



**MINUTES of
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
22 JUNE 2023**

PRESENT

Vice-Chairperson Councillor A Fittock
(in the chair)

Councillors D O Bown, J Driver, A S Fluker, A M Lay, R H Siddall,
W Stamp, CC, M E Thompson and S White

109. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman drew attention to the list of notices published on the back of the agenda.

110. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M F L Durham CC.

111. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 March 2023 be approved and confirmed.

112. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

113. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

114. ANNUAL REPORT IN RELATION TO THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery reporting on the activity of the Council in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) for the financial year 2022 / 23. The report also sought Members' consideration of the desktop review conducted by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) in November 2022.

The report provided background information following an IPCO inspection in 2018 and the changes made to address the recommendations made following the inspection. The Council's RIPA Policy had been amended to ensure it was compliant and was

attached as Appendix 1 to the report. A copy of the formal response (Action Plan) to the IPCO was attached at Appendix 2.

The Chairman moved the recommendations set out the report which were duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the activity of the Council in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) be noted and a review report and policy review be brought back to the Committee on an annual basis going forward;
- (ii) That the new RIPA Policy for the Council (Appendix 1 to the report) be approved and the Action Plan (Appendix 2 to the report) agreed with the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) be noted.

115. FEES AND CHARGES UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Chief Finance Officer seeking Member approval of the:

- revised Fees and Charges related to Building Control Services;
- permit Charge for Public / Commercial use of Council Offices Car Park;
- expansion of the existing High Street Off-Peak Resident Parking Scheme to the Council Offices.

Members noted the requirement under the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 and how following a review it was proposed that the Building Control Fees and Charges increase by 12.3% from 1 July 2023 (as set out in Appendix A to the report). This increase was in line with other increases in the Council's fees and charges for 2023 / 24.

Following a review of the Council Offices Car Park to identify any underutilisation of the car parking facilities the Council was able to offer additional car parking permits to partners, with a number having already been purchased. It was proposed that the balance of available car parking spaces be offered to the public and partners through an annual permit scheme and an expansion of the resident parking scheme. Details of both schemes were set out in the report.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations as set out in the report and these were duly seconded.

During the lengthy debate that ensued, Members raised a number of questions regarding the proposed changes and in response the Assistant Director provided the following information:

- **Council Offices Car Park Permit Charges:**
 - The new policy would enable an income from spaces in the Council offices car park that were currently under-utilised.
 - The new permits would be advertised on the Council's website and in addition the Council would be targeting specific businesses and contacting local residents to make them aware of the scheme.
 - In reviewing the current requirements of the Council office car park, Officers had ensured that there was sufficient parking for staff.

- **Annual Permit (Council office car park):**
 - The proposed cost of an annual permit was reflective of the current charges and there were no additional costs as the spaces were already available and maintained by the Council.
 - The proposed cost was lower than those charged for High Street car parks to acknowledge that they were not as accessible. Members were advised that the High Street Car park annual permit charge was £716.
- **Expanded Off-Peak Resident Parking Scheme:**
 - The proposed changes were an expansion of the existing scheme and would run alongside the current scheme run by South Essex Parking Partnership.

Members were informed that the Council was carrying out a full review of car parking charges as part of its car parking strategy and the new charges would be included within this.

Following a discussion regarding the proposed cost of the annual permit and aligning this with the annual permit charges for the High Street car parks, Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the proposed annual permit at the Council office car park be increased to £625. This proposal was duly seconded.

In response to a question regarding the revised fees for Building Control Services, Members were advised the Building Control Manager had confirmed that the proposed charges were comparable to similar services within the public sector.

The Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance clarified in response to the proposed amendment from Councillor Fluker that recommendation (ii) should therefore be amended to read "...be approved, noting the amendment to the annual fee fund from £500 to £629". The Chairman moved the amendment which was duly agreed. Councillor W Stamp asked that her vote against the amendment be noted.

The Chairman then put the recommendations, as amended, to the Committee and upon a vote being taken these were duly agreed. Councillor W Stamp asked that her vote against the recommendations be noted.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the revised Fees for Building Control Services from 22 August 2023 be approved;
- (ii) That the new Charges for permits for use of the Council Offices Car Park from 15 July 2023 be approved, noting the amendment to the annual fee fund from £500 to £629.

116. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, VIREMENTS, PROCUREMENT EXEMPTIONS AND USE OF RESERVES

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Chief Finance Officer reporting that during the above period one virement and two procurement exemptions had been agreed. It was noted that there were no supplementary estimates or drawdown from reserves during this period.

The Committee welcomed Ms Lucas, Interim Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer who had recently joined the Council.

The Chairperson put the recommendations as set out in the report and these were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the virements as detailed in paragraph 3.3.1 of the report be noted;
- (ii) That the procurement exemptions as detailed in paragraph 3.5.1 of the report be noted.

117. PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2022 / 23

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Chief Finance Officer providing Members with the provisional Outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2023. Movements in relation to the Council's General Fund, Earmarked Reserves and Capital Commitments as at 31 March 2023 were also detailed.

