Update on the review of the Scheme

We will be publishing the Sixth Edition of the Scheme on Wednesday 12 March, following a review and consultation. The revised Scheme will incorporate minor changes to the rules, guidance and budgets, which will come into effect from 1 April for the 2014-15 financial year. We will be sending out more detailed information when we launch the revised Scheme on 12 March.

Upgrade of the online expenses system

The online expenses system (Expense@Work) will be upgraded on 1 April. The functions will remain largely the same but the overall look and feel will be updated with some enhancements to make the system easier to use. It is important that we update the system to offer you the latest features available and to ensure compatibility with new versions of web browsers. We will also make any system changes required to reflect the new Scheme rules. While this work is being carried out, the online expenses system will not be available from Friday 28 March to Monday 31 March inclusive. It will be available again on Tuesday 1 April. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. We will send out more detailed information about these changes in the coming weeks.

Payroll cut-off dates at year-end

We wanted to remind you that, as stated in the Year End Guide we sent out recently, payroll costs cannot be backdated once we have moved into the new financial year. For this reason, it is very important that the Payroll team receives any paperwork related to the 2013-14 financial year by the required cut off dates (14 March for hard copies and 22 March for online timesheet submissions). As in previous years, any costs related to 2013-14 but paid in 2014-15 due to late submissions will be charged to 2014-15 without exception.

New RSA software tokens

In the coming weeks we will begin a phased rollout of RSA software tokens, an electronic version of the physical RSA security tokens that you use to securely access the online expenses system. The advantage of software tokens is that they can be installed on a range of mobile devices and laptops, as well as desktop computers. The new RSA software tokens offer the same level of security and peace of mind as the hardware tokens that you currently use.

We will begin the rollout of the new RSA software tokens with an MP staff user group before offering the tokens to all MPs and Proxies. If you wish to volunteer to be amongst the first group of users, then please contact the MP Support team on 0207 811 6400. You do not need to do anything now; we will contact you again with further details and instructions in the next few weeks on how to use the new RSA tokens. You can read more about RSA Software tokens here and there is also a short video guide.

Availability of new Employment Allowance

In the 2013 Budget, the Chancellor announced the creation of a new Employment Allowance of up to £2,000 every year, to come into effect from 6 April 2014. This allowance will be available to businesses, charities and amateur sports clubs to reduce their employer National Insurance bill. We have received a number of enquiries recently asking if this allowance would also be available to MPs. We have clarified the position with HMRC, which has confirmed that the Employment Allowance is not available for public authorities or those that carry out functions wholly or mainly of a public nature (unless a charity). Therefore, the Employment Allowance will not be available to MPs' offices.

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