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POLICING MINISTER REJECTS CALL FOR CUMBRIA CRIME CHIEF INQUIRY

By Nick Griffiths Crime reporter

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The Government has rejected calls for an inquiry after arrests were made over details leaked about trips by Cumbria's crime commissioner in a chauffeur-driven Mercedes.

Copeland MP Jamie Reed had asked the Home Office to look into the issue "as a matter of urgency" after two civilian police workers and a man from Penrith were held by police.

They were arrested for alleged involvement in leaking Richard Rhodes' travel invoices.

Nearly £700 of public cash was spent on trips to take the man elected to oversee county crime-fighting to two evening engagements.

There has been widespread disquiet about the Cumbria police investigation and calls have been made for an inquiry.

Mr Reed wrote to Theresa May, saying: "It is widely reported that these arrests followed a complaint from the police and crime commissioner's own office to the chief constable.

"If true, this is clearly indefensible. Such an act would not only damage the office of the police and crime commissioner beyond repair, but more importantly, damage the reputation of Cumbria Constabulary."

He has now received a reply from Policing Minister Damian Green, who said it would be inappropriate to comment or investigate separately while a police investigation was underway.

Mr Green wrote: "Staff in any public service organisation have an important role in drawing attention to any wrongdoing.

"An important distinction must, however, be drawn between those who follow the legitimate and proper procedures for whistleblowing set out in law and those who do not.

"I agree that any person whistleblowing under the correct legal procedures should be entitled to protection.

"Raising concerns by other means, however, will not always be within the law and as such cannot always claim such protection."

As soon as Mr Rhodes realised how much the trips were costing he put a stop to the practice and has since paid back the £700.

Meanwhile, Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron is still waiting to hear from the Prime Minister about a question he asked over the actions of the police commissioner at Prime Minister's Questions on April 24.

Mr Cameron promised to look carefully into the case.



Jamie Reed

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