It was noted that the draft Statement of Accounts was published on 31 July 2023 however, the audit of this was yet to commence and therefore the figures detailed in the outturn report were provisional as they were subject to change. The report provided detailed information regarding:

- 2022 / 23 Final Budget including approved amendments.
- Provisional Outturn – The report detailed budget variances and Appendix 1 provided a detailed analysis of the major variances attributed to the underspend. Those underspends carried forward into the next financial year to fund expenditure commitments were set out in Appendix 2.
- General Fund Balance - It was reported that this would remain above the minimum recommended level of £2.6m.
- Earmarked Reserves - Appendix 3 to the report provided a breakdown of Earmarked Reserves and it was noted that there had been a net increase of £0.4m from 1 April 2022.
- 2022 / 23 Provisional Capital Outturn – The Capital Programme outturn with requested carry forwards was set out in Appendix 4 to the report, along with reasons for any slippage during 2022 / 23.

The report advised that business rates income was above that budgeted and it was therefore proposed that the additional income be used in 2023 / 24 to close the budget gap of £421k.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations as set out in the report and these were duly seconded.

A lengthy debate ensued, during which Members raised a number of queries regarding the information detailed in the report and its appendices. In response, the Interim Chief Finance Officer and Assistant Director provided the following information:

- The General Fund Balance amount varied between Councils and was based on the size of their budgets and risks. The budget was reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process and was the responsibility of the Section 151 Officer.
- There was a clear plan of commitments against the Local Development Plan reserve.

- The Government had not made any firm commitments as to whether the New Homes Bonus (NHB) would continue in the future. The Council would be considering NHB as part of its overall funding package from the government.
- An explanation was provided regarding the variance in the car parking budget, and it was noted this was not due to the service under-performing but the budget being uplifted as part of the Council transformation process.
- The Council had an agreement with Place Services and through that would ensure that tree surgery work went out to various contractors. Value for money would be delivered and as a requirement there were a number of local contractors included in the process as previously requested by Members.
- It was noted that the budget provision for the Burnham-on-Crouch pontoon had not been spent and it was requested that the monies be carried forward into the current financial year. The Interim Chief Finance Officer advised that there may be additional funding streams supplementing this project, but she would confirm this to Members outside of the meeting.

In response to a question regarding the Committee receiving a report on the Local Development Plan review budget, the Interim Chief Finance Officer suggested that this be brought to a future meeting of the Finance Working Group.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations as set out in the report. This was duly seconded.

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor A S Fluker requested a recorded vote, and this was duly seconded. The Chairperson then put the recommendations to the Committee and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

Councillors R H Siddall and M E Thompson.

Against the recommendation:

Councillors A S Fluker, A M Lay, W Stamp and S White.

Abstention:

Councillors T Fittock, D O Bown and J Driver.

Following the vote, the Chairperson advised that the recommendations were therefore not agreed.

118. AREA OF SPECIAL CONTROL FOR ADVERTISEMENTS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources seeking Members' review of an Area of Special Control Order for Advertisements (attached at Appendix A to the report).

The report provided background information and advised that an Area of Special Control (ASC) for Advertisements placed additional control on advertisements to protect the rural amenity. Since 1988 most of the District had been designated as an ASC and the Council was required to review the order every five years.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation as set out in the report. This was duly seconded and agreed.

RECOMMENDED that the Area of Special Control Order for Advertisements (attached at **APPENDIX 1** to these Minutes), be reconfirmed.

119. BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking Members' approval of the updated Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief Scheme (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) which updated and replaced the Council's existing policy to reflect changes announced by Central Government to support businesses.

It was noted that the update reflected confirmation from the Government that the award of Heat Network Relief for eligible businesses should continue to be dealt with as a discretionary relief in 2023 / 24.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation and this was duly agreed by assent.

RECOMMENDED that the Discretionary Non-domestic Rate Relief Scheme (attached as **APPENDIX 2** to these Minutes), be updated to include an additional scheme.

120. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND WORKING GROUPS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources seeking appointment to Working Groups of the Strategy and Resources Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that Councillor S White be appointed to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Working Group. This proposal was duly seconded.

The Chairperson advised that he would consider nominations to each Working Group in turn, starting with:

Car Parking Task and Finish Working Group:

Following nominations which were duly seconded, the Chairman put to the Committee that Councillors D O Bown, J Driver, M F L Durham and A M Lay be appointed to the Car Parking Task and Finish Working Group. This was duly agreed.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Working Group:

Councillor R H Siddall proposed that the membership of this Working Group be expanded to two Members. This proposal was duly seconded and agreed.

The Chairperson advised that Councillors R H Siddall, M E Thompson and S White had received nominations (duly seconded) to this Working Group and therefore a vote was required to determine the two representatives. Following the first vote being taken it was agreed that Councillor Siddall be appointed. A second vote was then taken for the remaining seat, with Members voting for Councillor Thompson or White. Following this the Chairperson declared that Councillor Thompson was therefore appointed as the second representative on this Working Group.

Waste Contract Member Working Group:

Following nominations which were duly seconded, the Chairman put to the Committee that Councillors D O Bown, M F L Durham, A S Fluker and R H Siddall be appointed to the Waste Contract Member Working Group. This was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the Committee appoints the representatives to the Working Groups detailed below, for the ensuing municipal year.

Working Group	2023 / 24 Representative
Car Parking Task and Finish	Councillors D O Bown J Driver M F L Durham, CC A M Lay
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer	Councillors R H Siddall M E Thompson
Waste Contract Member	Councillors D O Bown M F L Durham, CC A S Fluker R H Siddall

121. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

122. LEGAL ACTION

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery advising Members of legal proceedings against Maldon District Council.

The report provided detailed background information regarding the legal claim served on the Council.

