

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **21st April 2021**

Report Subject: **Business Rates Relief – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2021/22**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member for Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer - Resources**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	X	15.04.21				21.4.21		

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 – 2021/22 scheme (RLHRR), as a section 47 discretionary rate relief for 2021/22.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Over the past couple of years, the Welsh Government have provided grant funding to Local Authorities in order for them to consider delivering Rate Relief schemes for certain businesses within their area.
- 2.2 Blaenau Gwent Council have adopted these discretionary schemes previously.
- 2.3 As part of the Covid19 response and recovery Welsh Government have frozen business rates for 2021/22 at 2020/21 levels. To provide a fiscal stimulus for businesses in Wales, the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd announced that the Welsh Government would extend grant funding to provide the RLHRR scheme for 2021/22.
- 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 2021/22 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 328 business may benefit as a result of adoption of the RLHRR scheme, totalling around £3.25M of rate relief.

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 – 2021/22 scheme as set out in the guidance in appendix 1.

3.2 Option 2 (preferred)

That the Executive Committee adopts the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2021/22 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

4.1 Council Priorities

The adoption of the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2021/22 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 reimbursed 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 under the RLHRR scheme to qualifying local business within Blaenau Gwent.

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**
During 2020/21 328 businesses benefited from the rate relief scheme totalling £3.25m.
- 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.

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13th April 2021