



PART B:	RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL
REPORT TO:	POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE:	7 FEBRUARY 2019
REPORT OF THE:	CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (S151) ANTON HODGE
TITLE OF REPORT:	POLICY ON RETAIL RELIEF FOR BUSINESS RATES
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL WARDS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To submit for members' consideration a policy for the determination of the allocation of Discretionary Business Rate Relief to retail business premises.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council is recommended to approve:
- (i) A Discretionary Business Rates Policy to award retail relief in accordance with DCLG guidelines with the following additional provisions:
 - a) Charity shops in receipt of 80% Mandatory Business Rates Relief shall not be granted discretionary retail relief
 - (ii) That Discretionary Retail Relief be awarded as follows:
 - a) Via delegated authority to Council officers
 - b) That an application process is not a mandatory requirement, but that officers reserve the right to request information in order to apply any award of relief.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Chancellors' 2018 autumn statement announced that retail premises with rateable values of less than £51,000 would be eligible for a reduction of one third on their business rates bill from 1 April 2019 for a period of two years. DCLG announced that the award of this reduction is to be on a discretionary basis. It is therefore prudent for the Council to have a policy for the award of this reduction that ensures business growth and sustainability of local businesses.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 Without formulating a policy, there is the risk that application of the reduction to any business could breach state aid limitations.
- 4.2 If a policy is not formulated, relief can be applied to businesses that do not necessarily boost the local economy

REPORT

5.0 REPORT DETAILS

- 5.1 As this is a measure for 2019-20 and 2020-21 only, the Government is not changing the legislation around the reliefs available to properties. Instead the Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, introduced by the Localism Act (under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended) to grant relief. It will be for individual local billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and decide in each individual case when to grant relief under section 47. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the discretionary relief (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). The Government expects local government to grant relief to qualifying ratepayers.
- 5.2 Properties that will benefit from this relief will be occupied hereditaments with a rateable value of £51,000 or less, that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments.
- 5.3 DCLG guidance considers shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments to mean:
- i. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:
 - Shops (such as: florist, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licence, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc)
 - Charity shops
 - Opticians
 - Post offices
 - Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
 - Car/ caravan show rooms
 - Second hand car lots
 - Markets
 - Petrol stations
 - Garden centres
 - Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)
 - ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:
 - Hair and beauty services (such as: hairdressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc)
 - Shoe repairs/ key cutting
 - Travel agents
 - Ticket offices e.g. for theatre
 - Dry cleaners
 - Launderettes
 - PC/ TV/ domestic appliance repair
 - Funeral directors
 - Photo processing
 - DVD/ video rentals
 - Tool hire
 - Car hire
 - iii. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/ or drink to visiting members of the public:
 - Restaurants

- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bars

5.5 To qualify for the relief the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used as a shop, restaurant, cafe or drinking establishment. In a similar way to other reliefs (such as charity relief), this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

Properties that do not benefit from the granting of this relief

5.6 The list below sets out the types of uses that government does not consider to be retail use for the purpose of this relief. Again, it is for local authorities to determine for themselves whether particular properties are broadly similar in nature to those below and, if so, to consider them not eligible for the relief under their local scheme.

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureau de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
- Other services (e.g. estate agents, letting agents, employment agencies)
- Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/financial advisers, tutors)
- Post office sorting office

ii. Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public.

5.7 The reliefs can be applied in conjunction with other reductions from business rates such as small business rate relief.

5.8 In granting the relief the Council must consider State Aid implications. State Aid is the means by which the EU regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to state aid. Retail relief will be compliant where it is awarded within De Minimis rules. To administer De Minimis it is necessary for each local authority to establish that the award of aid will not result in the business having received more than 200,000 euros of State Aid in a three year period (consisting of the current and preceding two years).

5.9 Shops that are occupied by registered charities currently receive 80% mandatory relief and are required to pay the remaining 20% of their charge. It is proposed to exclude charity shops from being granted retail relief in order to cap relief advantages charities have over other high street businesses.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The following implications have been identified:

- Financial
There is no financial implication as award of the relief is reimbursed through Section 31 grant.
- Legal
- Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental, Crime & Disorder)

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Background Papers:
MHCLG Business Rates Retail Relief Guidance

Background Papers are available for inspection at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>