

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **24<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

Report Subject: **Business Rates Relief – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N Daniels, Leader / Executive Member 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)
01.06.20	11.06.20	16.06.20				24.06.20		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for members of the Executive to consider and adopt, on behalf of the Council, the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21 scheme (RLHRR), as a section 47 discretionary rate relief for 2020/21.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 During 2019/20, the Welsh Government provided grant funding to Local Authorities in order for them to consider delivering a High Street and Retail Rate Relief scheme for business within their area.
- 2.2 Blaenau Gwent Council adopted this discretionary scheme.
- 2.3 As part of the Covid19 response, and to provide a fiscal stimulus for businesses in Wales, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020, the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd announced the Welsh Government would provide grant funding to provide the RLHRR scheme for 2020/21.
- 2.4 The criteria and guidance for the operation and delivery of the scheme is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.5 Welsh Government have yet to confirm the actual funding allocation for Blaenau Gwent for the 2020/21 scheme, but have provided an estimated allocation of £3.5M to allow delivery of the scheme.
- 2.6 From analysis of available data, it is anticipated that in the region of 300 business may benefit as a result of adoption of the RLHRR scheme, totalling around £3.5M of rate relief.

2.7 In order that assistance may be given to ratepayers the Council must resolve to adopt the WG 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 resolves not to implement the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21 scheme as set out in the guidance in appendix 1.

#### 3.2 **Option 2 (preferred option)**

That the Executive adopts the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21 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**

#### **Council Priorities**

4.1 The adoption of the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2020/21 scheme would support the Council Priority, '*Economic Development and Regeneration*', as it would offer financial support to businesses in the borough.

#### 4.2 **Statutory Responsibilities**

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

### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

#### 5.1 **Financial**

##### **Option 1**

There will be no financial implications for the council.

##### **Option 2**

From analysis of existing data, it is anticipated that any rate relief awarded to businesses throughout Blaenau Gwent under this scheme will be repaid in full by Welsh Government as a section 31 grant.

#### 5.2 **Risk**

##### **Option 1**

Failure to adopt the scheme will result in an inability to award financial assistance to qualifying local business.

##### **Option 2**

Welsh Government withdraw their provisional funding offer.

5.4 **Personnel**  
The administration of the scheme will be absorbed and delivered within existing staff resources.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**  
As the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief 2020/21 scheme is new scheme there is no comparable performance information to report.

6.2 **Involvement**  
Any potentially eligible businesses will be identified and contacted directly by the Revenues section. Direct awards of rate relief will be made to accounts that are easily identifiable as meeting the criteria for the scheme, with an application form process available for businesses where further clarification is required.

6.3 **Thinking for the Long term**  
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.

6.4 **Collaboration / partnership working**  
Each individual local authority in Wales must adopt this scheme in order to administer relief to ratepayers.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Revenue section will continue monitoring the potential for qualification for the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme during the financial year.

**Background Documents / Electronic Links**

*Appendix 1 – Non Domestic Rates – Retail Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief Guidance*