

REPORT OF: CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
TO: SPECIAL BUDGET POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE: 12th FEBRUARY 2019

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BUSINESS RATES - DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Policy and Resources Committee with an update on the Business Rates Discretionary Rates Relief.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to:-
 - a) Support the intention to review the current level of relief awarded to identify if any savings can be made and authorise officers to put current recipients on notice that their award will come to an end on 31st March 2020 pending the outcome of the review.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3. To facilitate a review of current reliefs to assess the scope for making savings.

ISSUE

Background

4. A report was presented to the Executive on 14th December 2017 setting out the Council's updated Policy for Granting Discretionary Business Rates Relief. This document consolidated all the various schemes of relief into one document.
5. There have a changes made to Business Rates Discretionary Reliefs that will be effective from 2019/20, for example, a one third discount for retail properties that have a rateable value below £51k for two years, as per the Government's 2018 Autumn Statement.

6. Awarding reliefs reduces the total rates collected and in the most part the Council is reimbursed via s31 Grant, this being the case for the example above. In some cases, however, there is a cost to discretionary relief and the Council must have regard to the wider interests of taxpayers generally when granting relief.
7. As there is an ongoing need for financial savings, the award of reliefs is an area that should be reviewed to ensure the granting of reliefs remains appropriate and in line with Council's objectives.
8. If the Council wishes to revoke any previous decisions to award discretionary relief it must give one year period of notice, in readiness for any potential changes it is recommended that all recipients of discretionary relief where put on notice that their current award will cease.
9. Given that changes are being made to reliefs the Council's policy will be updated and reported back to Policy and Resources Committee in March 2019.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy

10. There are no policy implications arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

Financial

11. There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

Legal

12. There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

Risk Management

13. There are no risk implications arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

Health and Safety

14. There are no health and safety implications arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

Sustainability

15. There are no sustainability implications arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

Community Safety

16. There are no community safety issues arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

Equality and Diversity

17. There are no equality and diversity issues arising directly from the recommendation within this report.

APPENDICES

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS