

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	30 JANUARY 2023	5
COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNT POLICY – 2023/24			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

Since the reform of Business Rates and Council Tax in 2013 (including the introduction of a degree of localisation of decision-making in respect of both Council Tax and Business Rates) national schemes of discounts and exemptions have been replaced by a range of national mandatory and local discretionary schemes.

In recent years central government has introduced further Business Rate reliefs to address particular circumstances or categories of business premises which are deemed to operate locally and must therefore be included within the approved policy for the award of such reliefs.

It is necessary, from time-to-time, to update the Council's policy of Discretionary Discounts to incorporate new reliefs, or amendments to schemes of existing reliefs, or to provide clarification where such would be helpful.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2023-24).

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Finance and Democracy Committee 28th January 2019 – Resolved to approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2019/20 update).

Finance and Democracy Committee 23rd November 2020 - Resolved to approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2020/21 update).

Finance and Democracy Committee 29th March 2021 - Resolved to approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2021/22 update).

Finance and Democracy Committee 22nd November 2021 - Resolved to approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2021/22 and 2022/23 update).

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	✓
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	✓
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	✓

REPORT

BACKGROUND

1. In respect of both Council Tax and Business Rates national schemes of discounts and exemptions have been in place since the introduction of those arrangements for local taxation. Fylde BC, in line with all local authorities, implemented the schemes of discounts and exemptions as directed by central government. Information of the available discounts and exemptions has always been made available to potential claimants and beneficiaries of such and for a number of years this information has also been promoted through the Council's website.
2. With the introduction of the local CTRS in April 2013 it became necessary for the Council to consider the provision of discretionary hardship relief to provide support for claimants in exceptional circumstances, and who are unable to increase their income from other means. Such provision is a key element of the operation of the scheme.
3. Section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003 (as amended by section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 2012) empowers a billing authority to reduce the amount of tax payable as it thinks fit. Funding for such reductions must be provided by the Council and major preceptors as necessary.
4. In order to mitigate part of the impact of the CTRS on the most vulnerable households, the Council at that time approved the award of discretionary Hardship Relief under the above powers. Strict criteria are used to determine if any additional relief is appropriate and the level of any such award. Awards are made to those unable to increase their income and then only in exceptional circumstances.
5. With regard to Non-domestic (i.e. business) rates the Council is required to apply the national (mandatory) schemes of relief, as determined by central government. The Council may also award additional (discretionary) business rate relief. This may be in relation to charitable organisations (following the application of 80% mandatory relief) or in respect of other organisations in exceptional circumstances. In recent years central government has introduced further reliefs to address particular circumstances or categories of business premises which are deemed to operate locally and must therefore be included within the approved policy for the award of such reliefs
6. From time-to-time it is necessary to revise the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy in order to reflect changes in reliefs that are introduced by central government, and any changes in the application of the policy due to changes in local circumstances or to provide clarification.

CHANGES REFLECTED IN THE PROPOSED UPDATE OF THE POLICY

7. This update includes the annual review of the policy and it has been updated to account for measures to support businesses announced in the Autumn Statement on 17th November 2022 as a result of the continued response to assist businesses. These relate to the award of a 75% discount for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, falling under the Expanded Retail Discount category of the policy. These awards are made under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and are subject to cash caps on the amount an eligible business can receive.

The proposed Discretionary Discount Policy for 2023/24 is attached at Appendix A.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The additional reliefs reflected in the updated policy are fully funded by central government, and as such there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
Legal	Section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003 (as amended by section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 2012) empowers a billing authority to reduce the amount of tax payable as it thinks fit.
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
Louise Jones Head of Revenues and Benefits (Shared Service)	Louise.jones@blackpool.gov.uk	12 th January 2023

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
None		

Attached documents

Appendix A - Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy 2023/24