

DECISION ITEM



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	20 MARCH 2017	4
COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNT POLICY - 2017/18 UPDATE			

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY

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.

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 (2017/18 update).

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Finance and Democracy Committee 21st March 2016 – resolved to 'Approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2016/17 update).'

Council 5th December 2016 – as part of the approval of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18 the Council resolved 'To approve the continuation of Discretionary Hardship Relief for 2017/18 to provide additional support for claimants in exceptional circumstances'.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	√
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	

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.

CHANGES REFLECTED IN THE PROPOSED UPDATE OF THE POLICY

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 were introduced by central government, and any changes in the application of the policy due to changes in local circumstances or to provide clarification.
7. The proposal is to update the Discretionary Discount Policy for 2017/18 to reflect the discontinuation of the following reliefs and references to the 2017 Rating List:
 - Retail Relief
 - Re-occupation Relief
 - New Build Relief
8. It is worth noting that for the years 2014/15 and 2015/16 qualifying retail properties with a rateable value of under £50,000 could request specific Retail Relief of up to £1,500 in 2015/16 (and up to £1,000 in 2014/15). Although Retail Relief was not extended beyond 2015/16, the new Small Business Rate Relief scheme is likely to provide lower bills for many of these ratepayers for 2017/18.
9. The revised policy will contain up-to-date information on available reliefs and discounts and it will be consistent with both the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18 and the Council Tax Discounts and Premium for 2017/18, each of which were the subject of reports to Council in December 2016.
10. The Discretionary Discount Policy for 2017/18, as it would appear if the proposal is accepted, is attached at Appendix A.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	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	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/18	5th December 2016	www.fylde.gov.uk

Attached documents

Appendix A - Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy