason we haven't done that yet is that she had the address as [personal information] and has realised this is a problem and so is changing it as I write.

From the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests to the office of Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 18 October 2012

Thank you. As no payment has yet been received, I will wait for you to contact me after the first payment has been made and after the address has been sorted. The rules require Members to make a Register entry within 28 days of receiving any payment.

Please let me know before then if Ms Dorries will be providing services in her capacity as an MP, as in that case further documentation would be needed.

4 and 18 October 2012

5. Enclosure to Ms Nadine Dorries MP's letter of 11 June 2013: E-mails between Ms Nadine Dorris MP and the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests, 10 and 11 June 2013

From the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests to Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 10 June 2013

Thank you for the latest amendment to your Register entry. I have set out below your amended entry, which will be included in the next Internet version of the Register of Members' Financial Interests.² I would be grateful if you would confirm that your entry is complete and correct.

Any changes to your entry should be registered within 28 days of a change occurring.

DORRIES, Nadine (Mid Bedfordshire)

3. 2 Remunerated employment, office, profession etc

Payments from the Mail on Sunday, Northcliffe House, 2 Derry Street, Kensington, London W8 5TT Received £5,000 for articles, January-May 2012. Hours: 20 hrs. (*Registered 8 June 2012*)

Received £1,500 for articles, October-November 2012. Hours: 5 hrs. (*Registered 5 December 2012*)

Received £3,000 for articles written for Conservative Home, January-May 2012. Address: 7 Cowley Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3NB. Hours: 100 hrs. (*Registered 8 June 2012*)

Received £1,440 for appearance on Have I Got News for You? 10 May 2012. Hat Trick Productions, 33 Oval Road London NW1 7EA. Hours: 5 hrs. (*Registered 8 June 2012*)

Received £300 for articles for The Sun, May 2012. Address: News International Newspapers Ltd, 3 Thomas More Square, Wapping, London E98 1XY. Hours: 3 hrs. (*Registered 8 June 2012*)

Received £300 for articles for Bella Magazine, May 2012. Address: H Bauer Publishing, Academic House, 24-28 Oval Road, London, NW1 7DT. Hours: 3 hrs. (*Registered 8 June 2012*)

5. Gifts, benefits and hospitality (UK)

Name of donor: Conservative Home

Address of donor: 7 Cowley Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3NB

² The enclosed version of Ms Dorries' draft Register entry was incomplete. The complete draft entry is given here.

Amount of donation or nature and value if donation in kind: Conference pass, accommodation and travel for the Conservative Party Conference, with an estimated value of £700

Date of receipt of donation: 7-10 October 2012

Date of acceptance of donation: 7-10 October 2012

Donor status: company, registration number 07053162

(Registered 31 October 2012)

9. Shareholdings

Director and sole shareholder of Averbrook, a writing and media consultancy. *(Registered 10 June 2013)*

From Ms Nadine Dorries MP to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests, 11 June 2013

The stock transfer forms have been signed but as yet, not allocated to me, although they will be very shortly. I am waiting for a call back from my accountant — when they are allocated, I will have more than 15% however I will not be the sole shareholder as they will be divided between another director and myself.

Just to make sure this is absolutely clear could you please remove the word 'sole' from the entry.

Many thanks.

10 and 11 June 2013

6. Letter to Ms Nadine Dorries MP from the Commissioner, 13 June 2013

Thank you for your letter of 11 June, in which you responded to my letter of 3 June. I was grateful for this prompt reply.

I hope it will be helpful if I make clear that the complaint I am investigating relates only to the registration of your financial interests. I am not investigating your decision to participate in the programme.

