



CABINET

20TH APRIL 2017

AGENDA ITEM (8)

RATE RELIEF

Accountable Member	Councillor Lynden Stowe Leader of the Council
Accountable Officer	Jon Dearing Group Manager - Revenues and Housing Support Services 01285 623304 jon.dearing@cotswold.gov.uk

Purpose of Report	<p>To consider adopting a policy to award Discretionary Rate Relief (under S47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended 'LGFA 1998') in certain circumstances specified in the report.</p> <p>Should Members decide to adopt the policy, to consider delegating authority to award the relief to the Group Manager - Revenues and Housing Support Services.</p>
Recommendation(s)	<p>(a) That the policy to award Discretionary Rate Relief in specific circumstances, as detailed in this report, be adopted;</p> <p>(b) that the Group Manager Revenues and Housing Support be given delegated authority to award the specified reliefs;</p> <p>(c) that the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to incorporate the changes in the Constitution.</p>
Reason(s) for Recommendation(s)	<p>Currently, delegated authority to decide the levels of discretionary rate relief awards rests with the Leader of the Council. The anticipated volumes and the expectations of businesses following the budget announcements make the current arrangement impractical.</p> <p>In addition, whilst technically being treated as discretionary relief, the policy objectives of the Government are clearly to make this in effect a mandatory relief; and the Government is funding these reliefs fully. In effect, the Council does not really have any discretion.</p>

Ward(s) Affected	None specifically
Key Decision	No
Recommendation to Council	No

Financial Implications	None
Legal and Human Rights Implications	None
Environmental and Sustainability Implications	None
Human Resource Implications	None
Key Risks	Failure to award relief quickly could lead to a significant reputational impact on the authority as well as the individuals involved. The policy and procedure documents, training and partnership working will help mitigate this risk.
Equalities Analysis	No effect on protected groups identified

Related Decisions	The Leader has delegated the authority to grant discretionary relief to certain rural businesses and to all village halls.
Background Documents	Business Rate Information Letter - February 2017 - Spring Budget CAMRA's definition of a Pub
Appendices	Appendix 'A' - Definition of a Public House Appendix 'B' - Assisting Small Businesses Criteria

Performance Management Follow Up	(i) Implement Cabinet decisions. (ii) Monitoring of applications and reporting via NNDR3 return
Options for Joint Working	The NDR Team is a shared service, and an identical policy has been approved at West Oxfordshire District Council

Background Information	
1.	As a result of the revaluation of all business premises and changes to levels of some mandatory reliefs, the Government has announced some new reliefs, and changes to some existing mandatory reliefs, which it expects billing authorities to award using their discretionary powers.
2.	As part of the Budget on 8 th March 2017, the Chancellor announced three measures to assist businesses facing increases in rates as a result of the revaluation, all of which are to be implemented using existing relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) A £1,000 discount for qualifying public houses with rateable values under £100,000. The proposed qualifying criteria are detailed at Appendix 'A'. It is estimated that over 100 businesses will be affected by these changes. (ii) A scheme to cap increases for small businesses that will lose some or all of their Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief. Details of the initial scheme are attached at Appendix 'B'. It is estimated that approximately 70 businesses will be affected by these changes.

(iii) a discretionary fund of £300m is to be established nationally, payable over four years, to enable billing authorities to support those facing the steepest increases in their business rates. The criteria for allocation of the fund will be subject to consultation in the near future. It is not proposed that this measure be delegated, but that all applications be determined on their individual merit by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Revenues and Benefits services.

(END)