

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024035863515 Morley, a former Labour environment minister, pleaded guilty last month to claiming more than £30,000 in bogus mortgage payments. He entered two guilty pleas for false accounting relating to his home in Winterton, near Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, between 2004 and 2007. Morley was sentenced at London's Southwark Crown Court. 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 from the party." Morley, who appeared flushed throughout the hearing, showed no emotion as the sentence was delivered. The former Labour MP, the most high profile of a string of convictions since the expenses revelations rocked Westminster, pocketed £30,428 by claiming for a phantom mortgage and inflating the amount he was previously paying. In total, he claimed £16,800 on a bogus mortgage and £15,200 after inflating the amount he was previously paying - for which he should have been entitled to only £1,572. Passing sentence, Mr Justice Saunders said Morley was guilty of "blatant dishonesty" and had "thrown away his good name and character." He 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 prosecution overshadows a political career lasting more than 20 years. As MP for Scunthorpe since 1987, former teacher Morley was one of Labour's most prominent voices on agricultural issues and the environment. He was party spokesman on rural affairs and animal welfare from 1989 until the 1997 election victory, and served under Tony Blair as environment minister from 2003 to 2006. But during that time he was claiming thousands of pounds more than any of the other MPs convicted. Peter Wright QC, prosecuting, told the court said Morley had "engaged in the wholesale abuse of the expenses system". The packed courtroom was told that between May 2004 and November 2007, Morley claimed significantly more than the value of his mortgage on his second home. Despite paying off the mortgage of the property in 2006, he continued to claim £800 a month in fraudulent payments. Between May 2004 and February 2006, he submitted 19 claims for "excessive mortgage payments" to which he was not entitled, worth £15,200. Between March 2006 and November 2007 he submitted 21 second-home allowance forms totaling £16,800 for payments on a mortgage that did not exist. Mr Justice Saunders said: "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." The court heard that under parliamentary expenses rules, Morley was entitled to claim only the interest element of mortgage payments on his second home. This amount varied from £52 per month in 2004 to just £5.85 in February 2006, but throughout this period, Morley continued to claim £800 per month. 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 once challenged 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 added: "He's made a grotesque error of judgment Mr Justice Saunders explained that Morley avoided a longer jail sentence despite claiming more money than other MPs convicted over the expenses scandal because of the lack of sophistication of his fraud. He told the court: "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 who 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.