The Chancellor announced what he described a comprehensive economic response to the coronavirus. Recognising that there may be up to 20% of the workforce off work at any time and that coronavirus will have a significant albeit temporary impact, the following measures aimed at easing cash flow pressure were announced:

- The costs of statutory sick pay (SSP) (up to 14 days) will be refunded for businesses with fewer than 250 employees and SSP can be claimed from day 1, instead of day 4;
- For self-employed individuals & those employed in the gig economy the Government will make it quicker and easier to access benefits;
- HMRC will scale up time to pay allowing businesses additional time to pay tax liabilities. There will be a dedicated helpline;
- For SMEs there will be a new Government backed Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme;
- Business rates will be abolished for 2020 for those businesses in both retail and hospitality (shops, cinemas, restaurants, caravan parks, gyms etc.) with a rateable value below £51,000; and
• For those businesses that already qualify for business rates relief, a £3000 cash grant will be available.

Further details can be found here.

These and other announcements in the Budget were driven by the need to address the likely and significant economic pressure that UK businesses will face in the coming days/weeks/months – a coronavirus budget.

Hopefully, these measures will help ease the economic impact of Covid-19 but, as noted in our earlier blog, businesses will need to consider the impact that restrictions placed on the movement of goods and people will have on all aspects of their business.

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