

## **MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses – new edition**

We are today publishing the latest edition of the Scheme, following our recent review and consultation. This new edition will come into effect on 1 April 2014 for the 2014/15 financial year. The current edition will continue to apply to the remainder of the 2013/14 financial year.

Based on the consultation responses that we received and other evidence that we gathered during the review, we concluded that only minor refinements are necessary to the Scheme. The aim of these refinements is to ensure that the Scheme rules, guidance and budgets continue to be fair and workable.

For the new edition of the Scheme, we have amended the rules and guidance to help clarify the terms on which MPs engage volunteers. For the avoidance of doubt, references in the Scheme to 'unpaid intern' have been replaced by 'volunteer'. The Scheme will continue to recognise 'employed interns', who are workers and must be paid at least the National Minimum Wage. The Model Volunteer Arrangement has also been amended to clarify its scope and purpose. We have also clarified the rules to state that, in the event of a recall of Parliament, MPs will be expected to travel standard class or equivalent unless there is no alternative available. We have refined the rules and guidance relating to expenditure by MPs in the lead-up to the General Election and by those MPs winding-up their affairs when they leave Parliament.

We have also reviewed the budget limits to ensure that these remain at an appropriate level. We have increased the Accommodation Expenditure budgets for MPs who claim rental payments by 2.5% to reflect rental costs. This represents an increase for those renting in the London Area to £20,600, and an increase of up to £400 for the regional rental bands. The nominal amount identified for associated expenditure will increase to £2,800. We have increased the Office Costs Expenditure budgets by 2.0% to reflect inflation.

The Staffing Expenditure budgets have been increased by around 1%, representing an increase of up to £1,500. This increase reflects the wider public sector pay policy, which remains that staff pay rises should be capped at an average of 1% except where significant extra responsibilities have been taken on. MPs should continue to have regard to the terms of this policy when setting pay for their staff.

A summary of the key changes made to the Scheme is attached. Please refer to the latest edition of the Scheme for full details of all the rules, guidance and budgets for 2014/15. A copy of the Scheme is available for collection at the Vote Office or on our website: [www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk](http://www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk).

## **MPs' Pensions Scheme – Same Sex Married Couples**

We have today laid before Parliament a new edition of the MPs' Pension Scheme, making changes in recognition of the commencement of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act. Copies are available on our website: [www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk](http://www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk).

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