

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **10th April 2024**

Report Subject: **Business Rates Relief – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief 2024-25**

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 Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)

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 – 2024/25 scheme (RLHRR), as a section 47 discretionary rate relief for 2024/25.

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 and the Revenues Team have targeted businesses that they believe meet the criteria for relief and have invited them to make an application.
- 2.3 In December 2023, The Minister for Finance and Local Government announced that Welsh Government intended to fund a scheme for 2024-25 but due to budget constraints the amount afford to qualifying ratepayers would reduce to 40% relief against their rate liability.
- 2.4 Therefore, retail, leisure and hospitality ratepayers in Wales can receive 40% non-domestic rates relief for the duration of 2024-25. The scheme

announced by the Welsh Government will still be capped at £110,000 per business across Wales.

- 2.5 The full criteria and guidance for the operation and delivery of the scheme can be accessed by the link detailed in section 9 of this report.
- 2.6 Welsh Government have confirmed the provisional funding allocation for Blaenau Gwent for 2024/25, is £1.28M to allow delivery of the scheme.
- 2.7 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**

To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CLT/Committees/Other groups)

3.1 **Option 1**

That Cabinet resolves not to implement the Retail, Leisure, and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2024/25 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 – 2024/25 scheme on behalf of the Council, to supplement the Council's discretionary rate relief scheme.

4. **Evidence of how 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 – 2024/25 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**

£1.28M 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***

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. ***Health and Safety***

6.1. Not applicable to this report

7. ***Supporting Evidence***

7.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

7.1.1 To date for 2023/24, 117 businesses have currently benefited from the 2023/24 RLHRR scheme totalling circa £472,600.

7.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

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

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

7.3.1 Details of the scheme will be published on the Authorities website and via the appropriate social media channels.

7.3.2 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.

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

7.4.1 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.

7.5 ***Preventative focus***

7.5.1 Not applicable to this report

7.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

7.6.1 Each individual local authority in Wales must adopt this scheme in order to consider applications from businesses. Applications will then be assessed and awarded by the Revenues section.

7.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

7.7.1 Not applicable to this report

7.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

7.8.1 Not applicable to this report

7.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)*** *(All decisions, policy reviews or policy implementation will now require a completed Integrated Impact Assessment) To note a screening template no longer needs to be completed*

7.9.1 In adopting the RLHRR scheme 2024/25, the Council will be able to assist all qualifying businesses within Blaenau Gwent that apply for RLHRR in 2024/25 and aid the businesses sustainability.

7.9.2 If the scheme is not adopted, qualifying businesses within Blaenau Gwent will not be able to receive the rate relief in 2024/25 which may have a detrimental effect on the Socio-Economic status of Blaenau Gwent.

8. **Monitoring Arrangements**

State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements.

- 8.1 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.

9. **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- 9.1. [Non-Domestic Rates – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief 2024-25 | Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)