I should also explain that the purpose of my investigation is to establish the relevant facts in order to allow me to determine whether, in my judgment, you have breached the Code of Conduct and its associated rules. I will not therefore reach any view on your conduct before I have had the opportunity to consider the evidence. I would also like to reassure you that all Members are subject to the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

In order to help me with my inquiry, please could you let me know the following:

1. whether I am right to understand from your letter that any fee you received from “I’m a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!” was paid directly to Averbrook Ltd;
2. whether any fee was paid for your appearance on this programme, and if so the amount(s) and the date(s) on which payment was received by Averbrook Ltd (or any other recipient);
3. if the money was paid to Averbrook Ltd, the nature and history of your relationship with Averbrook Ltd, in the light of the e-mails you enclosed which make clear that your shareholding in the company, assuming it is now effective, is a recent development. I also note that the e-mails from your office of 18 October 2012 said that you were at that time director, secretary and the whole owner of the company, which had just been set up.

Please could you also provide any documentary evidence you may have to support your answers to these questions.

I note your explanation that the contract you signed with the commissioning company is confidential and commercially sensitive. My inquiries are covered by parliamentary privilege and the evidence I receive is confidential unless and until it is published by me or by the Committee on Standards. The Committee and I are always prepared to consider requests for the redaction of confidential and personal information which is not relevant to the resolution of the inquiry. I therefore repeat my request for a copy of the contract. If you have concerns about this, I would be happy to meet you to discuss these.

It would be very helpful if you could let me have a response to this letter within the next two weeks, ie by 27 June 2013, or earlier if that is convenient.

13 June 2013

7. Letter to the Commissioner from Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 19 June 2013

Thank you for your letter of June 13th in response to the complaint by John Mann that:

“Nadine Dorries MP has not declared in the Register of Members Interests the payments she received from ITV for appearing in ‘I’m a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here’”.

The last payment I personally received in relation to my outside interests was declared on the Register of Members’ Interests.

Since October 2012 all outside earnings, paid by a number of media companies and publishers have been paid to Averbrook Ltd of which I am a joint director and which is registered in the register of member’s interests.

I enclose an email from my accountant who confirms the above.

All information regarding Averbrook Ltd is available via Companies House.

I don’t feel there is anything further I can add or anything further I am obliged to provide in relation to Mr Mann’s complaint.

19 June 2013

8. Enclosure to Ms Nadine Dorries MP’s letter of 19 June 2013: E-mail from a firm of accountants, undated

Further to your request I confirm that all of your earnings since October 2012 have been reflected through Averbrook Ltd.

To date you have not received any remuneration from the company.

19 June 2013

9. Letter to Ms Nadine Dorries MP from the Commissioner, 24 June 2013

Thank you for your letter of 19 June, in which you responded to my letter of 13 June.

I am sure that you are aware of the expectation set out in the Code of Conduct that Members will co-operate at all stages with a Commissioner’s inquiry. I recognise that you have responded promptly to both the letters I have sent you. I would, however, ask that you now respond to the questions set out in my letter of 13 June and that you provide the documentary evidence I have requested.

As I explained in my letter of 13 June, the evidence I receive is confidential unless and until it is published by me or by the Committee on Standards. I would not expect to publish any confidential or personal information which is not relevant to the resolution of my inquiry. In particular, I would not expect to publish details of payments unless I had concluded that the rules of the House required you to have registered them.

If you have concerns about any aspect of this process, I would be happy to meet you to discuss these.

24 June 2013

10. Letter to the Commissioner from Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 28 June 2013

Thank you for your letter and your acknowledgment that I have responded to you promptly. This has not been difficult as the complaint made by John Mann MP, that I have been paid a fee which has not been declared, is an easy one to refute.

I am disappointed, however, that the testament provided to you in which I state that I have not been paid a fee I have not declared and that of my accountancy firm, [name of firm], which has verified the same, appears not to have been sufficient for your enquiry.

I am also disappointed that you ask me for information I have no obligation whatsoever to provide. Whether fees have been paid to Averbrook, what those fees are and the contracts relating to fees are the business of Averbrook and therefore I am unable to provide you with the information you requested in your letter of June 13th. If IAC paid a fee, and how much that fee was, is the business of Averbrook alone.

In the spirit of being as helpful as possible, I have enclosed an email from [name], the company through which all payments have been made before reaching Averbrook Ltd since October 2012. I am sure you are aware that IAC is filmed during Nov/Dec. [This company] confirms that no payment has been made to me since October 2012 and that all payments are made to Averbrook Ltd.

