

## Cameron's PCC appoints £19,000-a-year chauffeur



Anthony Stansfeld took new chauffeur Cliff Hide/LNP

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The Police and Crime Commissioner local to David Cameron is the latest to be dragged into an expenses row after he was accused of setting up a second office to increase his mileage claims.

Anthony Stansfeld, the Conservative representative in Thames Valley, was criticised for his “extravagance” yesterday after it emerged he had also become the first PCC to hire a chauffeur. His driver has been given a £19,000 salary and the title of “support officer”.

Mr Stansfeld initially had to cover the cost of his 45-minute commuting journey to his main office at the police headquarters in Kidlington, North Oxford. Revenue & Custom rules do not allow employees to claim business mileage between their home and main place of work, which in Mr Stansfeld’s case was a 37-mile journey from Kintbury, in Berkshire. In December, his first month in charge, he was paid £15.30 in mileage at 45p a mile. He claimed £7.20 in January.

However, it was reported yesterday that he had opened a single room office in Hungerford police station, just four miles from his home. He was able to check in there first before claiming back the cost of journeys to Kidlington, where his 13 staff are based.

Expenses show that his mileage claim increased to £1,005 in February, for which he was paid £452.25, and in March it went up again to £1,334, for which he received £600.30.

He stopped using the Hungerford office in April and ceased his mileage claims after acquiring a chauffeur. He is now driven around in one of the force’s Audi A6 saloons. Mr Stansfeld’s office said there was no need for a written business case for the temporary second office as it was a low-cost “trial”.

Matthew Sinclair, chief executive of the TaxPayers’ Alliance, told *The Mail on Sunday*: “Anthony Stansfeld’s pop-up office appears to be part of a cynical scam to milk the system for as much cash as possible.”

Mr Stansfeld, who is paid £85,000 as a PCC and £15,000 in allowances as a Tory councillor, has hired a fellow Conservative as his deputy commissioner on a £35,000 salary. Three quarters of the local police and crime panel, which is supposed to scrutinise the actions of the PCC, are Conservative councillors.

Tony Page, one of the panel’s Labour members, said that the only reason for setting up a second office appeared to be on the basis of claiming travel expenses. He said the appointment of a chauffeur was “completely unjustifiable”.

“I think the Commissioner has some serious questions to answer about the extravagance of his office,” he added. Mr Page said that he doubted the PCC would be held to account by the panel as it was a “toothless tiger”. “I think the chairman [the Conservative councillor, Trevor Egleton] sees it as part of his role to protect the commissioner from unhelpful questions.”

Mr Egleton said he would not comment on the story until he had an "official explanation" but said the panel was a democratic committee and the issue "could well be raised" at its next meeting on Friday.

A spokesman for Mr Stansfeld said that the Hungerford office was made available to "increase his productivity". and the support officer's role included "administrative support" as well as driving.

It is the latest embarrassment involving PCCs, one of the key policies of the Prime Minister, whose local constituency is Witney, West Oxfordshire.

There was outcry last month after two police workers were arrested on suspicion of having leaked details of trips in a chauffeur-driven Mercedes by Richard Rhodes, the Cumbria PCC, while several PCCs have been accused of "cronyism" after appointing their friends as deputies.

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A look through some of the PCC's websites is interesting: some have claimed no expenses, others a bit and some plenty, including home-to-office mileage. Perhaps as politicians they're not employees so the HMRC rules don't apply?

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