Following the Officer's presentation, the Chairperson moved the recommendations as set out in the report and these were duly seconded.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed an amendment to recommendation (iii) requesting that the Chairperson of the Committee be included in the consultation. This proposal was duly seconded and agreed.

The Chairman put the recommendations (as amended) to the Committee and upon a vote being taken was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council continues to defend the claim against the Council;
- (ii) That the Director of Service Delivery in consultation with a legal advisor be authorised to respond to all legal representations, any directions of the Court and any other ancillary legal matters relating to this claim.
- (iii) That the Director of Service Delivery, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee and a legal advisor, regularly review the legal case and be granted delegated authority to settle the claim should it be expedient to do so.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.22 pm.

A FITTOCK
CHAIRPERSON

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AREA OF SPECIAL CONTROL

Area of Special Control relates to all of the Maldon District unless it falls within the areas outlined in black on the attached plans.

AREAS OF SPECIAL CONTROL

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (CONTROL OF ADVERTISEMENTS) REGULATIONS 1984

Within an Area of Special Control four main categories of advertisements are permitted.

These areas:

- a) election notices, statutory advertisements and traffic signs, (Regulation 9);
- b) advertisements inside a building (Regulation 12);
- c) advertisements with a deemed consent (Regulation 14). These include functional advertisements of local authorities and statutory undertakers, small professional signs, signs on hotel and inns, certain temporary advertisements such as "for sale" signs, advertisements on the forecourts of business premises, flag advertisements; and
- d) temporary advertisements for travelling circuses and fairs (Regulation 23).

Additionally express consent may be granted only for the display of advertisements of the following categories:-

- e) notices about local events or activities
- f) advance signs or directional signs which are "reasonably required" to direct people to the place identified on the sign;
- g) advertisements required for public safety reasons, and
- h) an advertisement which could be displayed with deemed consent {(c) above} if it is reasonable for the normal size, height or illumination limits to be exceeded.

With regard to advertisements displayed with deemed consent {(c) above} slightly more stringent requirements apply to advertisements which may be displayed within an Area of Special Control. Generally letters, figures etc. cannot exceed 0.3m and advertisements must not be displayed at a height exceeding 3.6m above ground level. Advertisements on business premises must not exceed 10% of the area of the face of the building up to a maximum of 3.6m above ground level.

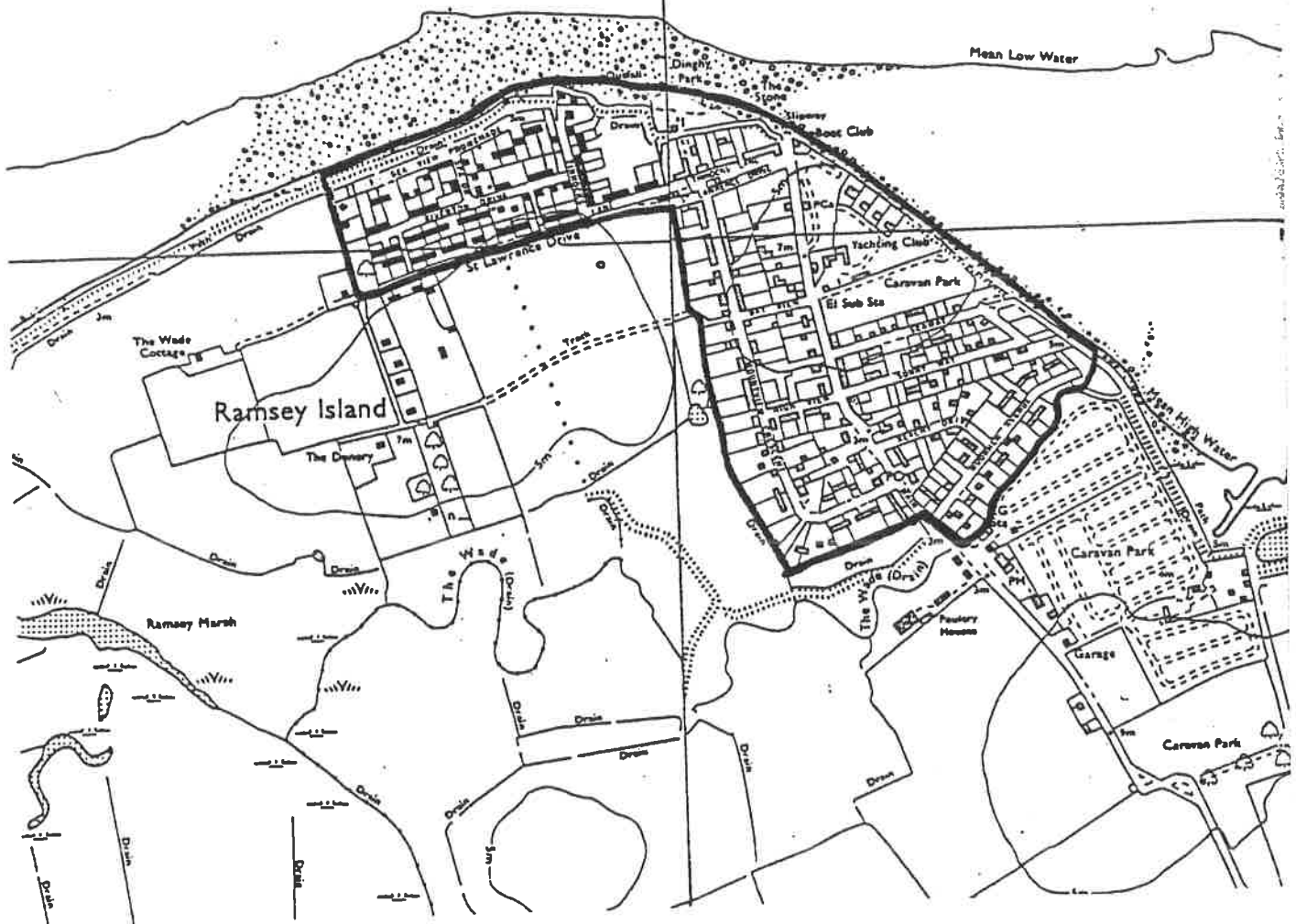
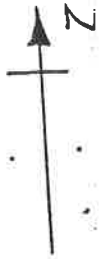
The foregoing is a summary of the relevant provisions of current legislation and is intended for guidance only. Anyone who requires further clarification or detail on any point is advised to consult The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1984 (S.I. 1984/421) and Department of the Environment Circular II.84 in respect of those Regulations.





