



NON DOMESTIC RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

Introduction

Local Authorities have the power to grant Discretionary Rate Relief to charitable, voluntary and community organisations that meet certain criteria. The amount of relief granted is used to reduce the amount of Non Domestic Rates (NDR) that the organisation is required to pay. This document sets out the Council's policy on granting and administering Discretionary Rate Relief.

Legislation

The following organisations automatically qualify for 80% mandatory relief from their NDR bill.

- Registered Charities;
- Other organisations which are exempt from registration but established and conducted for charitable purposes such as registered Friendly societies; Scout and Guide Groups; Voluntary aided schools; church commissioners;
- Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC).

The Council has discretion to;

- Grant "top up" relief of up to 20% to organisations that receive mandatory relief noted above;
- Grant discretionary rate relief of up to 100% to other organisations not established or conducted for profit. This may include organisations whose main objectives are charitable; philanthropic; religious; concerned with education; social welfare; science; literature; fine arts; or recreation where all or most of the property is occupied for a club or society.
- Grant discretionary rate relief to any other organisation

Who Pays For The Relief Granted?

- The cost of “top up” discretionary rate relief is met 50% by Central Government and 50% is met locally by Solihull’s Council Tax payers.
- The cost of other Discretionary Rate Relief awards is met 50% by Central Government and 50% is met locally by Solihull’s Council Taxpayers.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify how the Council will operate its discretionary powers in the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and to indicate the factors we will consider when deciding if relief can be awarded.

Statement of Objectives

The Council will consider awarding Discretionary Rate Relief to all organisations that meet the qualifying criteria specified in this policy. We will deal with each application for Relief on its merit and treat all organisations that apply for Discretionary Rate Relief equally and fairly.

Information to be provided by organisations applying for discretionary rate relief.

- A completed and signed application form;
- Copies of the rules of the organisation or its Memorandum and Articles of Association;
- Copies of the last two years’ audited accounts;
- Organisations will be asked to provide information and evidence to support their application and to demonstrate how the organisation meets the Council’s criteria;
- The ratepayer will be asked to evidence how their work contributes to one of the Council’s Top Priorities:
 - North Solihull Regeneration
 - Putting Solihull People First (transforming adult social care)
 - Integrated delivery of children’s services

Factors affecting the amount of relief granted

The Council will determine the percentage of relief to be granted and the timeframe, usually one year but up to a maximum two year period.

The Council will wish to grant relief to organisations where they add most to the community. It will also seek to assess the applicant's ability to meet the cost of the business rates.

The decision making process

A report and scoring matrix recommending the decision will be prepared for Members who will make the final decision on granting Discretionary Rate Relief.

Applications from organisations already funded annually from the Community Initiatives Fund will be decided at the same time Members decide on Council funding for the financial year.

Discretionary Rate Relief will be automatically awarded to Scout, Girl Guide, and other Youth Groups.

Administration of Discretionary Rate Relief

Once a decision has been made to grant relief, the ratepayer's account will be updated within 28 days and a revised business rates bill will be issued including any relief agreed.

Review period

Any awards of this relief will usually be allowed for 12 months or a maximum of up to two years.

An award of Discretionary Rate Relief at any time does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date even if the circumstances of the organisation have not changed.

Promotion and Advice

A copy of the policy will be made available on the Council's internet site, together with guidance notes and application forms. Guidance will be provided for officers and partners in order to provide ratepayers with advice about our policy.

Appeal against the decision

If the ratepayer's application is unsuccessful, an appeal can be made against the decision but only if there is additional information that wasn't included with the original application. The reason for appeal and supporting evidence must be supplied within 28 days of the original decision. The appeal will be presented to the Leader's Decision session for review.