
REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 6 DECEMBER 2017

PORTFOLIO: GOVERNANCE

REPORT FROM THE SECTION 151 OFFICER

SUBJECT: DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

1 DECISIONS BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To agree a criteria for the distribution of a Discretionary Relief Fund for Business Rates and incorporate this into a consolidated Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, which is included as Appendix A to this report.
- 1.2 That authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer to make decisions relating to the application of the Discretionary Rate Relief policy for individual cases; with the proviso that any application that is considered to be of a contentious or significant nature will be subject to consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE No: 12/17

3 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 In the Spring Budget 2017 the Government announced the establishment of a £300m discretionary fund over four years from 2017-18 to support those businesses that face the steepest increases in their business rates bills as a result of the 2017 revaluation.
- 3.2 The intention is that every Billing Authority in England is provided with a share of the £300m fund to support their local businesses. Billing authorities are expected to use their share of the funding to develop their own discretionary relief scheme to deliver targeted support to the most hard-pressed ratepayers.
- 3.3 The Government has allocated resource to each Billing authority by working out the total increase in bills (excluding the impact of transitional relief and other reliefs), for every rateable property in the authority's area that satisfies both of the following criteria:-
 - (a) The rateable value of the property for 2017-18 is less than £200,000; and
 - (b) The increase in the rate bill for that property in 2017-18 is more than 12.5% compared to its 2016-17 bill.
- 3.4 Government Grant funding for Rochford District Council (RDC) has been set at:-
 - £126,000 in 2017-18
 - £61,000 in 2018-19

- £25,000 in 2019-20
- £4,000 in 2020-21

- 3.5 Any underspend may not be “vired” from one year to the next and will need to be paid back to Central Government.
- 3.6 Allowing the Section 151 Officer to make decisions relating to the application of the Discretionary Rate Relief policy for individual cases would be appropriate, since it is not practical for all decisions to be made by the Portfolio Holder, due to the volume of awards.
- 3.7 This would be subject to the proviso that any application which is considered to be of a contentious or significant nature will be subject to consultation with the Portfolio Holder.
- 3.8 Where the ratepayer wishes to appeal the decision of the Section 151 Officer the matter will be considered by the Portfolio Holder, whose decision on behalf of the Council will be final.

4 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 4.1 There is insufficient funding to support all businesses facing a significant increase following the revaluation. Therefore, RDC's scheme would target those most affected as a result of the 2017 revaluation.
- 4.2 The criteria that has been determined is for ratepayers to:-
- have a property with a rateable value for 2017-18 of less than £100,000;
 - face an increase in their rate liability for their 2017-18 bill, after any reliefs and reductions, which exceeds a percentage increase figure to be determined by the Section 151 Officer and agreed with the Portfolio Holder (note that the 2017/18 percentage is yet to be determined pending more detailed information on RDC's rates base);
 - have had an occupied rates liability during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017;
 - be occupying the property;
 - not qualify for Mandatory Charity Relief or Supporting Small Business Relief;
 - not receive, in a three year period, including the current year, State Aid in excess of 200,000 Euros; and
 - have no more than three occupied rateable properties in the UK.

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- 4.3 The relief would be subject to a minimum award of £25 each year. Should (at any point over the lifetime of the scheme) the amount of relief we can award fall below this figure, the entitlement would end.
- 4.4 Relief would not apply where properties are brought into the Rating List retrospectively.
- 4.5 Relief would be recalculated in the event of a decrease of a bill due to a rateable value reduction or the award of another relief. Relief will not be recalculated where there is an increase due to a rateable value change.
- 4.6 Decisions to award the relief would be conditional on the basis that the ratepayer continues to meet the above criteria throughout the lifetime of the scheme.

5 AMOUNT OF RELIEF

- 5.1 The amount of relief would be a fixed amount and calculated on a percentage of the total net increase in the 2017/18 bill, compared to the 2016/17 bill.
- 5.2 The following levels of relief are proposed:-

2017/18 - a percentage to be agreed by the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, of the total net increase in the 2017/18 bill.

2018/19 - 50% of the relief awarded in 2017/18*

2019/20 - 40% of the relief awarded in 2018/19*

2020/21 - 20% of the relief awarded in 2019/20*

* These are estimated figures. The levels would be reviewed at the end of each financial year when the following year's liabilities were known. On this basis the level of relief applicable for the coming year could be determined.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Central Government requires Billing Authorities to devise a scheme to distribute this fund; so RDC must implement a policy to be compliant.
- 6.2 The scheme needs to be clear and transparent and should take into account the amount of funding available and the potential number of ratepayers who could qualify. Where a ratepayer meets the criteria of the policy, relief would have to be awarded regardless of the limit on the funding provided by Central Government. This means that RDC would need to fund any amounts awarded in excess of the Government grant itself. The proposed RDC scheme has been designed to ensure that the amounts awarded are within the grant envelope, based on our current rates base. In the event that the rates base changed significantly in any given year, there is a risk that RDC

would need to subsidise the scheme directly. However, the policy will be reviewed each year and the amount of relief awarded can be varied if it is assessed that it is likely the grant would be exceeded in the following year.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There is likely to be an increase in enquiries and work as a result of the proposed Discretionary Relief Fund scheme. However, this additional work can be absorbed with existing resources.
- 7.2 The Fund is provided by Central Government in the form of a Section 31 Grant. There is a requirement that any underspend will be paid back.
- 7.3 As set out in paragraph 6.2 any amounts awarded that exceed the Government grant allocation for RDC would need to be funded by the Council. The proposed scheme has been designed to stay within the grant envelope, based on the Council's current rates base, and the policy could be varied in future years if it was deemed likely that RDC would exceed the grant allocation.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Central Government requires Local Authorities to devise their own scheme on how to distribute their share of the funding. There is a requirement to consult with major preceptors. This is an essential part of the Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme and in line with the grant determination issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 It is important that the Discretionary Rate Relief policy clearly shows the criteria on which ratepayers would be eligible for each type of relief.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

LT Lead Officer Signature: _____



Section 151 Officer

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Pam Shepherd, Principal Officer (Revenues) on:-

Phone: 01702 318016

Email: pam.shepherd@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

Rochford District Council Policy for the Granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief

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1.0 Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to determine the level of discretionary relief and related areas to be granted to certain defined ratepayers within the Council's area.
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1988 and subsequent legislation requires the Council to grant mandatory relief for premises occupied by Charities and similar organisations that own or occupy them wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. Likewise, certain premises situated within a rural settlement area will be eligible for mandatory relief. Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow for the granting of discretionary rate relief to any premises where the Council feels the granting of such relief would be of benefit to the local community.
- 1.3 In addition to the above, Central Government is keen that in certain cases, assistance should be provided to businesses who have had increases in their rate liability due to the revaluation of

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premises in April 2017. In these cases, and where the Council meets Central Government guidelines, grants are available under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

- 1.4 Whilst the Council is obliged to grant relief to premises, which fall within the mandatory category, the Council also has powers to grant discretionary relief and reductions to ratepayers, subject to certain criteria being met. In the case of the new reliefs, some guidance has been issued by Central Government outlining actions expected to be taken by local authorities. This policy includes Government guidance where appropriate but also looks to target discretionary relief in line with the Council's priorities.
- 1.5 This document outlines the following areas:
 - Details of the criteria for receiving Discretionary Reliefs for all relevant areas;
 - The Council's policy for the granting of all types of Discretionary Reliefs;
 - Guidance on granting and administering the reliefs and awards;
 - European Union requirements including provisions for State Aid; and
 - The Council's Scheme of Delegation.
- 1.6 Where organisations apply for relief they will be granted (or not granted) relief or reductions in line with the following policy.