As I stated in my previous letter, all information regarding Averbrook is available online via Companies House. I have no other information I am obliged to provide. My office contacted [the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests] for guidance from the first day and my involvement in the company has been registered in the Register of Members interests. I have fulfilled my obligation. I am not aware that any complaint has been made regarding my Directorship of Averbrook.

Mr Mann wrote, *'Mrs Dorries has stated publicly that she has received a very large appearance fee for being on the programme'*. I am afraid this is blatantly untrue. If I were ever to make a complaint such as that made by Mr Mann MP I would feel duty bound to back up such a scurrilous accusation with evidence. If Mr Mann had evidence I have no doubt whatsoever he would have included it as part of his complaint in order to guarantee that you would act.

The fact that you have chosen to take up such a flimsy complaint and act upon an accusation without supporting evidence is also disappointing. He stated that I had not registered the fee and had breached the rules. This, as you are now aware, is untrue.

I am afraid I have no other information to provide you and no further questions to answer.

An accusation that I have been paid a fee which I have not declared is a very serious one indeed. I have applied for a copy of Mr Mann's press release and will use the basis of the information contained within to seek legal opinion. I take any false slur against my reputation very seriously.

I have provided you with information regarding Averbrook, and information regarding a business relationship Averbrook has with [my agent], which is for your benefit, that of the committee if necessary and not for public consumption. I have no further information I can provide.

Mr Mann's complaint is untrue and, no matter how hard he and the Daily Mirror may try, this will remain the case. I have provided documentary evidence to support my position. In the light of zero evidence from Mr Mann to support his accusation I look forward to your speedy resolution of a simplistic, unfounded, vexatious complaint which despite my swift response to your enquiries has gone on for far too long.

28 June 2013

11. Enclosure to Ms Nadine Dorries MP's letter of 28 June 2013: E-mail exchange between a firm of agents and the office of Ms Nadine Dorries MP

This email is to confirm that payments for all written and media work undertaken by Nadine Dorries on behalf of Averbook Ltd since October 2012 have been paid to [us] and following deduction of our commission the remaining balances are paid to Averbook Ltd. No payments are made personally to Nadine Dorries.

28 June 2013

12. Letter to Ms Nadine Dorries MP from the Commissioner, 1 July 2013

Thank you for your letter of 28 June, in which you responded to my letter of 24 June.

I am now writing to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests to seek her advice. She will have copies of all the relevant correspondence relating to this inquiry. I will also send her the enclosed information about Averbrook Ltd from the Companies House website. I note, however, that Averbrook's Annual Return is currently overdue.

Once I have received the Registrar's response, I will write to you again. As I have said, if at any stage you would like to discuss this process, I would be happy to meet you.

1 July 2013

13. Letter to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests from the Commissioner, 1 July 2013

I would welcome your help on a complaint I have received concerning Ms Nadine Dorries MP and the registration of her financial interests.

In essence, the complaint which I have accepted is that Ms Dorries failed to register a payment she received for participating in a television programme, "I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!".

I enclose the relevant correspondence, together with documents from Companies House³ relating to Averbrook Ltd, to which Ms Dorries has referred in her letters to me.

I would welcome your advice on this matter. In particular, please could you let me know:

1. whether, under the rules of the House in relation to the registration of Members' financial interests, you consider that Ms Dorries should have registered any payment made for her appearance on "I'm a Celebrity", even if that fee was paid to a company and not directly to her;
2. what advice, if any, you have given to Ms Dorries about the registration of any payment made for her appearance on "I'm a Celebrity";
3. what advice, if any, you have given to Ms Dorries about the registration of her relationship with Averbrook Ltd.

Any other comments you may wish to make would be most welcome.

It would be very helpful to have your response to this letter within the next two weeks. Thank you for your assistance.