LAWRENCE
INSET 6

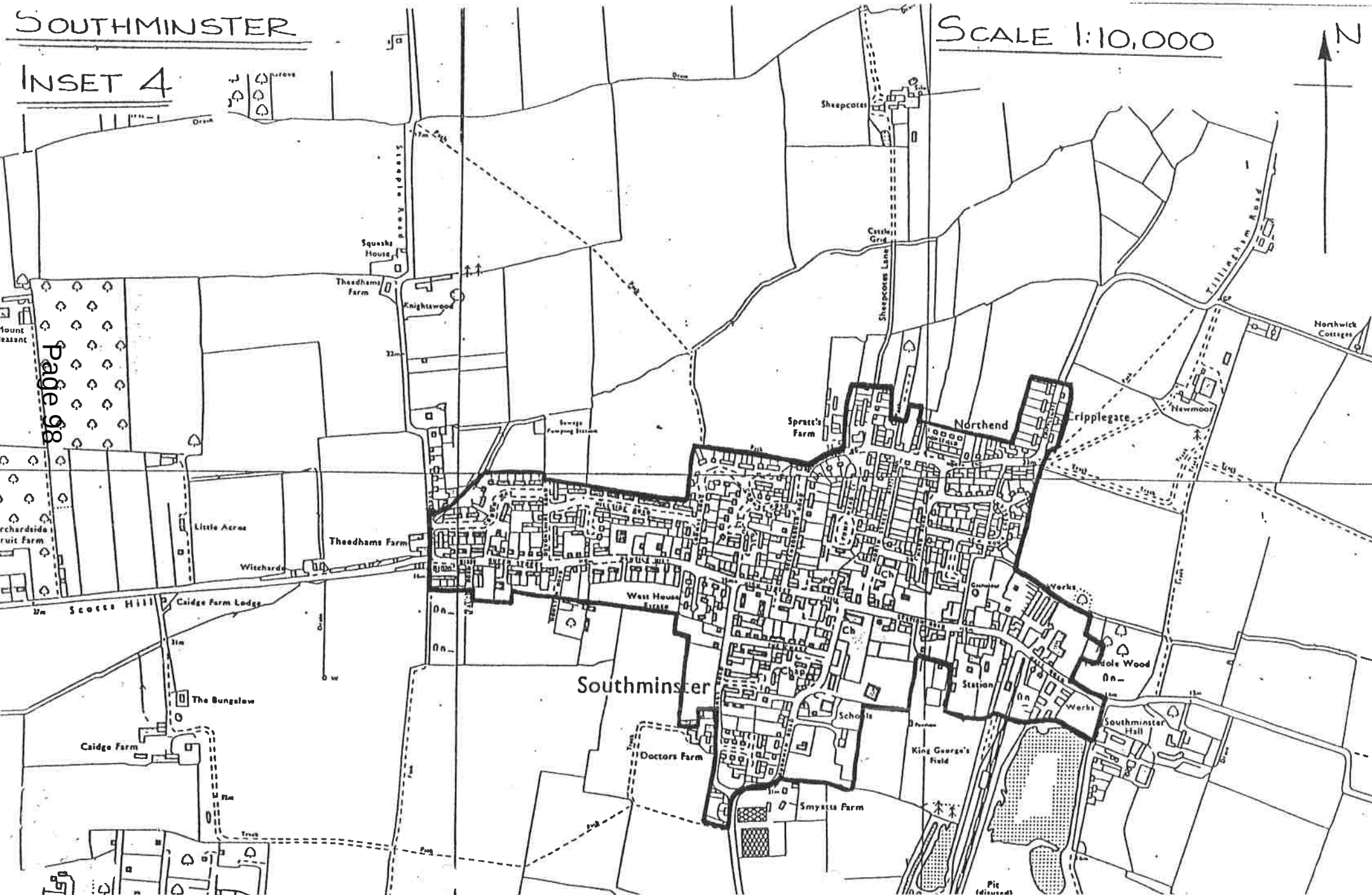
Scale: 1:10,000



SOUTHMINSTER

INSET 4

SCALE 1:10,000



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MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Maldon District Council Policy for the granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief

