

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **19th April 2023**

Report Subject: **Business Rates Relief – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2023/24**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S Thomas, Leader & Cabinet Member Corporate & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
31/03/23	06.04.23	12.04.23				19.04.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Cabinet to consider and adopt, on behalf of the Council, the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2023/24 scheme (RLHRR), as a section 47 discretionary rate relief for 2023/24.

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 To assist businesses in the sectors that were most affected by the COVID pandemic and now the cost of living crisis, the Minister for Finance and Local Government announced the Welsh Government would extend grant funding to provide the RLHRR scheme for 2023/24.
- 2.4 The Minister also announced that the 2023-24 scheme would be more generous than the 2022/23 scheme and afford qualifying ratepayers 75% relief against their rate liability (compared to 50% previously).
- 2.5 Therefore, retail, leisure and hospitality ratepayers in Wales can receive 75% non-domestic rates relief for the duration of 2023-24. 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 can be accessed by the link detailed in section 8 of this report.

2.7 Welsh Government have confirmed the provisional funding allocation for Blaenau Gwent for 2023/24, is £1.8M to allow delivery of the scheme.

2.8 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 Cabinet resolves not to implement the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2023/24 scheme as set out in the guidance in appendix 1.

3.2 **Option 2(preferred option)**

That Cabinet adopts the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2023/24 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 – 2023/24 scheme would support the Council Priority, 'Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient', in offering financial support to businesses in the borough during the cost of living crisis.

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**

An initial £1.8M of grant funding will be provided by Welsh Government as a section 31 grant in order for the RLHRR scheme to be delivered.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Option 1

5.2.1 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.

Option 2

5.2.2 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 2022/23, 145 businesses have currently benefited from the 2022/23 RLHRR scheme totalling circa £530,000.

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 and provide support during 2023/24 for Cost of Living pressures.

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

6.3.1 Details of the scheme will be published on the Authority's website and via the appropriate social media channels.

6.3.2 Due to the £110,000 relief cap and declarations required in respect of the Subsidy Control Act 2022, businesses will need to complete an online registration in order to be considered for relief.

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 consider application from businesses. 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

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

- 6.9.1 In adopting the RLHRR scheme 2023/24, the Council will be able to assist all qualifying businesses within Blaenau Gwent that apply for RLHRR in 2023/24 and aid the businesses sustainability.
- 6.9.2 If the scheme is not adopted, qualifying businesses within Blaenau Gwent will not be able to receive the rate relief in 2023/24 which may have a detrimental effect on the Socio-Economic status of Blaenau Gwent.

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

[Non-Domestic Rates – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief in Wales – 2023-24 | Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)