1 July 2013

14. Enclosure to the Commissioner's letter of 1 July 2013 to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests: Company details for Averbrook Ltd, Companies House website, as at 1 July 2013

Company Details

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Companies House

Company Details

Name & Registered Office:
AVERBROOK LIMITED

Company No. 02928407

Status: Active
Date of Incorporation: 12/05/1994

Country of Origin: United Kingdom
Company Type: Private Limited Company
Nature of Business (SIC):
63990 - Other information service activities not elsewhere classified
Accounting Reference Date: 31/12
Last Accounts Made Up To: 31/12/2011 (TOTAL EXEMPTION FULL)
Next Accounts Due: 30/09/2013
Last Return Made Up To: 12/05/2012
Next Return Due: 09/06/2013 OVERDUE
Mortgage: Number of charges: (0 outstanding / 0 satisfied / 0 part satisfied)
Last Members List: 12/05/2012

Previous Names:
No previous name information has been recorded over the last 20 years.

UK Establishment Details
There are no UK Establishments associated with this company.

Overseas Company Info
There are no Overseas Details associated with this company.

15. Letter to the Commissioner from the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests, 8 July 2013

Thank you for your letter of 1 July. I shall answer your three questions in the order in which they are set out in your letter.

1. You ask whether I consider that Ms Dorries should have registered a payment made for her appearance on "I'm a Celebrity", even if that payment was made to a company and not to her. The rules of the House on registration and declaration of interests are set out in the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members 2012, HC 1885. But they do not touch on arrangements of this sort.

4. In the absence of either specific guidance or a specific exemption, my advice was and is that Ms Dorries should have registered this payment. I based this advice on the purpose of the Register, which is, as set out in paragraph 12 on page 11 of the Guide to the Rules, openness. Paragraph 11 on the same page further explains this purpose as follows: "to provide information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a Member receives which might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions, speeches or votes in Parliament, or actions taken in his or her capacity as a Member of Parliament."

5. It is our established practice to advise Members to register remuneration for their work even if it is paid not to them but to other organisations, and the published Register contains a number of such entries made in accordance with our advice. In some cases this remuneration is paid to the Member's own company. In others, particularly the payments received for completing opinion surveys, the money may be paid to a charity or local party organisation.

2. You ask what advice this office has given to Ms Dorries about registering any payments for her appearance on "I'm a Celebrity". In the light of media coverage of this appearance, I emailed her on 3 January to remind her to let us have the details as soon as possible if she had any payments to register from Averbrook or from "I'm a Celebrity". I reminded her again on 18 January. On 21 January, following a telephone conversation with Ms Dorries, I sent her an email advising her to register payments from the television programme even if they were made to another organisation. A copy of that email is appended.

3. You ask what advice this office has given to Ms Dorries about registering her relationship with Averbrook. Ms Dorries has already supplied copies of my email exchanges with her office on October 2012. From these I understood that Averbrook was a new company, to be wholly owned by Ms Dorries, and that it had not yet started trading. I therefore took the view that registration was not needed at that stage. On 18 October I concluded the exchanges by asking Ms Dorries' office to let us know after she had received the first payment from Averbrook and after its address had been confirmed. We telephoned on 31 October to ask if there was anything to register in relation to Averbrook, and were told there was not. Further reminders were included in my emails of 3 December 2012 and 3 and 18 January 2013.

4. On 10 June Ms Dorries' office emailed to register her directorship of Averbrook, even though it remained unremunerated. That prompted further e-mail exchanges. I advised that since she was not a paid director, her relationship with the company would not be registered under the heading of remunerated directorships, but should be registered under shareholdings, on the basis that Ms Dorries was the sole shareholder. I forwarded a draft Register entry to Ms Dorries, who then told me that she was not the sole shareholder as the shares were divided between herself and another director. She said that she had acquired a shareholding of more than 15%, but that she did not know the exact size of that holding. She said that the paperwork for the transfer of stock had yet to be completed. On that basis the following entry was included under Ms Dorries' name in the Register:

9. Shareholdings

(a) Director and shareholder of Averbrook, a writing and media consultancy. (*Registered 10 June 2013*)

Please let me know if I can help further.