Version Control

<i>Version</i>	<i>Version date</i>	<i>Revised by</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	June 2017	LM	Policy
2	June 2017	DA	Revisions
3	July 2017	LM	Revisions
4	July 2017	DA	Sign Off
5	October 2017	LM	Revisions MLM
6	November 2017	LM	Revisions MLM
7	January 2019	LM	Full update of policy
8	April 2020	LM/DA	Full update of policy & inclusion of COVID-19 reliefs
9	April 2021	LM/DA	Full update of policy & inclusion of COVID-19 reliefs
10	February 2022	LM/DA	Full update of policy & inclusion of COVID-19 reliefs
11	February 2023	LM/DA	Full update of policy & inclusion of Cost of Living reliefs
12	March 2023	LM/DA	Inclusion of Heat Network Relief

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1.0 Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to determine the level of discretionary relief and related areas to be granted to certain defined ratepayers within the Council's area. The policy includes all changes effective from 1st April 2023 and includes all new reliefs due to the revaluation of rateable values in April 2023 and the cost of living crisis. The Council is keen to support businesses during the crisis, as far as possible.
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1988 and subsequent legislation requires the Council to grant mandatory relief for premises occupied by Charities and similar organisations that own or occupy them wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. Likewise, certain premises situated within a rural settlement area will be eligible for mandatory relief. Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow for the granting of discretionary rate relief to any premises where the Council feels the granting of such relief would be of benefit to the local community.
- 1.3 In addition to the above, Central Government is keen that in certain cases, assistance should be provided to businesses who have had increases in their rate liability due to the revaluation of premises in April 2023. In these cases, and where the Council meets Central Government guidelines, grants are available under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 1.4 Whilst the Council is obliged to grant relief to premises, which fall within the mandatory category, the Council also has powers to grant discretionary relief and reductions to ratepayers, subject to certain criteria being met. In the case of the new reliefs, some guidance has been issued by Central Government outlining actions expected to be taken by local authorities. This policy includes Government guidance where appropriate but also looks to target discretionary relief in line with the Council's priorities.
- 1.5 This document outlines the following areas:
 - Details of the criteria for receiving Discretionary Reliefs for all relevant areas;
 - The Council's policy for the granting of all types of Discretionary Reliefs;
 - Guidance on granting and administering the reliefs and awards; and
 - The Council's Scheme of Delegation.
- 1.6 Where organisations apply for relief they will be granted (or not granted) relief or reductions in line with the following policy.

2.0 Mandatory Relief - Legislative Background

Charity Relief

- 2.1 The powers relating to the granting of mandatory¹ and discretionary relief are given to the Council under the Local Government Finance Act 1988². Charities and Trustees for Charities are only liable to pay one fifth of the Non-Domestic Rates that would otherwise be payable where property is occupied and used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. This amounts to mandatory relief of 80%. For the purposes of the Act, a charity is an organisation or trust established for charitable purposes, whether or not it is registered with the Charity Commission. The provision has been extended under the Local Government Act 2003 (effective from 1st April 2004) to registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs). Full details of the mandatory provisions are given later within this policy.
- 2.2 In the case of charity shops, the premises must meet the criteria laid down by section 64 (10) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which states that the premises are to be treated as used for charitable purposes at any time it is wholly or mainly used for the sale of goods donated to the charity and the proceeds of goods (after any deductions for expenses) are applied for the purpose of the charity.
- 2.3 The Council has discretion to grant relief of up to a further 20% for these mandatory cases under its discretionary provisions.

Rural Rate Relief

- 2.4 From 1st April 1998, under powers originally granted to the Council by the Local Government and Rating Act 1997³, certain types of business in rural settlements, with a population below 3000 may qualify for mandatory rate relief of 50 per cent. Businesses that qualify for this relief are the sole general store and the sole post office in the settlement, provided it has a Rateable Value of up to £8500; any food shop with a Rateable Value of up to £8500; and the sole pub and the sole petrol station in the settlement provided it has a Rateable Value of up to £12500.
- 2.5 From 1st April 2023, Central Government has indicated that it wants all authorities to give 100% relief to premises that receive mandatory rural rate relief. Where the additional 50% is granted, a section 31 grant will be made available to the Council. This is dealt with further within this policy and the Council will automatically grant the additional 50% discretionary relief where appropriate
- 2.6 Where businesses in rural settlements have a Rateable Value of up to £16,500 **and** are not in receipt of mandatory relief, the Council may decide to give up to 100 per cent discretionary relief if it is satisfied that the business is of benefit to the community and having regard to the interests of its Council Taxpayers.

¹ S43 & S45 Local Government Finance Act 1988

² S47 & S48 Local Government Finance Act 1988

³ LGFA 1988, s.47, as amended by Sch. 1 to the Local Government and Rating Act 1997

