

Name: Alert ID: TMML202403956795 A judge told the disgraced former MP that he had “thrown away his good name and character” with “blatant dishonesty” and “lies”. Despite a high-flying job as a junior environment minister, the 58-year-old fraudulently claimed £800-a-month interest on mortgage payments on his constituency home in Lincolnshire. MPs are allowed to claim interest on their mortgages, but the actual monthly interest Morley paid was only ever between £6 and £52. He even carried on claiming the £800 after his mortgage was paid off. In total he claimed £32,000 when, under parliamentary expenses rules, he was only entitled to £1,572. At London’s Southwark Crown Court Mr Justice Saunders said: “I am satisfied from the nature of the mortgage transactions and the correspondence that the excessive claims were made deliberately and are not explicable, even in part, by oversight. “The continuation of the claim for £800 a month after the mortgage had been redeemed can properly be described as blatant dishonesty.” He added: “The results of this case are tragic for the defendant and his family. He has thrown away his good name and good character.” Morley, a father of two who was elected MP for Scunthorpe in 1987 and stood down before last year’s general election, admitted two counts of false accounting. The admission made him the first minister and most high-profile politician to be caught in the scandal. Peter Wright QC, prosecuting, said under parliamentary expenses rules, Morley was entitled to claim mortgage interest on his second home in Winterton, Lincs. But, in fact, the Liverpool-born MP “engaged in the wholesale abuse of the expenses system”, submitting a total of 40 fraudulent claims. Between May 2004 and February 2006, he submitted 19 claims worth £15,200, and between March 2006 and November 2007 he submitted 21 claims totalling £16,800. After receiving a letter from the parliamentary fees office, Morley explained his behaviour as an “embarrassing and inadvertent oversight”. Jim Sturman QC, mitigating, said that Morley had paid back the full amount owed immediately. He said: “This is a tragic end to a lifetime of public service. He has done an enormous amount of good, often for no pay. “He’s made a grotesque error of judgment.” Mr Justice Saunders said Morley avoided a longer jail sentence despite claiming more money than other MPs who had also been convicted over the expenses scandal because of the lack of sophistication of his fraud. He said: “While this defendant is charged with obtaining more money than any other MP and over a long period, the degree of sophistication involved in carrying out the fraud was less than in some other cases.” Matthew Sinclair, director of the TaxPayers’ Alliance, said: “Morley’s jail sentence is justice for taxpayers whom he cheated and stole from. “The damage done by the MPs’ expenses scandal is still being repaired and it will take time to restore the public’s trust in the system, but this is another step down that road. “This sentence sends a clear message that even a former minister is not above the law, and stealing from the taxpayers he was supposed to represent is a very serious crime.” A Labour Party spokesman said: “Elliot Morley had already been suspended from the Labour Party and following his custodial sentence, he has now been excluded.”