8 July 2013

16. Enclosure to the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests' letter of 8 July 2013: E-mail from the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests to Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 21 January 2013

This email follows up our telephone conversation earlier today.

You said that you had arranged for your earnings to be paid into your company Averbrook, and that you will register these when you draw money from Averbrook.

As Averbrook is not currently included in your Register entry, I advise that you should register it under the Shareholdings category if you hold more than 15% of its shares, or if your holding is worth more than the parliamentary salary. If you are a remunerated director you should register that role under Category 1.

I also confirm that this office has always advised that a Member who has earnings from employment should register these if they are paid not to him or her but to another entity, such as a company of which he or she is an unpaid director. While the current Guide to the Rules does not cover this specific scenario, we have advised in individual cases that such earnings should be registered, and you will find in the current Register a number of such payments listed under the employment categories.

I hope this is helpful. Please let me know if anything is not clear.

21 January 2013

17. Letter to Ms Nadine Dorries MP from the Commissioner, 9 July 2013

I have now heard from the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests in response to my request for her advice on this complaint. I enclose my letter of 1 July and her letter of 8 July.

I have reached no conclusion on this complaint and I will not do so until I have completed my inquiry. At that stage, the questions I will need to resolve are as follows:

- whether you should have registered a payment related to your appearance on “I’m a Celebrity”; and
- whether, in the light of the information you have provided, your registration of your interest in Averbrook met the requirements of the rules of the House.

There are three ways in which I can resolve a complaint inquiry. I can dismiss the complaint if it is not supported by the evidence; I can resolve it informally with the Member, using the rectification procedure, if the breach is minor or inadvertent and the Member accepts that they have breached the rules and apologises; or I can submit a formal report on my findings to the Committee on Standards. I do therefore need to ask you for some further information before I can close this inquiry.

You will see from the Registrar’s letter that it is the established practice of her office to advise that Members should register remuneration for their work, even if that remuneration is paid not to the Member but to another organisation. She gave you this advice in her e-mail of 21 January 2013, a copy of which I enclose.

In the light of this, I would be grateful if you could now let me know the following:

1. whether any fee was paid for your appearance on “I’m a Celebrity”, and if so the amount(s) and the date(s) on which payment was received by Averbrook Ltd;
2. details of all other employment payments made to Averbrook Ltd by [your agent] on your behalf;

3. the nature and history of your relationship with Averbrook Ltd, and in particular:
 - (a) the circumstances of your being made secretary and a director of the company in or shortly before October 2012, given that the company was established in May 1994;
 - (b) whether the paperwork for the transfer of stock, referred to in the Registrar's letter, has now been completed.

Please could you also provide any documentary evidence you may have to support your answers.

Once I have received your answers to these questions, I will be able to consider how best to proceed. If you do not provide me with the information I have requested, I will not be able to resolve this complaint. The only course of action open to me would then be to report this matter to the Committee on Standards. The Committee would then consider my report and take whatever action, if any, it considered necessary.

As I have said, I would be happy to meet you to discuss this process if that would be helpful. If possible, I would be most grateful if you could let me have a response to this letter by 17 July, but do let me know if this will be difficult for you.

9 July 2013

18. Letter to the Commissioner from Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 10 July 2013

Thank you for your letter of July 9th. I respond to your points raised as follows;

6. I have no obligation to answer what payments are made by whom to Averbrook Ltd.
7. I do have an obligation to inform you within thirty days when, as a joint director of Averbrook Ltd, I am remunerated. As yet I have not been as I have confirmed with supportive documentary evidence from both my accountant and my agent. However, when I am, I shall inform the Registrar immediately.
8. I have no obligation to inform you of payments made to Averbrook Ltd by any organisation. My obligation is to inform the Registrar when I personally receive a payment. As yet I have taken no remuneration from Averbrook Ltd. However, when I do, I shall inform the Registrar immediately.
9. I have no obligation to inform you of the nature or history of my relationship with Averbrook Ltd other than to confirm that I am a shareholder and that my interest as such has been registered at the appropriate time.