3.0 Discretionary Relief – Legislative Background

Introduction

- 3.1 The original purpose of discretionary relief was to provide assistance where the property does not qualify for mandatory relief, or to 'top' up cases where ratepayers already receive mandatory relief.
- 3.2 Over recent years and particularly since 2011, the discretionary relief provisions have been amended to allow authorities the flexibility to provide more assistance to businesses and organisations.
- 3.3 The range of bodies, which are eligible for discretionary rate relief, is wide and not all of the criteria laid down by the legislation will be applicable in each case.
- 3.4 Unlike mandatory relief, ratepayers are obliged to make a written application to the Council. The Council will expect all businesses to make applications in such a format as is required (which may vary from time to time) and for the business to provide such information and evidence as required in order to determine whether relief should be awarded.
- 3.5 The Council is obliged to carefully consider every application on its merits, taking into account the contribution that the organisation makes to the amenities within the authority's area. There is no statutory appeal process or Tribunal against any decision made by the Council although, as with any decision of a public authority, decisions can be reviewed by Judicial Review. The authority will however, upon request, review decisions made. Details of the internal review process are given within this policy.
- 3.6 Granting of the relief falls broadly into the following categories:
- (a) Discretionary Relief – Charities who already receive mandatory relief.
 - (b) Discretionary Relief – Premises occupied by organisations not established or conducted for profit whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts **or** premises occupied by organisations not established or conducted for profit and wholly or mainly used for purposes recreation;
 - (c) Discretionary Relief – Rural Rate relief - premises that already receive mandatory relief;
 - (d) Discretionary Relief – Rural Rate relief - premises not receiving mandatory relief but of benefit to the local community and less than £16,500 RV;
 - (e) Discretionary Relief – Granted under the Localism Act 2011 provisions;
 - (f) Local Newspaper Relief (from 1st April 2023 until 2025);
 - (g) Supporting Small Businesses Relief (from 1st April 2023 for a period of up to three years);
 - (h) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief (from 1st April 2022 for a period of one year);
 - (i) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief (from 1st April 2023 for a period of one year);
 - (j) S49 Hardship Relief.
- 3.7 The decision to grant or not to grant discretionary relief is a matter purely for the Council.

The Council's general approach to granting Discretionary Relief

- 3.8 In deciding which organisations should receive discretionary rate relief, the Council has considered the following factors and priorities:
- (a) The awarding of relief will be in line with the Council's vision and values. Details can be found at
 - (b) That any award should support business, charities, organisations, and groups that help to retain services in the Council's area and not compete directly with existing businesses in an unfair manner;
 - (c) It should help and encourage business, charities, organisations, groups, and communities to become self-reliant;
 - (d) Awarding discretionary relief should not distort competition or significantly change the provision of services within the Council's area;
 - (e) Local organisations will be given priority over national organisations. Where requested, the organisation will need to supply the Council with clear evidence of **all** financial affairs (normally two full years) including, and most importantly, the amounts of monies raised, used, and invested locally. This will be essential where the organisation is national in nature;
 - (f) To enable appropriate organisations to start, develop or continue their activities, which deliver outcomes to the community and that also relate to the priorities of the Council, which without granting discretionary relief they would be unable to do;
 - (g) To assist the Council in delivering services which could not be provided otherwise;
 - (h) To enable the Council to determine the level of rate change in comparison with the organisation's financial situation; and
 - (i) To ensure that the financial impact of awarding discretionary business rate relief is justified in terms of the local outcomes achieved by the organisation receiving it;
- 3.9 Where any reduction or remission is granted to a ratepayer under S49 Local Government Finance Act 1988 where hardship is proven to the Council, then there will be no requirement to grant Discretionary Rate Relief for that amount.
- 3.10 In certain cases, the order in which relief is granted is specified. Mandatory relief shall be granted in all cases where the criteria is met irrespective of whether discretionary relief can be granted or not.

The Council's approach to granting Government led Discretionary Relief schemes.

- 3.11 Over the past few years, a number of schemes have been led by Central Government but without specific legislative changes. These are administered under S47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and guidance is often provided. The Council is keen to support such initiatives especially where they are designed to help local businesses and will look to maximise both the reliefs given as well as maximise any grants receivable. However, the Council reserves the right to vary its approach where thought appropriate.

4.0 Effect on the Council's Finances

- 4.1 The granting of discretionary relief will, in the main, involve a cost to the Council. Since the change to the funding for Non-Domestic Rating in April 2013, the effect of the relief is complex.
- 4.2 Any amounts granted prior to 1st April 2013 and continuing since that date will be included in the Council's baseline within the Business Rates Retention Scheme. For any amounts granted for similar cases after 1st April 2013, the costs of the relief will be borne in accordance with the Business Rates Retention Scheme share namely 50% borne by Central Government, 40% by the Council and 10% by Essex County Council. This also applies where mandatory relief is granted.
- 4.3 Where Central Government leads an initiative, grants are often available through section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. This is not automatic and Central Government will look to the Council to adopt the recommended approach when granting in these areas
- 4.4 The financial effects of discretionary reliefs covered by this policy are as follows:

Appendix	Relief Type	Granted after 1 st April 2023
	Charity Relief	
A	Discretionary relief granted to Mandatory Relief recipients	40% borne by the Council
B	Non-profit Making Organisations including Sports Clubs and societies	40% borne by the Council
	Rural Rate Relief	
C	50% Discretionary relief granted to Mandatory Rural Relief recipients	Section 31 Grant
D	Other premises within a rural settlement under £16500 RV	40% borne by the Council
	Localism	
E	Discretionary Relief granted to ratepayers generally and not covered by any other section	40% borne by the Council
	Local Newspaper Relief	
F	Discretionary Relief granted to local newspapers meeting the criteria (From 1 st April 2023 up until 2025)	Section 31 Grant
	Supporting Small Business Relief	
G	Supporting Small Businesses Relief (from 1 st April 2023 for a period of up to three years if conditions are met	Section 31 Grant
	Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief	