2.0 Mandatory Relief - Legislative Background

Charity Relief

- 2.1 The powers relating to the granting of mandatory¹ and discretionary relief are given to the Council under the Local Government Finance Act 1988². Charities and Trustees for Charities are only liable to pay one fifth of the Non-Domestic Rates that would otherwise be payable where property is occupied and used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. This amounts to mandatory relief of 80%. For the purposes of the Act, a charity is an organisation or trust established for charitable purposes, whether or not it is registered with the Charity Commission. The provision has been extended under the Local Government Act 2003 (effective from 1st April 2004) to registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs). Full details of the mandatory provisions are given later within this policy.
- 2.2 In the case of charity shops, the premises must meet the criteria laid down by section 64 (10) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which states that the premises are to be treated as used for charitable purposes at any time it is wholly or mainly used for the sale of goods donated to the charity and the proceeds of goods (after any deductions for expenses) are applied for the purpose of the charity.
- 2.3 The Council has discretion to grant relief of up to a further 20% for these mandatory cases under its discretionary provisions.

Rural Rate Relief

- 2.4 From 1st April 1998, under powers originally granted to the Council by the Local Government and Rating Act 1997³, certain types of business in rural settlements, with a population below 3000 may qualify for mandatory rate relief of 50 per cent. Businesses that qualify for this relief are the sole general store and the sole post office in the settlement, provided it has a Rateable Value of up to £8500; any food shop with a Rateable Value of up to £8500; and the sole pub and the sole petrol station in the settlement provided it has a Rateable Value of up to £12500.
- 2.5 From 1st April 2017, Central Government has indicated that it wants all authorities to give 100% relief to premises that receive mandatory rural rate relief. The legislation enabling this will not be forthcoming until 2018 and therefore it has indicated that where the additional 50% is granted, a section 31 grant will be made available to the Council. This is dealt with further within this policy and the Council will automatically grant the additional 50% discretionary relief where appropriate
- 2.6 Where businesses in rural settlements have a Rateable Value of up to £16,500 **and** are not in receipt of mandatory relief, the Council may decide to give up to 100 per cent discretionary relief if it is satisfied that the business is of benefit to the community and having regard to the interests of its Council Taxpayers.

¹ S43 & S45 Local Government Finance Act 1988

² S47 & S48 Local Government Finance Act 1988

³ LGFA 1988, s.47, as amended by Sch. 1 to the Local Government and Rating Act 1997

3.0 Discretionary Relief – Legislative Background

Introduction

- 3.1 The original purpose of discretionary relief was to provide assistance where the property does not qualify for mandatory relief, or to 'top' up cases where ratepayers already receive mandatory relief.
- 3.2 Over recent years and particularly since 2011, the discretionary relief provisions have been amended to allow authorities the flexibility to provide more assistance to businesses and organisations.
- 3.3 The range of bodies, which are eligible for discretionary rate relief, is wide and not all of the criteria laid down by the legislation will be applicable in each case.
- 3.4 Unlike mandatory relief, ratepayers are obliged to make a written application to the Council. The Council will expect all businesses to make applications in such a format as is required (which may vary from time to time) and for the business to provide such information and evidence as required in order to determine whether relief should be awarded.
- 3.5 The Council is obliged to consider carefully every application on its merits, taking into account the contribution that the organisation makes to the amenities within the authority's area. There is no statutory appeal process or Tribunal against any decision made by the Council although, as with any decision of a public authority, decisions can be reviewed by Judicial Review. The authority will however, upon request, review decisions made. Details of the internal review process are given within this policy.
- 3.6 Granting of the relief falls broadly into the following categories:
 - a. Discretionary Relief – Charities who already receive mandatory relief.
 - b. Discretionary Relief – Premises occupied by organisations not established or conducted for profit whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts **or** premises occupied by organisations not established or conducted for profit and wholly or mainly used for purposes recreation;
 - c. Discretionary Relief – Rural Rate relief - premises that already receive mandatory relief;
 - d. Discretionary Relief – Rural Rate relief - premises not receiving mandatory relief but of benefit to the local community and less than £16,500 RV;
 - e. Discretionary Relief – Granted under the Localism Act 2011 provisions;
 - f. Local Newspaper Relief (from 1st April 2017 for a period of two years);
 - g. Local Public House Relief (from April 2017 for a one year period);
 - h. Supporting Small Businesses Relief (from 1st April 2017 for a period of five years or until business pay their full rate charge or their transitional rate charge (calculated in accordance with the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016)); and
 - i. Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme (from 1st April 2017 for a period of up to four years)
- 3.7 The decision to grant or not to grant discretionary relief is a matter purely for the Council.

The Council's general approach to granting Discretionary Relief

- 3.8 In deciding which organisations should receive discretionary rate relief, the Council has considered the following factors and priorities:
- a. The awarding of relief will be in line with the Council's priorities as set out in its Business Plan;
 - b. Be equitable and balance the wider interests of the community with the resources made available by the Council Tax payer;
 - c. Support the delivery of the Council's objectives and priorities;
 - d. Be clear and transparent;
 - e. Set out, as far as possible, objective criteria rather than subjective judgements for the award of Discretionary Relief;
 - f. Be simple to administer;
 - g. Offer stability to those organisations receiving relief;
 - h. Any award should support business, charities, organisations and groups that help to retain services in the Council's area and not compete directly with existing businesses in an unfair manner;
 - i. The award should help and encourage business, charities, organisations, groups and communities to become self-reliant;
 - j. Awarding discretionary relief should not distort competition or significantly change the provision of services within the Council's area;
 - k. Local organisations will be given priority over national organisations. Where requested, the organisation will need to supply the Council with clear evidence of **all** financial affairs (normally two full years) including, and most importantly, the amounts of monies raised, used and invested locally. This will be essential where the organisation is national in nature;
 - l. To enable appropriate organisations to start, develop or continue their activities, which deliver outcomes to the community and that also relate to the priorities of the Council, which without granting discretionary relief they would be unable to do;
 - m. To assist the Council in delivering services which could not be provided otherwise;
 - n. To enable the Council to determine the level of rate change in comparison with the organisation's financial situation; and
 - o. To ensure that the financial impact of awarding discretionary business rate relief is justified in terms of the local outcomes achieved by the organisation receiving it;
- 3.9 Where any reduction or remission is granted to a ratepayer under S49 Local Government Finance Act 1988 where hardship is proven to the Council, then there will be no requirement to grant Discretionary Rate Relief for that amount.
- 3.10 In certain cases, the order in which relief is granted is specified. Mandatory relief shall be granted in all cases where the criteria is met irrespective of whether discretionary relief can be granted or not.