The paperwork for the transfer of stock within Averbrook Ltd is the business of the shareholders, the accountant and Companies House. I have no obligation to provide information regarding the business of Averbrook Ltd other than to declare my interest as Director and shareholder at the appropriate time.

As you are aware, and as supported by emails provided, [the Registrar] was contacted on the very first day I became involved with the company and her advice with regard to my involvement discussed by both my office and myself. We went out of our way to ensure that nothing regarding my involvement was unknown to the Registrar and we urged the Registrar to register my involvement in Averbrook Ltd. As at the time I was non remunerated Director and at that point unaware of the shareholding divide or where the office would finally be registered, we were informed that until such decisions were taken she **could not** register my involvement.

With regard to your point;

'it is established practice for her office to advise that Members should register remuneration for their work, even if that remuneration is paid not to the Member but to another organisation'

It may be the established practice of her office to recommend that Members, in her opinion, *should* but it is not a requirement or an obligation that the Member *must*. I am not the only director of Averbroom Ltd, therefore, I choose to strictly abide by the rules and not by subjective requirement. Information I place in the public domain pertains to an additional shareholder who does not hold public office.

[The Registrar] quotes that some Members do declare payments made to their own company. I'm sure some do, but certainly not all, indeed, not many. This is because there is no specific legal requirement for them to do so.

Should I ever speak in the Chamber on matters relating to DCMS [the Department for Culture, Media and Sport] I will of course declare my interest as someone who works within the industry before doing so as is required.

I note your comment;

'I can dismiss the complaint if it is not supported by the evidence'

I look forward to sight of the preliminary evidence sought and provided by Mr Mann to your office, other than hearsay, to support his complaint, which I assume formed the basis upon which you decided to accept and act upon his complaint. A complaint which has involved a great deal of time, public expense and inconvenience on both our parts.

If Mr Mann's complaint did not include at the very least a witness statement or a reported comment in quotation marks from myself it should have been dismissed long ago and I would like to know upon what shred of evidence you decided to accept his complaint which is vexatious and politically motivated.

As I have answered all of your own questions promptly and as your decision to accept his complaint resulted in an extreme amount of adverse press reporting which affects my staff, my family and me personally, perhaps you would have the courtesy to answer my question and explain to me the basis upon which you made the decision to accept Mr Mann's complaint?

10 July 2013

19. Letter to Ms Nadine Dorries MP from the Commissioner, 15 July 2013

Thank you for your letter of 10 July, which responded to my letter of 9 July.

I would like first to address your questions about my decision to accept this complaint for inquiry. That decision is for me alone to make but I am happy to explain the process I follow. When I receive any complaint, I first consider whether it falls within my remit, which is to consider complaints that a Member may have breached the Code of Conduct and its associated rules. A complaint about the registration of a Member's financial interests clearly meets this test. I then consider whether the complaint is supported by sufficient evidence to justify my initiating an inquiry. You will understand from this that the complainant is not required to supply all the evidence I need to resolve my inquiry. In this case, your participation in "I'm a Celebrity" is public knowledge. The fact that you have not registered any earnings from the programme is similarly a matter of public record. I consider this sufficient evidence to justify an inquiry.

As I have already explained, the purpose of my investigation is to establish the relevant facts in order to allow me to determine whether, in my judgment, you have breached the Code of Conduct and its associated rules. Before I come to make that judgment, I would take into account the evidence you have given about your understanding of the Guide to the Rules. I cannot, however, resolve the complaint without the further evidence I have requested from you.

I must remind you of the expectation set out in the Code of Conduct that Members will co-operate at all stages with a Commissioner's inquiry. If you do not provide me with the information I have requested, I will need to report this matter to the Committee on Standards, who will then consider this matter as well as the original complaint.

I do understand that you may be concerned about the publication of any confidential information which you are not required to record in the Register. I would like to take this opportunity once again to assure you that I

would not expect to publish any confidential or personal information which is not relevant to the resolution of my inquiry. In particular, as I have said before, I would not expect to publish details of payments unless I had concluded that the rules of the House required you to have registered them. At this stage I have reached no view on that. I would be very happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about the confidentiality of information I receive in the course of my inquiries.

