

O Fon i Fynwy

Improving Communication with Constituents

A Consultation by Jill Evans MEP

Like every other MEP, I am allocated roughly £3,500 a month of public money to cover the costs of working with and representing my constituents within Wales. My Brussels and Strasbourg office costs are paid for separately.

Since my re-election in June, I have looked carefully and critically at the way I use this money in order to provide a more effective service. Representing the whole of Wales makes it impossible to have local offices which will equally serve all constituents. I have therefore explored at ways of using my expenses to improve communications throughout the country.

The ideas here are aimed at making it easier for you to contact me, giving you more information and getting your views on issues of importance to Wales in Europe. I will implement it from January 2010.

Please send me your comments and other ideas to improve my work. Please use the attached form or e mail me on jill.evans@europarl.europa.eu.

1. Correspondence

Hundreds of constituents write to me by post or e mail with problems relating to themselves or their families. They cover a huge range of issues from health and housing to customs or visa problems.

A lot of problems are best dealt with by the local council or National Assembly and will be dealt with in liaison with the relevant body. Issues that are directly linked to EU law or practice will be taken up by my caseworker with support from my researcher in Brussels when necessary.

In all cases I will send constituents a written acknowledgement within a week by e mail or post, a full response within the following three weeks and an update every three weeks after that until the matter is resolved. This will ensure constituents know they haven't been forgotten.

I will publicise one e mail address and one postal address for all constituents to contact.

2. Listening to Constituents

Many constituents prefer to explain the problem themselves rather than put it in writing. I will set up a dedicated constituents' phone line for people to speak to my caseworker or arrange to meet if preferred. Constituents wishing to speak to me personally will be given an appointment at a local venue convenient to them or offered direct contact by telephone or video/internet link.

Surgeries, including on line/video surgeries will be organised regularly in all parts of Wales. A list of locations will be drawn up and times and dates publicised in the press/media, on my website, in newsletters and reports and by letter to various groups. Where possible, joint surgeries will be held with MPs, AMs and councillors.

3. Contact Information

I will place a general leaflet, poster and cards giving details of all the facilities available to constituents and how to contact me in all Plaid offices as well as libraries, shops and other public places across the country.

I will produce a calendar annually giving contact details and information about parliamentary sittings.

4. Local Newsletters

I will produce a local newsletter at least once a year in each Assembly constituency. Whenever possible, a joint newsletter will be published with the local Plaid Cymru MP, AM, councillors or party organisation to share public costs. A tear-off reply slip will be included to encourage constituents to send in comments.

5. Bi-Annual reports

I will send out a report on my work every six months to all organisations, schools, colleges, local authorities and businesses in Wales. The possibility of sending this to all constituents on an annual basis will be examined. Where possible, the report will be sent with other mailings to reduce costs.

6. Open Forums

I will hold open forums around Wales for constituents to ask questions and raise issues from time to time.

7. European Funding Queries

I am regularly approached by businesses, community groups etc. who want to apply for European funding. I will provide a directory of what is available and who to approach. I will provide letters of support for projects when appropriate.

8. Lobbying

Letter writing campaigns are regularly organised by voluntary organisations, churches etc. on topical issues in parliament. I will reply to each constituent and update them on progress. You will also be asked whether you wish to be put on my mailing list for regular information on that particular issue.

9. Updates on Policy Work

All constituents who contact me will be asked whether they wish to receive regular information either on a specific issue or in general on my work.

10. European Parliament Visits

MEPs are funded to invite a total of 100 constituents a year to Brussels or Strasbourg on subsidised visits to parliament. My policy is to award applications on a "first come first served" basis although I give preference to new groups over those who have visited before. Terms and conditions are available on my website.

I can also arrange additional visits to Brussels and Strasbourg for individuals/groups for a specific purpose e.g. to contribute to a seminar/conference, to meet Commission officials.

11. Website

My JillEvans.net website will continue to provide up to date details of my work, information on and links to relevant campaigns, and contact details.

12. Feedback

All constituents who contact me will be asked how satisfactory the service was and how I can improve it.

13. People with Disabilities

I will draw up a specific policy to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to all these services. I have access to a printer to produce braille materials.

14. General Policy

All the above will be published bilingually and using recycled/sustainable materials.

As appropriate, tenders will be issued to ensure value for money.

To keep my carbon footprint to a minimum, I will keep travel to a minimum in favour of other methods of communication with constituents.

Confidentiality will be respected at all times.

Jill Evans

Plaid Cymru Member of the European Parliament

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