Appendix	Relief Type	Granted after 1 st April 2023
H	Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief (from 1 st April 2022 for a period of one year);	Section 31 Grant
	Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief	
I	Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief (from 1 st April 2023 for a period of one year)	Section 31 Grant
	Heat Network Relief	
J	Relief for all Heat Networks for a period of 1 year	Section 31 Grant
	S49 Hardship Relief	
K	Partial or full relief for cases of hardship where it would be reasonable to do so having due regard to the interests of council taxpayers	40% borne by the Council

5.0 Administration of Discretionary Relief

- 5.1 The following section outlines the procedures followed by officers in granting, amending, or cancelling discretionary relief and reduction. This is essentially laid down by legislation⁴

Applications and Evidence

- 5.2 All reliefs must be applied for. Application forms are produced by the Council both in hard copy and electronic format. The relevant application forms available online using the following links.
- [General Discretionary application form](#)
 - [CASC, charities and not for profit additional questions](#)
- 5.3 Organisations are required to provide a completed application form plus any such evidence, documents, accounts (normally the last two years), financial statements etc. necessary to allow the Council to make a decision. Where insufficient information is provided, then no relief will be granted. In some cases, it may be necessary for officers to visit premises and we would expect organisations claiming relief to facilitate this where necessary.
- 5.4 Applications should initially be made to the Revenues and Benefits Services and will be determined in accordance with Section 7 of this policy.
- 5.5 **The Council will provide this service and provide guidance free of charge. Ratepayers are encouraged to approach the Council direct and NOT pay for such services through third parties.**

⁴ The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989

Granting of relief

- 5.6 In all cases, the Council will notify the ratepayer of decisions made.
- 5.7 Where an application is successful, then the following will be notified to them in writing:
- The amount of relief granted and the date from which it has been granted;
 - If relief has been granted for a specified period, the date on which it will end. (It should be noted that reliefs are granted for the period specified in the appropriate Appendix and may vary from a day to a full financial year);
 - The new chargeable amount;
 - The details of any planned review dates and the notice that will be given in advance of a change to the level of relief granted; and
 - A requirement that the applicant should notify the Council of any change in circumstances that may affect entitlement to relief.
- 5.8 Where relief is not granted, then the following information is provided, again in writing:
- An explanation of the decision within the context of the Council's statutory duty; and
 - An explanation of the appeal rights (see below).
- 5.9 Discretionary relief is to be granted from the beginning of the financial year in which the decision is made or when liability begins whichever is the later. Since 1997 decisions can be made up to 6 months after the end of the financial year for which the application was made. In such cases, the Council *may* backdate its decision.
- 5.10 A decision to award discretionary relief and how much relief is given is normally only applicable to the financial year for which the application is made. However, the Council reserves the right to grant relief for any other period as appropriate.
- 5.11 A fresh application for discretionary relief will be necessary for each financial year **or** at such time-period as the Council determines.

Variation of a decision

- 5.12 Variations in any decision will be notified to ratepayers as soon as practicable and will take effect as follows:
- Where the amount is to be increased due to a change in rate charge or a change in the Council's decision which increases the award – this will apply from a date determined by the Council as appropriate;
 - Where the amount is to increase for any other reason, it will take effect at the expiry of a financial year and so that at least one year's notice is given;
 - Where the amount is to be reduced due to a reduction in the rate charge or liability including any reduction in rateable value, awarding of another relief or exemption this will apply from the date of the decrease in rate charge; and

- Where the amount is to be reduced for any other reason, it will take effect from a date determined by the Council as appropriate;
- 5.13 A decision may be revoked at any time however; a one-year period of notice will be given, and the change will take effect at the expiry of a financial year.

6.0 Scheme of Delegation

Granting, Varying, Reviewing and Revocation of Relief

- 6.1 All powers in relation to reliefs are given under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Local Government Act 2003, and the Localism Act 2011. However section 223 of the Local Government Act 1992 allows for delegation of decisions by the Council to Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees or Officers.
- 6.2 The Council's scheme of delegation allows for the Lead Specialist, Service Delivery to award, revise or revoke any discretionary relief applications. However, any application which is considered to be of a significant nature will be subject to consultation with the relevant executive or committee prior to final determination.
- 6.3 Applications that are refused will, on request, be reconsidered if additional supporting information is provided or the refusal is subsequently considered to be based on a misinterpretation of the application.

Reviews

- 6.4 The policy for granting relief will be reviewed annually or where there is a substantial change to the legislation or funding rules. At such time, a revised policy will be brought before the relevant committee of the Council.

Appeals

- 6.5 Where the Council receives an appeal from the ratepayer regarding the granting, non-granting or the amount of any discretionary relief, the case will be reviewed by the Lead Specialist, Service Delivery. Where a decision is revised then the ratepayer shall be informed, likewise if the original decision is upheld.
- 6.6 Where the ratepayer wishes to appeal the decision of the Lead Specialist, Service Delivery the case will be considered by the Section 151 officer or another member of the Corporate Leadership team, whose decision on behalf of the Council will be final
- 6.7 Ultimately the formal appeal process for the ratepayer is Judicial Review although the Council will endeavour to explain any decision fully and openly with the ratepayer.

7.0 Reporting changes in circumstances

- 7.1 Where any award is granted to a ratepayer, the Council will require any changes in circumstances which may affect the relief, to be reported as soon as possible. This will be important where the change would result in the amount of the award being reduced or cancelled e.g., where the premises comes unoccupied or is used for a purpose other than that determined by the Council as eligible for relief.
- 7.2 Where a change of circumstances is reported, the relief will, if appropriate, be revised or cancelled as appropriate. Where any award is to be reduced, the Council will look to recover the amount from the date the change of circumstances occurred.