In the light of your most recent letter, I will now begin to prepare my memorandum to the Committee. Before I submit my report to the Committee, I will share the draft factual sections with you so that you have an opportunity to comment on them. I will include, appended to my report, the exchange of correspondence we have had. However, it is still open to you at this stage to provide the information I have requested, if you wish to do so. Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to do this.

As part of this, I note that Averbroom's Annual Return to Companies House has now been published on the Companies House website; I enclose a copy. I note from the Annual Return that 90 shares of the existing 100 shares were transferred from [name of director] on 3 October 2012 and that you held 90 shares on the date of the return. It would appear from this that 90 shares were transferred from [name of director] to you on 3 October and that he holds the remaining 10 shares. If this is not correct, I would be grateful if you could explain to me what did happen. If you would like to make any other comments on the Annual Return, please feel free to do so.

As always, I would be more than happy to meet you to discuss any of these matters. It would be very helpful if you could let me know of any times when you will not be available during the summer recess, and whether it would be convenient for my office to send material in hard or soft copy to you at a different address while the House is not sitting.

15 July 2013

20. Enclosure to the Commissioner's letter of 15 July 2013: Annual Return for Averbrook Ltd, dated 12 May 2013



AR01 (ef)

Annual Return



Received for filing in Electronic Format on the: 11/07/2013

X2CEUWJD

Company Name: Averbrook Limited

Company Number: 02928407

Date of this return: 12/05/2013

SIC codes: 63990

Company Type: Private company limited by shares

Situation of Registered Office:

Officers of the company

Company Director 1

Type: Person
Full forename(s): MS NADINE VANESSA

Surname: DORRIES

Former names:

Service Address:

Country/State Usually Resident: UNITED KINGDOM

Date of Birth: [] Nationality: BRITISH

Occupation: WRITER/COMMENTATOR/TV
RADIO PERSONALITY

Director 2
Person

Forename(s):

Surname:

Former names:

Service Address:

Country/State Usually Resident: UNITED KINGDOM

Date of Birth: [] Nationality: BRITISH

Occupation: BUSINESS CONSULTANT

Statement of Capital (Share Capital)

Class of shares	ORDINARY	<i>Number allotted</i>	100
		<i>Aggregate nominal value</i>	100
Currency	GBP	<i>Amount paid per share</i>	1
		<i>Amount unpaid per share</i>	0

Prescribed particulars

THE SHARES HAVE ATTACHED TO THEM FULL VOTING RIGHTS.

Statement of Capital (Totals)

Currency	GBP	<i>Total number of shares</i>	100
		<i>Total aggregate nominal value</i>	100

Full Details of Shareholders

The details below relate to individuals / corporate bodies that were shareholders as at 12/05/2013 or that had ceased to be shareholders since the made up date of the previous Annual Return

A full list of shareholders for the company are shown below

Shareholding 1 : 90 ORDINARY shares held as at the date of this return
Name: NADINE VANESSA DORRIES

Shareholding 2 : 10 ORDINARY shares held as at the date of this return
 90 shares transferred on 2012-10-03

Name:

Authorisation

Authenticated

This form was authorised by one of the following:

Director, Secretary, Person Authorised, Charity Commission Receiver and Manager, CIC Manager, Judicial Factor.

21. Extracts from Website of Nadine Dorries Agent, 20 August 2013

Under the heading of Roster:
Nadine Dorries

...Recent TVs include:

- 22.11.12 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here Now! ITV2
- 10.01.13 Question Time, BBC1
- 14.01.13 to 18.01.13 The Wright Stuff, Channel 5
- 23.01.13 Daybreak (News Review), ITV1
- 27.01.13 Murnaghan, Sky News
- 04.02.13 This Morning, ITV1 (abortion debate which she won with 79% of vote)
- 03.06.13 Daybreak, ITV1