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The Council's approach to granting Government led Discretionary Relief schemes

- 3.11 Over the past few years, a number of schemes have been led by Central Government but without specific legislative changes. These are administered under S47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and guidance is often provided. The Council is keen to support such initiatives especially where they are designed to help local businesses and will look to maximise both the reliefs given as well as maximise any grants receivable. However, the Council reserves the right to vary its approach where thought appropriate.

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4.0 Effect on the Council's Finances

- 4.1 The granting of discretionary relief will, in the main, involve a cost to the Council. Since the change to the funding for Non-Domestic Rating in April 2013, the effect of the relief is complex.
- 4.2 Any amounts granted prior to 1st April 2013 and continuing since that date will be included in the Council's baseline within the Business Rates Retention Scheme. For any amounts granted for similar cases after 1st April 2013, the costs of the relief will be borne in accordance with the Business Rates Retention Scheme share namely 50% borne by Central Government, 40% by the Council and 10% by Essex County Council. This also applies where mandatory relief is granted.
- 4.3 Where Central Government leads an initiative, grants are often available through section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. This is not automatic and Central Government will look to the Council to adopt the recommended approach when granting in these areas
- 4.4 The financial effects of discretionary reliefs covered by this policy are as follows:

Appendix	Relief Type	Granted after 1 st April 2013
	Charity Relief	
A	Discretionary relief granted to Mandatory Relief recipients	40% borne by the Council
B	Non-profit Making Organisations including Sports Clubs and societies	40% borne by the Council
	Rural Rate Relief	
C	50% Discretionary relief granted to Mandatory Rural Relief recipients	Section 31 Grant
D	Other premises within a rural settlement under £16500 RV	40% borne by the Council
	Localism	
E	Discretionary Relief granted to ratepayers generally and not covered by any other section	40% borne by the Council
	Local Newspaper Relief	
F	Discretionary Relief granted to local newspapers meeting the criteria (From 1 st April 2017 for a period of two years)	Section 31 Grant
	Public House Relief	
G	Discretionary Relief granted to public houses meeting the criteria (From 1 st April 2017 for a period of one year)	Section 31 Grant
	Supporting Small Business Relief	
H	Supporting Small Businesses Relief (from 1 st April 2017 for a period of up to five years if conditions are met)	Section 31 Grant
	Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme	
I	Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme (from 1 st April 2017 for a period of up to four years)	Section 31 Grant up to a maximum level set by Central Government. Once the maximum has been reached any additional amount is borne 40% by the Council

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Appendix	Relief Type	Granted after 1 st April 2013
	S49 Hardship Relief	
J	Partial or full relief for cases of hardship where it would be reasonable to do so having due regard to the interests of council tax payers	40% borne by the Council

5.0 Discretionary Relief – EU State Aid requirements

- 5.1 European Union competition rules generally prohibit Government subsidies to businesses. Relief from taxes, including non-domestic rates, can constitute state aid. The Council must bear this in mind when granting discretionary rate relief.
- 5.2 Rate relief for charities and non-profit making bodies is not generally considered to be state aid, because the recipients are not in market competition with other businesses. However, where other bodies receive relief and are engaged in commercial activities or if they are displacing an economic operator or if they have a commercial partner, rate relief could constitute state aid.
- 5.3 Relief will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)⁴. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three-year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years).
- 5.4 Where the relief to any one business is greater than the De Minimis level, then permission will need to be obtained from the European Commission. In such cases the matter will be referred to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for advice and then referred back to the Council for consideration. It will be for the ratepayer to provide confirmation as to whether the State Aid provisions apply to them.
- 5.5 In all cases, where discretionary relief is to be granted or where liability is to be reduced, when making an application, ratepayers will be required to provide the Council with sufficient information to determine whether these provisions are applicable in their case.

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

6.0 Administration of Discretionary Relief

- 6.1 The following section outlines the procedures followed by officers in granting, amending or cancelling discretionary relief and reduction. This is essentially laid down by legislation⁵

Applications and Evidence

- 6.2 All reliefs must be applied for. The relevant application forms are available from the Council. The Council will specify how applications are to be received and this may vary from time to time.
- 6.3 Organisations are required to provide a completed application form plus any such evidence, documents, accounts (normally the last two years), financial statements etc. necessary to allow the Council to make a decision. Where insufficient information is provided, then no relief will be granted. In some cases, it may be necessary for officers to visit premises and we would expect organisations claiming relief to facilitate this where necessary.
- 6.4 Applications should initially be made to the Revenues and Benefits Service and will be determined in accordance with Section 7 of this policy.
- 6.5 **The Council will provide this service and provide guidance free of charge. Ratepayers are encouraged to approach the Council direct and NOT pay for such services through third parties.**

Granting of relief

- 6.6 In all cases, the Council will notify the ratepayer of decisions made.
- 6.7 Where an application is successful, then the following will be notified to them in writing:
- The amount of relief granted and the date from which it has been granted;
 - If relief has been granted for a specified period, the date on which it will end. (It should be noted that reliefs are granted for the period specified in the appropriate Appendix and may vary from a day to a full financial year);
 - The new chargeable amount;
 - The details of any planned review dates and the notice that will be given in advance of a change to the level of relief granted; and
 - A requirement that the applicant should notify the Council of any change in circumstances that may affect entitlement to relief.
- 6.8 Where relief is not granted, then the following information is provided, again in writing:
- An explanation of the decision within the context of the Council's statutory duty; and
 - An explanation of the appeal rights (see below).
- 6.9 Discretionary relief is to be granted from the beginning of the financial year in which the decision is made or when liability begins whichever is the later. Since 1997 decisions can be made up to 6 months after the end of the financial year for which the application was made. In such cases, the Council *may* backdate its decision.

⁵ The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989

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- 6.10 A decision to award discretionary relief and how much relief is given is normally only applicable to the financial year for which the application is made. However, the Council reserves the right to grant relief for any other period as appropriate.
- 6.11 A fresh application for discretionary relief will be necessary for each financial year **or** at such time-period as the Council determines.

Variation of a decision

- 6.12 Variations in any decision will be notified to ratepayers as soon as practicable and will take effect as follows:
- Where the amount is to be increased due to a change in rate charge or a change in the Council's decision which increases the award – this will apply from a date determined by the Council as appropriate;
 - Where the amount is to increase for any other reason, it will take effect at the expiry of a financial year and so that at least one year's notice is given;
 - Where the amount is to be reduced due to a reduction in the rate charge or liability including any reduction in rateable value, awarding of another relief or exemption this will apply from the date of the decrease in rate charge; and
 - Where the amount is to be reduced for any other reason, it will take effect from a date determined by the Council as appropriate;
- 6.13 A decision may be revoked at any time however; a one year period of notice will be given and the change will take effect at the expiry of a financial year.

