

Committee: **Executive Committee**
Date of meeting: **2nd March 2022**
Report Subject: **Business Rates Relief – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2022/23**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N Daniels, Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
21/02/22		22.02.22				02/03/22		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Executive Committee to consider and adopt, on behalf of the Council, the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2022/23 scheme (RLHRR), as a section 47 discretionary rate relief for 2022/23.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 In recent years, the Welsh Government have provided grant funding to Local Authorities in order for them to consider delivering the Retail Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief schemes for certain businesses within their area.

2.2 Blaenau Gwent Council adopted these discretionary schemes.

2.3 As part of the Covid-19 response and recovery, Welsh Government have frozen business rates for 2022/23 at 2021/22 levels.

2.4 To assist businesses in the sectors most affected by the COVID pandemic, the Minister for Finance and Local Government announced the Welsh Government would extend grant funding to provide the RLHRR scheme for 2022/23, although the 2022-23 scheme will differ in the level of relief available.

2.5 Retail, leisure and hospitality ratepayers in Wales will receive 50% non-domestic rates relief for the duration of 2022-23. Like the scheme announced by the UK Government, the Welsh Government's Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme will be capped at £110,000 per business across Wales.

- 2.6 The full criteria and guidance for the operation and delivery of the scheme is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.7 Welsh Government have yet to formally confirm the actual funding allocation for Blaenau Gwent for the 2022/23 scheme, but have provided an estimated allocation of £1.17M to allow delivery of the scheme.
- 2.8 From analysis of current available data, it is anticipated that circa 300 business may benefit as a result of adoption of the RLHRR scheme, totalling around £1.3M of rate relief. We have had verbal acknowledgement from WG that our requirement will be 100% funded
- 2.9 In order that assistance may be given to ratepayers, the Council must resolve to adopt the Welsh Government prescribed scheme as a discretionary rate relief scheme in line with s47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

That the Executive Committee resolves not to implement the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2022/23 scheme as set out in the guidance in appendix 1.

3.2 **Option 2(preferred option)**

That the Executive Committee adopts the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2022/23 scheme on behalf of the Council, to supplement the Council's discretionary rate relief scheme.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1 The adoption of the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2022/23 scheme would support the Council Priority, '*Economic Development and Regeneration*', as it would offer financial support to businesses in the borough.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1.1 **Option 1**

There will be no financial implications for the Council.

5.1.2 **Option 2**

It is estimated that circa 300 business throughout Blaenau Gwent will be eligible for the RLHRR scheme if adopted. This will total approximately £1.3M of rate relief which will be repaid in full by Welsh Government as a section 31 grant.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 **Option 1**

Failure to adopt the scheme will result in an inability to award financial assistance under the RLHRR scheme to qualifying local business within Blaenau Gwent.

5.2.2 **Option 2**

Welsh Government withdraw their provisional funding offer.

5.3 ***Legal***

5.3.1 The Council must resolve to adopt a discretionary relief scheme in accordance with s47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 The administration of the scheme will be absorbed and delivered within existing staff resources.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 For 2021/22, 315 businesses have currently benefited from the rate relief scheme totalling circa £2.2m.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

6.2.1 Adoption of the relief scheme will reduce financial burdens on qualifying businesses and aid their economic recovery from the pandemic.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

6.3.1 Welsh Government have slightly changed the criteria for the 2022/23 scheme by stipulating that each business eligible for the relief, must make and application for the relief, and have provided an example application form as shown in appendix 2. Subject to acceptance of this report, it is intended that notification of the scheme will be issued with the 2022/23 Non-Domestic Rate demand notice, along with details of the qualifying criteria and application form.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

6.4.1 The availability of the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme is dependent on Welsh Government decision to offer such a scheme in future years.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 Not applicable to this report

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.6.1 Each individual local authority in Wales must adopt this scheme in order to how application. Applications will then be assessed and awarded by the Revenues section.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

6.7.1 Not applicable to this report

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

6.8.1 Not applicable to this report

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

Not applicable to this report

6.9b ***Equality Impact Assessment***

Not applicable to this report

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Revenue section will monitor the potential for qualification for the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme during the financial year, and will notify and consider applications from ratepayers where appropriate.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 Welsh Government Guidance for the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief in Wales – 2022-23

Appendix 2 Example Application Form