

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 8 APRIL 2014

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To determine a policy for Discretionary Rates Relief

RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE: that:

(A)	the Discretionary Rates Relief policy as now submitted, be approved.
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1 Background

- 1.1 The procedure for granting Discretionary Rates Relief requires updating to reflect the fact that the way that Business Rates and Business Rates reliefs are determined has significantly changed. Central Government is asking Council's to use their Discretionary powers to enact new reliefs that are announced as part of their Budget announcements, to support certain types and classes of business over a short period of time.
- 1.2 The current procedure requires the authority to periodically determine those groups of organisations which are eligible for discretionary relief, and enables officers to administer those applications. Applications not meeting the criteria are considered as non key decisions.
- 1.3 The Government are making increased use of the discretionary powers available to authorities to target support to a group or class of business, for emergency or short term economic policy objectives.

- 1.4 The Government have identified this as a quicker way of achieving policy objectives rather than by changing legislation. Currently this includes targeting flood relief to business which meet certain criteria, and from April a number of initiatives to encourage re use of empty retail property, support for empty new builds, and £1000 relief to occupied retail properties.
- 1.5 In each of these cases the costs of these reliefs will be fully reimbursed if awards are made in accordance with the criteria specified.
- 1.6 The department for communities and local government (DCLG), expect that the use by Government of this discretionary powers route will continue and it is anticipated that further announcements could be made at any point over the next few months and years

2 Report

- 2.1 The attached policy and procedure document does not propose any changes to the Authorities current determination of organisations which it wishes to support through awarding Discretionary Rate Relief, where there is a cost to the authority.
 - 2.2 The proposed policy and procedure are shown at **Essential Reference Paper B**
 - 2.3 The current approved criteria are shown at **Essential Reference Paper C**
 - 2.4 The policy and procedure document proposes that in cases where there is no additional cost to the Council of awarding the relief, in situations like those detailed a 1.4 above, that the authority to approve these awards is delegated to the Director of Finance and Support services in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, and the officers administering the scheme in accordance with the specified criteria.
3. Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background papers

None

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