7.0 Scheme of Delegation

Granting, Varying, Reviewing and Revocation of Relief

- 7.1 All powers in relation to reliefs are given under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011. However section 223 of the Local Government Act 1992 allows for delegation of decisions by the Council to Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees or Officers.
- 7.2 The Council's scheme of delegation allows for the Section 151 Officer make decisions to award, revise or revoke any discretionary relief applications. However, any application which is considered to be of a contentious or significant nature will be subject to consultation with the Head of Finance and Portfolio Holder prior to final determination.
- 7.3 Applications that are refused will, on request, be reconsidered if additional supporting information is provided or the refusal is subsequently considered to be based on a misinterpretation of the application.

Reviews

- 7.4 The policy for granting relief will be reviewed annually or where there is a substantial change to the legislation or funding rules. Where there are any changes, a revised policy will be brought before The Executive committee of the Council.

Appeals

- 7.5 Where the Council receives an appeal from the ratepayer regarding the granting, non-granting or the amount of any discretionary relief, the case will be reviewed by the Principal Officer (Revenues). Where a decision is revised then the ratepayer shall be informed, likewise if the original decision is upheld.
- 7.6 Where the ratepayer wishes to appeal the decision of the Principal Officer (Revenues), the case will be considered by the Head of Finance and Portfolio Holder whose decision on behalf of the Council will be final
- 7.7 Ultimately the formal appeal process for the ratepayer is Judicial Review although the Council will endeavour to explain any decision fully and openly with the ratepayer.

8.0 Reporting changes in circumstances

- 8.1 Where any award is granted to a ratepayer, the Council will require any changes in circumstances which may affect the relief, to be reported as soon as possible or in any event within 21 days of the change. This will be important where the change would result in the amount of the award being reduced or cancelled e.g. where the premises comes unoccupied or is used for a purpose other than that determined by the Council as eligible for relief.
- 8.2 Where a change of circumstances is reported, the relief will, if appropriate, be revised or cancelled as appropriate. Where any award is to be reduced, the Council will look to recover the amount from the date the change of circumstances occurred.

9.0 Fraud

- 9.1 Where a ratepayer falsely applies for any relief, or where the ratepayer provides false information, makes false representation, or deliberately withholds information in order to gain relief, prosecutions will be considered under the Fraud Act 2006.

Appendix A

Discretionary Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients

Discretionary Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients

General Explanation

- A.1 S43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 allows mandatory relief (80%) to be granted on premises if the ratepayer is a charity or trustees for a charity and the premises are wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. No charge is made in respect of unoccupied premises where it appears that *when next in use* it will be used wholly or mainly for those purposes.
- A.2 The legislation has been amended by the Local Government Act 2003 (effective from 1st April 2004) to include registered⁶ Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC). These organisations can now receive the mandatory (80%) relief.

Charity registration

- A.3 Charities are defined within the legislation as being an institution⁷ or other organisation established for charitable purposes only or by persons administering a trust established for charitable purposes only.
- A.4 The question as to whether an organisation is a charity may be resolved in the majority of cases by reference to the register of charities maintained by the Charity Commissioners under s.4 of the Charities Act 1960. Entry in the register is conclusive evidence. By definition, under the Non-Domestic Rating legislation, there is no actual need for an organisation to be a registered charity to receive the relief and this has been supported by litigation⁸, however in all cases the organisation must fall within the following categories:
- trusts for the relief of poverty;
 - trusts for the advancement of religion;
 - trusts for the advancement of education; and
 - trusts for other purposes beneficial to the community, but not falling under any of the preceding heads.
- A.5 Certain organisations are exempted from registration generally and are not required to make formal application to the Charity Commissioners these are:
- the Church Commissioners and any institution administered by them;
 - any registered society within the meaning of the Friendly Societies Acts of 1896 to 1974;
 - units of the Boy Scouts Association or the Girl Guides Association; and
 - voluntary schools within the meaning of the Education Acts of 1944 to 1980.
- A.6 The Council will consider charitable organisations, registered or not, for mandatory relief.

Use of Premises – wholly or mainly used

- A.7 Irrespective of whether an organisation is registered as a charity or not, the premises **must** be wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. This is essential if any relief (either mandatory or discretionary) is to be granted. In most cases this can be readily seen by inspection, but on

⁶ Registered with HMRC as a CASC

⁷ S67(10) Local Government Finance Act 1988

⁸ Income Tax Special Commissioners v Pemsell (1891)

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occasions the Council has had to question the actual use to which the premises are to be put. In some cases, it will be necessary for the Council to inspect any premises fully.

- A.8 Guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has stated that in the case of 'mainly', at least 51% must be used for charitable purposes whether of that charity or of that and other charities
- A.9 The following part of this section gives details on typical uses where relief may be given plus additional criteria that have to be satisfied. The list is not exhaustive but gives clear guidance on premises for which mandatory relief can be granted *and therefore* premises which may be equally considered for discretionary rate relief.

Offices, administration and similar premises

- A.10 Premises used for administration of the Charity include:
 - Offices;
 - Meeting Rooms; and
 - Conference Rooms.

Charity shops

- A.11 Charity shops are required to meet additional legislative criteria if they are to receive mandatory relief. Section 64 (10) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 provides that a property is to be treated as being wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes at any time if, at the time, it is wholly or mainly used for the sale of goods donated to a charity and the proceeds of the sale of the goods (after any deduction of expenses) are applied for the purposes of the charity.
- A.12 In order to ascertain whether an organisation meets these requirements, inspections may be made by an officer of the Council when an application is received

Granting of Mandatory Relief - the Council's Policy

- A.13 Where the criteria for awarding mandatory relief are met, the rate charges shall be calculated in accordance with the legislation reducing the liability of ratepayers for each day that the criteria are met.

Charity Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients, the Council's Policy for granting discretionary relief.

- A.14 The Council will consider applications for a discretionary rate relief top up from charities based on their own merits, on a case-by-case basis.
- A.15 In determining the application, the following matters will be taken in to consideration:
 1. How the charity supports and links into the Council's corporate Business Plan;
 2. The purpose of the charity and the specific activity carried out within the premises for which the relief is requested; and
 3. Whether the charity operates at a local or national level and where appropriate, the local and national funding streams and financial position of the charity. The Council is keen to ensure that the organisation provides significant benefit to local residents.
- A16 The Council is keen to support businesses that have a critical role to play in the local economy and to

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assist the Council in meeting its priorities in its Business Plan.

- A.17 In the case of registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs, the key criteria in determining the application will be:
1. The ratepayer occupies the whole hereditament;
 2. Relief cannot be granted in respect of premises that are occupied by the Council or precepting authority;
 3. How the CASC supports and links into the Council's corporate Business Plan;
 4. The membership and fee structure, and whether the CASC is accessible to all residents, including whether there are concessions for certain groups, for example people on a low income or young people under 18;
 5. Membership numbers and the number and percentage of these members that are local residents;
 6. If the CASC has due regard to equality issues and if it actively encourages members from under-represented groups, for example black and minority ethnic residents, people over 50 and people with disabilities;
 7. Whether facilities are available to the wider community regardless of ability; and
 8. If the CASC runs a bar or food provision: the level of income from this activity and how this money is used; and whether the CASC operates at a local or national level and where appropriate, the local and national funding streams and financial position of the CASC.
- A.18 The Council wishes to support and enable appropriate businesses to start, develop and continue with their operations that deliver outcomes directly related to the Council's aims and vision. In the main, this will be done through other means rather than granting discretionary relief. There may be occasions where applications are made for such relief or where a package of measures, including discretionary relief, are appropriate in supporting businesses. This would need to be in accordance with any limitations in respect of state aid.

Appendix A

Appendix B

Discretionary Relief – Non-Profit Making Organisations including Recreation

Discretionary Relief – Non-Profit Making Organisations including Recreation

General explanation

Non-Profit

- B.1 The legislation⁹ allows the Council to grant discretionary relief where the property is not an *excepted* one and all or part of it is occupied for the purposes of one or more institutions or other organisations none of which is established or conducted for profit and each of whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts.
- B.2 Relief cannot be granted to any premises occupied by the Council, or any town, parish council or major Precepting Authority (*excepted premises*).
- B.3 A number of issues arise from the term 'not established or conducted for profit'. This requires the Council to make enquiries as to the overall purpose of the organisation although if surpluses and such amounts are directed towards the furtherance or achievement of the objects of the organisation then it does not necessarily mean that the organisation was established or conducted for profit.¹⁰

Recreation Clubs

- B.4 Ideally all recreation clubs should be encouraged to apply for Community Amateur sports Club (CASC) status, which would automatically entitle them to 80% relief. The relief granted to CASCs is covered earlier within this policy.
- B.5 Recreation clubs can also apply to the Charity Commissioners for registration as a Charity (thereby falling under the mandatory provisions for 80% relief) where they meet the following conditions:
 - a. The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation and by the provision of facilities for the playing of particular sports; and
 - b. The advancement of the physical education of young people not undergoing formal education.
- B.6 Where sports clubs do not meet the CASC requirement, and are not registered charities, discretionary relief can be granted (0-100%) where the property is not an *excepted* one, it is wholly or mainly used for purposes of recreation and all or part of it is occupied for the purpose of a club, society or other organisation not established or conducted for profit.

⁹ S47 Local Government Finance Act 1988

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Definition of Recreation

B.7 Recreation is clearly defined by the Sports Council as any of the following¹¹

Aikido	Croquet	Kabaddi	Real Tennis	Tang Soo Do
American Football	Crossbow	Karate	Roller Hockey	Tenpin
Angling	Curling	Kendo	Roller Skating	Bowling
Archery	Cycling	Korfball	Rounders	Trampolining
Arm Wrestling	Disability Sport	Lacrosse	Rowing	Triathlon
Association Football	Dragon Boat Racing	Lawn Tennis	Rugby League	Tug of War
Athletics	Equestrian	Life Saving	Rugby Union	Unihoc
Australian Rules Football	Fencing	Luge	Sailing	Volleyball
Badminton	Fives	Modern Pentathlon	Sand/Land Yachting	Water Skiing
Ballooning	Flying	Motor Cycling	Shinty	Weightlifting
Baseball	Gaelic Football	Motor Sports	Shooting	Wrestling
Basketball	Gliding	Mountaineering	Skateboarding	Yoga
Baton Twirling	Golf	Movement, Dance, Exercise & Fitness	Skiing	
Biathlon	Gymnastics	Netball	Snowboarding	
Bicycle Polo	Handball	Orienteering	Softball	
Billiards and Snooker	Hang/Para Gliding	Parachuting	Sombo Wrestling	
Bobsleigh	Highland Games	Petanque	Squash	
Boccia	Hockey	Polo	Skater/Street Hockey	
Bowls	Horse Racing	Pony Trekking	Sub-Aqua	
Boxing	Hovering	Pool	Surf Life Saving	
Camogie	Hurling	Quoits	Surfing	
Canoeing	Ice Hockey	Racketball	Swimming & Diving	
Caving	Ice Skating	Rackets	Table Tennis	
Chinese Martial Arts	Jet Skiing	Raquetball	Taekwondo	
Cricket	Ju Jitsu	Rambling		
	Judo			

Access to clubs

B.8 Guidance issued by the DCLG also requires the Council to consider access to clubs within the community before granting discretionary relief.

B.9 Membership should be open to all sections of the community. There may be legitimate restrictions placed on membership which relate for example to ability in sport or to the achievement of a standard in the field covered by the organisation or where the capacity of the facility is limited, but in general membership should not be exclusive or restrictive.

B.10 Membership rates should not be set at such a high level as to exclude the general community. However, membership fees may be payable at different rates that distinguish the different classes of membership such as juniors, adults, students, pensioners, players, non-players, employed and unemployed. In general, the club or organisation must be prepared to show that the criteria by which it considers applications for membership are consistent with the principle of open access.

¹¹ Definition last reviewed by Sport England in 2002

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- B.11 The Council also asks the following question to help establish the level of access 'Does the organisation actively encourage membership from particular groups in the community e.g. young people, women, older age groups, persons with disability, ethnic minorities' etc.?'

Provision of facilities

- B.12 Clubs which provide training or education are encouraged, as are those who provide schemes for particular groups to develop their skills e.g. young people, the disabled, retired people.
- B.13 A number of organisations run a bar. The mere existence of a bar will not in itself be a reason for not granting relief. However, the Council focuses on the main purpose of the organisation. The Council is encouraged to examine the balance between playing and non-playing members.
- B.14 Within this area, the Council also considers whether the facilities provided relieve the Council of the need to do so, or enhance and supplement those that it does provide.

Discretionary Relief - Non-Profit Organisations including Recreation – the Council's Policy

- B.15 The Council will consider applications for discretionary rate relief from non-profit making organisations on their own merits on a case-by-case basis. In determining the application, the following matters will be taken in to consideration (The list is not exhaustive):
- How the organisation supports and links into the Council's Business Plan;
 - Whether the facilities provided include education and/or training for members as a whole or for special groups;
 - The extent to which the facilities provided reduce the demand for Council services or produce savings;
 - Any membership and fee structure and whether the facilities are accessible to all residents, including whether there are concessions for certain groups, for example people on a low income or young people under 18;
 - If covered by a membership scheme, membership numbers and the number and percentage of these members that are local residents; and
 - If the organisation has due regard to equality issues and if its facilities are used by all members of the community, for example black and minority ethnic residents, people over 50 and people with disabilities.
- B.16 The Council will also require additional financial information including:
- If the organisation runs a bar or food provision, the level of income from this activity and how this money is used.; and
 - Whether the organisation operates at a local or national level and where appropriate, the local and national funding streams and financial position of the organisation.

Appendix C

Discretionary Relief - Rural Rate Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients

Discretionary Relief - Rural Rate Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients

What are the qualifying criteria for Mandatory Relief?

- C.1 For a Post Office or General Store to be entitled to 50% Mandatory Relief, all the following criteria must be met:
- The Rateable Value of the property must not exceed £8,500 (from 1 April 2010);
 - The property must be used as a Post Office or a General Store (see below for definition), or both;
 - The property must be the only Post Office or the only General Store within the Rural Settlement.
- C.2 For a Public House or Petrol Filling Station to be entitled to 50% Mandatory Relief, all the following criteria must be met:
- The Rateable Value of the property must not exceed £12,500 from 1 April 2010);
 - The property must be used as a Public House (see below for definition) or a Petrol Filling Station (see below for definition); and
 - The property must be the only Public House or the only Petrol Filling Station within the Rural Settlement.
- C.3 For a village food shop to be entitled to 50% Mandatory Relief, all the following criteria must be met:
- The Rateable Value of the property must not exceed £8,500 from 1 April 2010); and
 - The property must be used as a shop selling mainly food (see below for definition).

