Changes to the Online Expenses System

As we announced on Monday, we have made some changes to the online system. These changes are based on feedback we have received from MPs and their staff, and are designed to make the submission of your expenses easier and more intuitive.

Please see the end of this Bulletin for a full description of the changes.

We will be introducing further changes later in the year, which will require system downtime. We will notify you of these in advance.

This week some proxies have reported a problem when logging in – a screen prompting you to choose either your name or your MP's. This issue has now been rectified, and we would like to apologise for the inconvenience caused.

In addition, a small number of users have reported that they are having password problems – if this is the case please contact us on 020 7811 6400 or info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk and we will send a new password to you.

IPSA Website

On Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning you may have been unable to access the IPSA website at www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk. This was a result of a technical fault at the external company who host the site. This did not affect the online expenses system, and was not related to the changes we made at the weekend.

Travelcard Reconciliations

Any journeys paid for on a travelcard will appear on your monthly travelcard statement. You do not need to make claims for these journeys. Details of your travelcard statement will appear on your proxy's online system in the 'forms in progress' section as 'Expenses: Travel Card'. You will also receive a hard copy of this statement by post, for your records. This does

not need to be paid, but may be helpful when completing the reconciliation process detailed below.

Once the online statement appears in the system, your proxy will need to complete the remaining fields for each journey taken, giving details of the journey (for example, 'constituency office to Westminster'), and send the form to you to check and confirm that the journeys were taken in the performance of Parliamentary duties. You should then submit this form to IPSA by clicking on the 'submit' button. You will also need to print off the barcode cover sheet and send it in with the receipts for each journey made.

When completing the reconciliation statement please make sure you are not accidentally submitting an expense claim for a journey that has already been paid for on the travelcard. Where this happens, the claim will be checked against our own travelcard records and designated 'Not Paid' on the basis that it is a duplicate.

Staff Training

Staff can book onto the session below by calling the IPSA information line on 020 7811 6400 or by emailing training@parliamentarystandards.org.uk.

Forthcoming staff training sessions are as follows:

7 December – London

If you live outside London and would like to express interest in a training session in your area, please email or call the training helpline. Courses will be run according to the level of demand.

Payment of Expenses and Salaries

IPSA's online expenses and finance systems have been set up to enable approved expenses to be paid into MPs' bank accounts **throughout** the month. This means that there is no monthly or weekly cut-off date.

Please note, however, that the monthly cut-off date for IPSA's **salary** payroll is the 15th, or if this falls on a non-working day, the last working day before that.

IPSA Bulletins, Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions in the Members' Centre

Paper copies of these Bulletins, our latest Scheme guidance and our frequently asked questions are now available from the Members' Centre in Portcullis House. Alternatively you can find them on our website.

Online Expenses System Changes description

1) Validation Notes on Claims Not Paid

Where a claim has not been paid, a note will be visible which gives the reason for the decision. To view these notes, go to the 'Refusals/Advances' section of the homepage. Click on 'Refusals'. Select the claim by ticking the tick box and then click 'display transactions' to open the claim form. A new column labelled 'Validation Notes' contains a button on each row. Click on this to see the validator's notes on the claim. Please note that the 'Refusals' section will be renamed 'Not Paid' when further changes to the system are made later in the year.

2) Ability to copy a form submitted previously

 This means that for identical claims that you submit regularly, there is no need to complete the same form every time.

To copy a form, go to the 'Submitted' list in the top right hand corner of the homepage and click on the form number to open the form you wish to copy.

Select the row(s) you wish to copy by using the tick box on the left hand side of the rows. Then click on the 'Copy Form' button in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. All the details from the previous form will be retained apart from the date information. If there are no other changes to the claim, then you will just need to add the new date, otherwise you can type over the previous information with the new details.

We introduced this function as a priority for MPs. Further work is needed to extend this to proxies.

3) Search for forms

You can now search through your submitted items to find a particular form. From the homepage, click on 'submitted forms' and enter the required form number in the search box.

4) Help text added

Help text has been added to forms, to give guidance on the information required. When you view a form, some fields will have a question mark next to them. If you hover your mouse over these you will see guidance on what information is required in that field.

5) Printing

Once a form has been submitted and you have pressed 'I confirm', a prompt box will appear to ask if you would like to print it. If you choose not to print at this stage, you will still be able to print this later from the 'submitted' list.

6) Claims not Paid

Where a claim has not been paid, it will appear in the 'refused' section of the homepage. When there is a claim in this section the word 'Refused' will appear in red. This means it will be more obvious that there are claims there for your action. For example, if further information is required you may wish to provide this and submit the claim again.

7) Logging off

The log-off button in the top right hand corner has changed colour, from grey to red, to make it more easily visible. In addition, if you exit the system using the 'x' in the top right hand corner of your browser window, you will receive a warning message. This means you won't log off accidentally.

8) Change of address

When amending your address, a confirmation note will appear so you know the changes have been saved.

9) Clarification of expense types

To make it clearer when claiming for surgery hire, the categories for this have been renamed. To claim for venue hire for surgeries choose 'surgery premises hire only'. To claim for venue hire for meetings choose 'Hire of venues for meetings (not surgeries)'

10) Reports

The reports section now includes two different types of reports. Standard reports contains options to run regular, standard reports, for example 'Monthly Overview

Against Budget'. Custom reports enables you to input your own specific search terms, for example looking at 'My Allowed Expenses (Sent for Payment)'.

11) Deletion of unsubmitted forms

Where a form has been created but you no longer wish to submit it, you will now have the option of deleting it by clicking on a 'delete form' button in the bottom left hand corner of the screen.

If you have any queries or problems with any of these changes, please contact us on 020 7811 6400 or info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk

Contacting IPSA

Phone: IPSA Information Line: 020 7811 6400
(Opening hours 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk

Post: IPSA, 7th floor, Portland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5BH

Website: www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk