Viewpoint Accountants

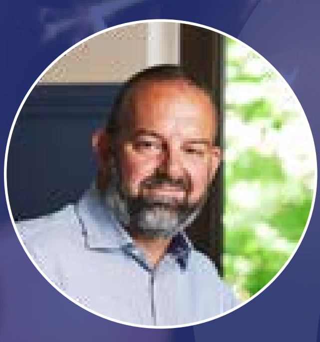
TAX NEWSLETTER

January 2024

WELCOME TO THE JANUARY TAX NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year and welcome to the January edition of Tax eNews. We hope that you find this informative. Please contact us if you wish to discuss any matters in more detail, we are only a phone call away and always here to help.

Call **01245 258 689** or email **info@viewpointaccountants.co.uk**



Steve Bird
Director

Vicky Coffman
Director

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS TO SAVE TAX

At this time of year, we think about New Year's resolutions. It is also a good time to start planning your tax affairs before the end of the tax year on 5th April.

An obvious tax planning point would be to maximise your ISA allowances for the 2023/24 tax year (currently £20,000 each). You might also want to consider increasing your pension savings before 5 April 2024, as the unused annual pension allowance from 2020/21 lapses after three years.

Many of us get together with the family at Christmas and that prompts us to think about making or updating our Will.

TIME TO REVIEW, OR MAKE A WILL?

At the top of the New Year to-do list for many individuals is to make or update their Will. Many think this is something to leave until later in life, but it is important to get things in place once property is acquired or when children come along.

In the absence of a Will, there are statutory rules which dictate how your assets are distributed on death. Those statutory intestacy rules may not be tax efficient, and you might want to make specific provisions in your Will for your unmarried partner or the guardianship of your children.

People often think that if they die without making a Will, their spouse (or civil partner) will automatically inherit everything, but this is not necessarily the case. According to the laws of intestacy in England, for deaths occurring on or after 26 July 2023, the surviving spouse would inherit a statutory legacy of £322,000, all of the personal effects, and half of the remaining estate. The deceased's surviving children (or their descendants) would split the remaining half of the estate equally. If those descendants are under the age of 18, their inheritance is kept back for them until they turn 18. Note that intestacy rules are different in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

PASSING ON THE FAMILY HOME

When considering the wording of your Will, you should note that the inheritance tax (IHT) nil rate band continues to be frozen at £325,000, subject to any announcements in the Spring Budget. There is currently an additional nil rate band of up to £175,000 for passing on the family home to direct descendants on death. We can work with your solicitor to make sure your Will is tax efficient.

Where some of the nil bands are unused on the death of the first spouse, the balance is available on the death of the surviving spouse, potentially allowing a married couple (or civil partners) to pass on assets of up to £1 million at today's rates without paying IHT.

The residence nil band is even available when you downsize to a cheaper property. For example, if a married couple currently live in a large house worth £500,000 and downsize to a flat worth £300,000, they could give away some of the proceeds during their lifetime and yet still benefit from inheritance tax relief based on the higher valued property. They could even sell the house and move into a rental property or a care home and still benefit from this nil band.

LEAVING MONEY IN YOUR WILL TO CHARITY

If you leave at least 10% of your estate to charity, the rate of Inheritance tax on the amount chargeable Is reduced from 40% over the nil rate bands to just 36%. This would reduce the amount passing to other beneficiaries and needs to be carefully considered.

YEAR-END INHERITANCE TAX PLANNING

Many were expecting an announcement from the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement about cuts to, or the possible abolition of, inheritance tax (IHT). Maybe he is saving that for his Spring Budget, but in the meantime, it may be worth utilising the £3,000 gifts annual exemption for 2023/24 and, if available, the unused amount from 2022/23. Note that £3,000 is the overall exemption for the tax year, not the amount for each done. More generous amounts can be given away by taking advantage of the exemption for regular gifts out of income.

REGULAR GIFTS OUT OF YOUR INCOME CAN SAVE IHT

One tax planning opportunity that many thought the chancellor might restrict was the exemption from inheritance tax for regular gifts out of an individual's surplus income. Inheritance tax is designed to tax transfers of capital, so if the donor can demonstrate that the gifts are made out of surplus income then the transfers are not taken into consideration for IHT. The exemption applies where there is a regularity to the payments, such as a standing order to pay school fees or pension contributions on behalf of children or grandchildren. HMRC will also require proof that the payments are paid out of post-tax income and do not limit the donor's normal lifestyle. Detailed records are required, and we can help you with a suitable spreadsheet.

PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS ON BEHALF OF OTHERS

Normally an individual's payments into a pension scheme are limited to their relevant earnings in a given tax year. This restriction does not apply where the contributions are less than £3,600 gross, allowing parents and grandparents to make payments on behalf of children and grandchildren with limited income. Payments of £2,880 a year would attract a 25% uplift from the government which could grow to a substantial amount by the time the child reaches retirement age (currently age 55, but increasing to 57 in 2028). The parent or grandparent may be able to justify that the payments qualify for the regular gifts out of income exemption from inheritance tax mentioned above if a standing order was set up for no more than £240 a month.

UPDATE PAYROLL SOFTWARE FOR THE JANUARY NIC CUT

The chancellor's announcement of a 2% cut in national insurance contributions (NICs) for employees applies to payments on or after 6 January 2024. That doesn't allow much time to update payroll software, particularly with the Christmas holidays in between. Note that for employees other than directors, NIC is not calculated on a cumulative basis so, where over-deductions are made, the error is not automatically corrected in later months.

ADVISORY FUEL RATE FOR COMPANY CARS

The table below sets out the HMRC advisory fuel rates from 1 December 2023. These are the suggested reimbursement rates for employees' private mileage using their company car.

Where the employer does not pay for any fuel for the company car, these are the amounts that can be reimbursed in respect of business journeys without the amount being taxable on the employee.

Engine Size	Petrol	Diesel	LPG
1400cc or less	14p (13p)		10p
1600cc or less		13p (12p)	
1401cc to 2000cc	16p		12p
1601 to 2000cc		15p (14p)	
Over 2000cc	26p (25p)	20p (19p)	18p (19p)

Where there has been a change the previous rate is shown in brackets.

You can also continue to use the previous rates for up to 1 month from the date the new rates apply.

Note that for hybrid cars you must use the petrol or diesel rate.

For fully electric vehicles the rate is 9p (10p) per mile.

DIARY OF MAIN TAX EVENTS - JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2024

DATE	WHAT'S DUE
01 January	Corporation tax for year to 31/03/2023 unless quarterly instalments apply.
19 January	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 05/01/24 (due 22/1 if you pay electronically).
31 January	Deadline for filing 2022/23 self-assessment tax return online, paying your outstanding tax for 2022/23 and first payment on account of 2023/24 tax.
01 February	Corporation tax for year to 30/04/2023 unless quarterly instalments apply.
19 February	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 05/02/24 (due 22/02 if you pay electronically).

FURTHER INFORMATION & ADVICE

If you would like further information or advice about any of the issues raised in this newsletter then we would be delighted to hear from you.

steve.bird@viewpointaccountants.co.uk
vicky.coffman@viewpointaccountants.co.uk