What is the definition of a General Store?

- C.5 For the purposes of Rural Rate Relief, 'General Store' means a business or trade, which wholly or mainly sells by retail both food (other than confectionery) for human consumption and general household goods. Where there are two or more General Stores within the same Rural Settlement, none can qualify for Mandatory Relief on that basis, although if one of them functions as a Post Office or a Food Shop relief may be claimed independently on that ground. However, both a General Store and a Post Office in the same Rural Settlement will qualify for Mandatory Relief, provided that, they both meet the criteria. Although a General Store or a Post Office may not meet the criteria for Mandatory Relief, they may still be eligible to apply for Discretionary Relief.

What is the definition of a Public House?

- C.6 For the purposes of Rural Rate Relief, 'Public House' means any premises as defined in the Licensing Act 2003, which has a premises license authorising sale by retail of alcohol for consumption on the premises. In addition, the premises must be used principally for retail sales of alcohol to members of the public for consumption on the premises, and sales must not be subject to the condition that buyers reside at or consume food on the premises.

What is the definition of a Petrol Filling Station?

- C.7 For the purposes of Rural Rate Relief, 'Petrol Filling Station' means premises where petrol or other automotive fuels are sold retail to the general public for fuelling motor vehicles intended or adapted for use on roads

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What is the definition of a Food Shop?

- C.8 For the purpose of Rural Rate Relief, 'Food Shop' means a trade or business consisting wholly or mainly of the sale by retail of food for human consumption (excluding confectionery and catering – in this context catering means any supply of food for consumption on the premises on which it is supplied and any supply of hot food for consumption off the premises). This definition may also include shops, which sell mainly household foods and which may partly also sell hot take away food or food consumed on the premises. But shops whose main business is a restaurant, tearoom, take-away, or confectionery sales are not food shops and so will not qualify for mandatory relief.

What are the qualifying criteria for Discretionary Relief?

- C.9 The Council may grant up to 50% Discretionary Relief in respect of any property which qualifies for 50% Mandatory Relief and the Council may also grant up to 100% Discretionary Relief to any rural business which does not meet the mandatory provisions. It should be noted that for 2017 onwards Central Government has requested that Council grant 50% discretionary relief to all ratepayers who receive 50% mandatory rural rate relief.

Rural Rate Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients, the Council's Policy for granting discretionary relief.

- C.10 As Central Government has requested and fully funds any additional relief granted to ratepayers who receive mandatory rural rate relief, the Council will automatically grant the additional 50% until such time as primarily legislation is changed.

Appendix D

Discretionary Relief – Premises within Rural Settlements

Discretionary Relief – Premises within Rural Settlements

- D.1 In addition to having the ability to grant discretionary relief to those in receipt of mandatory relief, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 allows discretionary relief of up to 100% to be granted where the rateable value is £16500 or less and:
- a. Property is used for purposes which are of benefit to the local community; and
 - b. It would be reasonable for the billing authority to award relief, having regards to the Council's Council Taxpayers.
- D.2 As with most discretionary relief, part of the cost, is met by Central Government and the balance from local sources.
- D.3 The main criteria for granting discretionary relief in respect of rural rate relief is that premises are used to benefit the local community.

Benefit to the local community

- D.4 Whilst each application for the relief will be considered on its own merits, there are certain factors which weigh heavily in the decision-making process. It is this Council's belief that the spirit of the legislation is to assist businesses and amenities, which contribute significantly to the quality of life of the people who have their main home in the Rural Settlement.
- D.5 To be successful for consideration, a business must show that its existence is a significant benefit to the local community with the majority of local residents directly benefiting from services or facilities provided by that business

Rural Rate Relief – the Council's Policy for granting discretionary relief.

- D.6 The Council will also consider applications for a discretionary rural rate relief from all ratepayers, not entitled to mandatory relief up to a maximum of 100%.
- D.7 In determining the application the following matters will be taken in to consideration:
- The granting of any discretionary relief will be essential in ensuring the viability of any business within the rural settlement;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief is proportionate given the level of any business rates charged compared with the overall turnover of the business;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief will assist the business in continuing to be viable and / or prevent the business from failing;
 - The business is considered by the Council to be essential to the community and that any reduction or withdrawal of the business will have a serious detrimental effect on the rural settlement;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief is reasonable having regard to the effect on taxpayers of the Council;

Appendix E

Discretionary Relief – Localism Act 2011

Discretionary Relief – Localism Act 2011

General explanation

- E.1 Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 amended Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. These provisions allow all Councils to grant discretionary relief in **any** circumstances where it feels fit having regards to the effect on the Council Tax payers of its area.
- E.2 The provisions are designed to give authorities flexibility in granting relief where it is felt that to do so would be of benefit generally to the area and be reasonable given the financial effect to Council Tax payers. An example where the Council has granted relief in the past are where premises were affected by flooding.

Discretionary Relief – Localism – the Council's Policy

- E.3 Applications will be considered from any ratepayer who wishes to apply. However, where a ratepayer is suffering hardship or severe difficulties in paying their rates liability then relief can be granted under the existing provisions as laid down by Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. There will be no requirement to grant relief in such cases under the Council's discretionary relief policy.
- E.4 Any ratepayer applying for discretionary rate relief under these provisions and who does not meet the criteria for existing relief (charities, non-profit making organisations etc.) must meet **all** of the following criteria and the amount of relief granted will be dependant on the following key factors:
 - a. The ratepayer **must not** be entitled to mandatory rate relief (Charity or Rural Rate Relief);
 - b. The ratepayer **must not** be entitled to Central Government funded reliefs;
 - c. The ratepayer **must not** be an organisation that could receive relief as a non-profit making organisation or as a sports club or similar;
 - d. The ratepayer **must** occupy the premises (no discretionary rate relief will be granted for unoccupied premises);
 - e. The premises and organisation **must** be of *significant* benefit to residents of the Council's area;
 - f. The premises and organisation **must** relieve the Council of providing similar facilities;
 - g. The ratepayer **must**;
 - i. Provide facilities to certain priority groups such as elderly, disabled, minority groups, disadvantaged groups; **or**
 - ii. Provide *significant* employment or employment opportunities to residents of the Council; **or**
 - iii. Provide the residents of the area with such services, opportunities or facilities that cannot be obtained locally or are not provided locally by another organisation;
 - h. The ratepayer **must** demonstrate that assistance (provided by the discretionary rate relief) will be for a *short time only* **and** that any business / operation is financially viable in the medium and long term; **and**
 - i. The ratepayer **must** show that the activities of the organisation are consistent with the Council's core values and priorities.
- E.5 Where a ratepayer can demonstrate that **all** of the above criteria are met, relief will be considered for initially a short period.
- E.6 A formal application from the ratepayer will be required in each case and any relief will be granted in line with State Aid requirements as specified within section 6 of this policy.

