

The Chairman has admitted this item of business as urgent in order to make representations to Central Government at the earliest opportunity.

## **SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF- FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE**

### **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To advise Members of the initiative now announced by Central Government and to seek Members' views thereon.

### **2 DETAILED CONSIDERATION**

- 2.1 The Government has now announced an aid package to reduce rate bills for small businesses in rural areas badly affected by the foot and mouth disease. Under the package announced:-
- i) Businesses with a rateable value of £12,000 or less in rural local authority districts, which adopt the scheme, will be eligible for a reduction of up to £1,290 for a three month period providing they can show that they have suffered serious economic loss through the impact of foot and mouth disease. For some businesses this could amount to all of their rate bill for the period in question. The scheme will allow impacts beyond three months to be kept under review.
  - ii) The Government will underwrite 95% of local authority costs in operating this scheme for businesses below £12,000 rateable value. Businesses with properties above that level affected by foot and mouth disease will be eligible to benefit from existing local authority hardship relief provisions in which Government meets 75% of the cost.
  - iii) In addition, businesses in rural areas considering appeals against their business rate valuation whether because of foot and mouth disease, the 2000 revaluation or some other reason will have an additional period of three months from 31<sup>st</sup> March in which to make such an appeal, so that the benefit of any resulting change can take effect between 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2000 and 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2001.
- 2.2 However, this initiative will only be available for properties with rateable values of up to £12,000, in 151 rural local authorities in England. The Government say that this includes all the areas in England most seriously affected by foot and mouth disease and will also apply in rural area that are less seriously affected.

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- 2.3 Larger properties and those in other areas will also be eligible for rate relief if they have been seriously affected by foot and mouth disease. In these cases the Council will, as usual, need to fund 25% of the cost, with Central Government funding 75%.
- 2.4 The deadline for making appeals against business rate valuations, both those arising from foot and mouth disease and those made for any other reason will also only apply to the 151 designated rural areas.
- 2.5 The rural authorities within the Eastern Region which have been designated are attached as Appendix 1. Members will see that Rochford has not been included, although it has been one of the main Authorities to have been affected in Essex. In the circumstances therefore, it is felt that the Council should make the strongest possible representations to get Rochford District Council included on the list of designated rural authorities.

### **3 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Sub Committee **RECOMMENDS**

that this Council make the strongest possible representations to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, with copies to the Local Government Association and the local Members of Parliament seeking the inclusion of Rochford District Council to the list of authorities in the Eastern Region covered by the rural aid package.

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**Background Papers:** Press Notice from Department of Environment, Transport, and the Regions

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