Under the heading of News:
Nadine Dorries

Nadine Dorries appears on 'This Morning' on 04.07.13

Downloaded 20 August 2013

22. List of Articles published under Nadine Dorries' byline between 1 July 2012 and 21 August 2013

1. "At the first sign of trouble George Osborne slips under the surface". Mail Online, 2 July 2012
2. "Boris is a witty winner and he's the only hope for the Tories". Mail Online, 5 August 2012
3. "Dream of Knight Mayor: Boris can save our party". The People, 26 August 2012
4. "Our new Health Minister should care for the sick, not encourage them to end their own lives". Mail Online, 9 September 2012
5. "To swap Mitchell for a baronet is a crass mistake by Cameron". Mail Online, 21 October 2012
6. Spectator diary article, 1 December 2012

21 August 2013

23. Letter to the Commissioner from Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 21 August 2013

Thank you for your letter of 15 August, I would like to make the following points:

I have never claimed Averbrook was a new company. It was an off the shelf company, owned by my business partner, which we decided to use rather than going through the process of establishing a new company. This is common business practice.

When I informed the registrar on 18 October that the company had only been set up a few weeks earlier it was in the context of a media consultancy and not as an engineering business. When I joined on October 4 this is what happened, the description of the business altered.

Your report makes a simple business transaction sound ambiguous, which it is not.

I can provide you with a very long list of MPs in all parties who do not declare payments made to their companies or even their shareholdings, given that they maintain such shareholdings below 15%.

For the purpose of this letter I will cite [another Member]; who runs a [...] business. Are you seriously suggesting that every payment made to his busy family business by clients should be declared in the Register of Member's Interests?

I also take issue that, in light of there being no specific rule requiring MPs to register payments made to their Limited Company, you will make one up by telling members they should and therefore attempting to establish a precedent.

I would imagine the reasons why there is no rule requiring that MPs have to register payments are numerous and legitimate. However, as I have stated, some MPs do declare SOME, some declare all and the vast majority abide by rules.

I should inform you that I feel your report amounts to a witch hunt and I have forwarded it on to legal professionals for further advice regarding my position in relation to the committee and you personally.

You are choosing to use a vexatious complaint made against me to reinforce your 'on the hoof, make it up as you go' policy. I will not tolerate that or any report which invokes libellous negative coverage against me as a result and will not hesitate to pursue you personally should that be the case.

21 August 2013

24. Letter to the Commissioner from Ms Nadine Dorries MP, 22 August 2013

Apologies for the second letter in two days, the text was sent electronically to my Westminster office and this should have been the concluding part of yesterday's letter.

It is not noted in your factual findings that the share certificate for Averbrook was signed only on 13 June 2013. A copy of this can be provided as required.

I would also like to state that the registrar's criteria of 'openness' is made within the context of pecuniary interest having relevance or influence upon a Member's work in Westminster. My media work has no such bearing upon my representation of Mid-Bedfordshire.

22 August 2013

25. E-mail to the Commissioner's staff from Ms Nadine Dorries MP's staff, 11 September 2013

My apologies for the delay in getting back to you. I have now been told that Nadine has nothing further to add to the last letters sent to the Commissioner so there is no additional response from this office.

I understand that the case now progresses to discussion by the Standards Committee?

Many thanks for your ongoing help.

11 September 2013

26. Letter to Ms Nadine Dorries MP from the Commissioner, 12 September 2013

Thank you for the e-mail of 11 September from your Parliamentary Assistant, [name], to my PA. I understand from this message that you have no comments to make on the draft factual sections of my memorandum, which I sent to you on 22 August.

There is, however, one matter which needs to be resolved before I can submit my findings to the Committee on Standards. In your letter of 22 August, which completed your letter of 21 August, you offered to send me a copy of the share certificate for your shares in Averbroom Ltd. My office wrote to you on 23 August to ask you to arrange for a copy of this share certificate, and the relevant stock transfer form, to be sent to me.

I have not yet received these documents. I would therefore be grateful if you could arrange for copies to be sent to me within the next week, to allow me to complete my memorandum.

12 September 2013