Appendix F

Local Newspaper Relief

General Explanation

- F.1 This is a temporary relief for 2017-18 and 2018-19 and the Government is not changing the legislation around the reliefs available to these properties. Central Government will reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers (under section 47(3)) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance.
- F.2 The Council will be compensated by Central Government through a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Eligibility criteria

- F.3 The scheme will provide a £1,500 relief for office space occupied by local newspapers up to a maximum of one discount per local newspaper title and per hereditament, for two years from 1 April 2017.

Local Newspapers

- F.4 The relief is to be specifically for local newspapers and by that, the Council means what would be considered a “traditional local newspaper.” The relief will not be available to magazines.

Office Space

- F.5 The hereditament **must** be occupied by a local newspaper and wholly or mainly used as office premises for journalists and reporters.

Amount of Relief

- F.6 The amount of relief is limited to a maximum of one discount per newspaper title (e.g. per newspaper name) **AND** per hereditament. As with all discretionary rate relief, any grant will be subject to State Aid limits as defined within section 6 of this policy.

Local Newspaper Relief – the Council’s policy for granting discretionary relief.

- F.7 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

Appendix G

Supporting Small Businesses Relief

General Explanation

- G.1 Central Government has increased the thresholds for Small Business Rate Relief from 1 April 2017 to £12,000 for the 100% relief and £15,000 for the tapered relief. They have also allowed rural rate relief to be granted up to 100% using S47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as a top up to the mandatory level of 50%, albeit that the rateable value limits have not been changes in respect of rural hereditaments (see section D of this policy). Unfortunately, despite these changes, some small businesses and businesses in rural areas may lose their entitlement to the relief due to increases in Rateable Value through the revaluation on 1st April 2017.
- G.2 The transitional relief scheme (provided under the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265) does not provide support in respect of changes in reliefs. Therefore, those ratepayers who have lost some or all of their small business or rural rate relief may face large percentage increases in bills from 1 April 2017.
- G.3 In view of this, Central Government announced that a new scheme of relief would be made available to those ratepayers facing large increases as a result of the loss of small business or rural rate relief due to the revaluation. All authorities are encouraged to grant the relief in accordance with the guidelines laid down by Central Government and if granted strictly in accordance with guidance, the Council will be compensated by Central Government through a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- G.4 The relief is known as the 'Supporting Small Businesses Scheme'

Who is eligible for the relief and how much relief will be available?

- G.5 The Supporting Small Businesses relief will help those ratepayers who as a result of the change in their rateable value at the revaluation are losing some or all of their small business or rural rate relief and, as a result, are facing large increases in their bills.
- G.6 To support these ratepayers, the Supporting Small Businesses relief will ensure that the increase per year in the bills of these ratepayers is limited **to the greater of:**
 - a. a percentage increase per annum. of 5%, 7.5%, 10%, 15% and 15% 2017/18 to 2021/22 all plus inflation. (Unlike the transitional relief scheme under the Chargeable Amount regulations), for the first year of the scheme the percentage increase is taken against the bill for 31 March 2017 after small business rate relief or rural rate relief; **or**
 - b. a cash value of £600 per year (£50 per month).
- G.7 This cash minimum increase ensures that those ratepayers paying nothing or very small amounts in 2016/17 after small business rate relief are brought into paying something.
- G.8 In the first year of the scheme, this means all ratepayers losing some or all of their small business rate relief or rural rate relief will see the increase in their bill capped at £600. The cash minimum increase is £600 per year thereafter. This means that ratepayers who in 2016/17 paid nothing under small business rate relief and are losing all of their entitlement to relief (i.e. moving from £6,000 rateable value or less to more than £15,000) would under this scheme be paying £3,000 in year 5.
- G.9 The Government has also decided that those on the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme whose 2017 rateable values are £51,000 or more will not be liable to pay the supplement (1.3p) to

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fund small business rate relief while they are eligible for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme.

- G.10 Ratepayers will remain in the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme for either 5 years or until they reach the bill they would have paid without the scheme (this would be the charge payable as their true rates payable or the charge calculated under the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016).
- G.11 A change of ratepayer will not affect eligibility for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme **but** eligibility will be lost if the property falls vacant or becomes occupied by a charity or Community Amateur Sports Club.
- G.12 The rules for state aid (as detailed in section 6 of this policy) shall apply when considering Supporting Small Businesses Relief.

Recalculation of relief

- G.13 The amount of relief awarded under the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme will be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances including the following:
 - This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament; or
 - The awarding of another relief.
- G.14 The Council will, in effect, calculate the award on a daily basis taking into account the above, and the relief will be re-calculated if the rateable value changes.

Other Reliefs

- G.15 Hereditaments eligible for charity or Community Amateur Sports Club relief or hereditaments which are unoccupied are not eligible for Supporting Small Businesses Relief. Likewise, the same principle applies to properties for which a Section 44A certificate has been granted (apportionment of rateable values for partly occupied properties). The presence of a section 44A certificate will not further reduce the bill found under the Supporting Small Business scheme.
- G.16 In accordance with Central Government guidelines, all other discretionary reliefs, will be considered **after** the application of Supporting Small Businesses relief.

Supporting Small Businesses Relief – the Council’s policy for granting discretionary relief.

- G.17 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines

Appendix H

Public House Relief

Appendix A

General Explanation

- H.1 This is a temporary relief for 2017-18 and the Government is not changing the legislation around the reliefs available to premises. Central Government will reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers (under section 47(3)) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) to grant £1000 relief in line with the eligibility criteria set out in guidance to be produced by Central Government
- H.2 Central Government guidelines have been issued and it has been established that any amount granted will be reimbursed by a section 31 grant.

Eligibility criteria

- H.3 The Council's policy, in line with Central Government requirements, will provide a relief of £1,000 relief for one year only (1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018) for all eligible public houses who have a rateable value of less than £100,000 on 1st April 2017.
- H.4 The definition of a 'Public House' means any premises as defined in the Licensing Act 2003, which has a premises license authorising sale by retail of alcohol for consumption on the premises. In addition, the premises **must** be used principally for retail sales of alcohol to members of the public for consumption on the premises, and sales must not be subject to the condition that buyers reside at or consume food on the premises.
- H.5 It will be for the Council to decide whether any premises falls within the definition give in the above paragraph. No relief shall be given where the premises are unoccupied.

Other Reliefs

- H.4 Public House relief will be granted after applying any other mandatory reliefs and reductions

Public House Relief – the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

- H.5 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

Appendix I

Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme

General Explanation

- I.1 In March 2017, Central Government announced that it would make available a discretionary fund of £300 million over four years from 2017-18 to support those businesses that face the steepest increases in their business rates bills as a result of the revaluation. Government determined that Councils would be best placed to determine how this fund should be targeted and administered to support those businesses and locations within their area that are in the greatest need.
- I.2 Every authority within England is to be provided with a share of a £300 million fund to support their local businesses. This is to be administered through billing authorities' discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988.
- I.3 Government also believes that local authorities are best placed to judge the particular circumstances of local ratepayers and direct the funding where it is most needed to support local economies.
- I.4 The funding is not provided equally over the four-year period but in the following approximate proportions:
- Year 1 (2017/18) 58%
- Year 2 (2018/19) 28%
- Year 3 (2019/20) 12%
- Year 4 (2020/21) 2%
- I.5 Councils will be compensated for any relief granted under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government has decided that any underspend **cannot** be 'vired' from one year to the next.
- I.6 A key criteria of reimbursement will be that all Billing Authorities will consult with major precepting authorities when formulating their schemes.
- I.7 The financial effects to the Council of the Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme are shown in the following table

Amount of discretionary fund awarded (£000s) – Rochford District Council			
2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
126	61	25	4

Consultation

- I.8 The Council has consulted with the major preceptors in relation to this scheme and has taken their comments into account when determining the eligibility criteria. This is an essential part of the Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme and is in line with the grant determination issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) No.31/3071.
- I.9 The grant determination states that a condition of the fund is that consultation is undertaken with 'relevant authorities'. Relevant authorities for the purposes of this scheme means:
- a. Any major precepting authority; and
 - b. Any combined authority.
- I.10 In the case of Rochford District Council the major precepting authorities have been consulted namely:
- a. Essex County Council
 - b. Essex Police and Crime Commissioner; and
 - c. Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

State Aid

- I.11 The rules relating to State Aid (as defined within section 6 of this policy) apply. The Council will ensure full compliance in this area to ensure that relief can be given to the most deserving ratepayers.

Decisions by the Council

- I.12 Decisions by the Council are made directly in line with the Scheme of Delegation as outlined within section 7 of this policy. Any decision to award relief under this scheme will follow the core principles of the Council's discretionary relief policy as defined by section 3.8.
- I.13 It should be noted that whilst the funding from Central Government for Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme is limited, the decision of the Council whether to award any relief under this scheme **will not take account** of the level of any funding.

Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme– the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

- I.14 The Council has decided that relief under the scheme will be awarded using the following criteria:
- a. The scheme is designed to assist ratepayers who have suffered significant increases in rate liability due to the revaluation and the subsequent increase to their Rateable Value;
 - b. Relief will only be given where the property has a rateable value in the 2017 list below £100,000;
 - c. In assessing any potential entitlement to an award under this scheme, the Council will compare the following:
 - i. The rate liability of the ratepayer at 31st March 2017 after any reliefs and reductions; and
 - ii. The rate liability of the ratepayer at 1st April 2017 after any reliefs and reductions;

Appendix A

- d. Relief will be awarded where the calculation in c. above would result in an increase of more than a specified % figure which will be agreed by the Section 151 Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder;
- e. Relief will only be given to premises which are liable for occupied rates. No relief within this scheme will be granted for unoccupied premises;
- f. Relief will only be granted to ratepayers who were in occupation at 31st March 2017 and in occupation on 1st April 2017 and for each day subsequently.
- g. Ratepayers taking up occupation after the 1st April 2017 will **not** be eligible for relief on the basis that new ratepayers would not have suffered from increases due to a revaluation;
- h. Relief will be targeted to local businesses and not to those who have more than three occupied rateable properties in the UK
- i. Relief will **not** be awarded where:
 - i. mandatory relief is awarded; or
 - ii. supporting small business relief is awarded
 - iii. where the ratepayer has applied for a reduction under S44a of the Local Government Finance Act 1988; and
 - iv. the hereditament has an increase in Rateable Value after the 1st April 2017 which increases the rate charge above the 1st April 2017 value.
 - v. A property is entered into the list retrospectively.

Amount of Relief

- I.15 The amount of relief is tapered and will be calculated as follows:
- 2017/18**
A %, to be confirmed by the Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder, of the total net increase in the 2017/18 bill compared to the 2016/17 bill
- 2018/19**
Award = 50% of the relief awarded in 2017/18 *
- 2019/20**
Award = 40% of the relief awarded in 2018/19*
- 2020/21**
Award = 20% of the relief awarded in 2019/20*
- I.16 * These are estimated % figures. The levels will be reviewed at the end of each financial year when the following years liabilities are known. On this basis we can then determine the level of relief applicable for the coming year.
- I.17 The relief will be subject to a minimum award of £25 each year. Should at any point over the lifetime of the scheme the amount of relief we can award in any particular year fall below this figure the entitlement will end.

Applications for relief under this scheme

- I.16 The Council is keen to identify ratepayers who may qualify for the relief and as such will look to encourage certain ratepayers to apply. The Council will look to simplify the application process wherever possible, but it will expect any ratepayers to provide such information as is required by the Council to support their application
- I.17 The Council will fix a date by which all applications under this scheme must be received.

Variation and amendment of relief under the scheme

- I.17 The amount of relief awarded under the Discretionary Businesses Rates relief scheme will be recalculated in the event that the rates liability reduces due to a change of circumstances. This will include, for example, a rateable value reduction or award of other relief. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.
- I.18 No additional relief will be awarded due to an increase in rates liability due to any change of circumstances.
- I.19 The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1059) requires the Council to provide ratepayers with at least one year's notice in writing before any decision to revoke or vary a decision so as to increase the amount the ratepayer has to pay takes effect. Such a revocation or variation of a decision can only take effect at the end of a financial year. But within these regulations, the Council may still make decisions which are conditional upon eligibility criteria or rules for calculating relief which allow the amount of relief to be amended within the year to reflect changing circumstances.

Appendix J

Section 49 – Hardship Relief

Section 49 – Hardship Relief

General explanation

- J.1 The Council is able to exercise its discretion under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to provide either partial or full relief for non-domestic rate payments in cases of hardship where it would be reasonable to do so having due regard to the interests of council tax payers in general.

Section 49 Hardship Relief – the Council's Policy

- J.2 The Council will consider applications for hardship relief from individuals and organisations based on their own merits on a case-by-case basis. .
- J.3 In making decisions on whether to award the relief the Council takes into account the following criteria (not listed in any priority):
- Any reduction or remission of rates on the grounds of hardship should be the exception rather than the rule;
 - Any reduction of the rates must be shown to be significant to the future viability of the business;
 - The business must continue to trade;
 - Cash flow forecasts for a minimum of the next twelve months must be provided together with a comprehensive Business Plan incorporating a brief history of the business;
 - The test of "hardship" is not strictly confined to financial hardship and that this, in itself, is not a deciding factor;
 - The loss of the business would reduce amenities of an area if it is the sole provider of a service in the area;
 - Details of any state aid, grants or subsidies either from central or local government over the previous three years;
 - The loss of the business would worsen the employment prospects in the area;
 - The interests of the Council Tax payers of the area would be best served by awarding the relief;
 - The business must demonstrate how it is beneficial to the local community and why it is currently suffering financial hardship;
 - The business provides employment to local residents in an area where employment opportunities are limited;
 - Independent advice given by banks or financial advisors should be sought to demonstrate the future viability of the business;
 - Applications will only be considered where signed by the ratepayer, or, where an organisation is the ratepayer, an appropriately authorised representative of the organisation; and
 - The ratepayer will provide additional information as deemed necessary by the Council to be essential in order for a fair evaluation of the application.