8.0 Fraud

- 8.1 Where a ratepayer falsely applies for any relief, or where the ratepayer provides false information, makes false representation, or deliberately withholds information in order to gain relief, prosecutions will be considered under the Fraud Act 2006.

Appendix A

Discretionary Relief - Mandatory Relief recipients

Discretionary Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients

General Explanation

- A.1 S43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 allows mandatory relief (80%) to be granted on premises if the ratepayer is a charity or trustees for a charity and the premises are wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. No charge is made in respect of unoccupied premises where it appears that *when next in use* it will be used wholly or mainly for those purposes.
- A.2 The legislation has been amended by the Local Government Act 2003 (effective from 1st April 2004) to include registered⁵ Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC). These organisations can now receive the mandatory (80%) relief.

Charity registration

- A.3 Charities are defined within the legislation as being an institution⁶ or other organisation established for charitable purposes only or by persons administering a trust established for charitable purposes only.
- A.4 The question as to whether an organisation is a charity may be resolved in the majority of cases by reference to the register of charities maintained by the Charity Commissioners under s.4 of the Charities Act 1960. Entry in the register is conclusive evidence. By definition, under the Non-Domestic Rating legislation, there is no actual need for an organisation to be a registered charity to receive the relief and this has been supported by litigation⁷, however in all cases the organisation must fall within the following categories:
- trusts for the relief of poverty;
 - trusts for the advancement of religion;
 - trusts for the advancement of education; and
 - trusts for other purposes beneficial to the community, but not falling under any of the preceding heads.
- A.5 Certain organisations are exempted from registration generally and are not required to make formal application to the Charity Commissioners these are:
- the Church Commissioners and any institution administered by them;
 - any registered society within the meaning of the Friendly Societies Acts of 1896 to 1974;
 - units of the Boy Scouts Association or the Girl Guides Association; and
 - voluntary schools within the meaning of the Education Acts of 1944 to 1980.
- A.6 The Council will consider charitable organisations, registered or not, for mandatory relief.

⁵ Registered with HMRC as a CASC

⁶ S67(10) Local Government Finance Act 1988

⁷ Income Tax Special Commissioners v Pemsell (1891)

Use of Premises - wholly or mainly used

- A.7 Irrespective of whether an organisation is registered as a charity or not, the premises **must** be wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. This is essential if any relief (either mandatory or discretionary) is to be granted. In most cases this can be readily seen by inspection, but on occasions the Council has had to question the actual use to which the premises are to be put. In some cases, it will be necessary for the Council to inspect any premises fully.
- A.8 Guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (now MHCLG) has stated that in the case of 'mainly', at least 51% must be used for charitable purposes whether of that charity or of that and other charities
- A.9 The following part of this section gives details on typical uses where relief may be given plus additional criteria that have to be satisfied. The list is not exhaustive but gives clear guidance on premises for which mandatory relief can be granted *and therefore* premises which may be equally considered for discretionary rate relief.

Offices, administration, and similar premises

- A.10 Premises used for administration of the Charity include:
- Offices;
 - Meeting Rooms; and
 - Conference Rooms.

Charity shops

- A.11 Charity shops are required to meet additional legislative criteria if they are to receive mandatory relief. Section 64 (10) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 provides that a property is to be treated as being wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes at any time if, at the time, it is wholly or mainly used for the sale of goods donated to a charity and the proceeds of the sale of the goods (after any deduction of expenses) are applied for the purposes of the charity.
- A.12 In order to ascertain whether an organisation meets these requirements, inspections may be made by an officer of the Council when an application is received

Granting of Mandatory Relief - the Council's Policy

- A.13 Where the criteria for awarding mandatory relief are met, the rate charges shall be calculated in accordance with the legislation reducing the liability of ratepayers for each day that the criteria are met.

Charity Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients, the Council’s Policy for granting discretionary relief.

- A.14 The Council will consider applications for a discretionary rate relief top up from charities based on their own merits, on a case-by-case basis.
- A.15 In determining the application, the following matters will be taken into consideration:
1. How the charity supports and links into the Council’s corporate vision and priorities;
 2. The purpose of the charity and the specific activity carried out within the premises for which the relief is requested; and
 3. Whether the charity operates at a local or national level and where appropriate, the local and national funding streams and financial position of the charity. The Council is keen to ensure that the organisation provides significant benefit to local residents.
- A16 The Council is keen to support businesses that have a critical role to play in the local economy and to assist the Council in meeting the corporate aims and values.
- A.17 In the case of registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs, the key criteria in determining the application will be:
1. The ratepayer occupies the whole hereditament;
 2. Relief cannot be granted in respect of premises that are occupied by the Council or precepting authority;
 3. How the CASC supports and links into the Council’s corporate vision and priorities;
 4. The membership and fee structure, and whether the CASC is accessible to all residents, including whether there are concessions for certain groups, for example people on a low income or young people under 18;
 5. Membership numbers and the number and percentage of these members that are local residents;
 6. If the CASC has due regard to equality issues and if it actively encourages members from under-represented groups, for example black and minority ethnic residents, people over 50 and people with disabilities;
 7. Whether facilities are available to the wider community regardless of ability; and
 8. If the CASC runs a bar or food provision: the level of income from this activity and how this money is used; and whether the CASC operates at a local or national level and where appropriate, the local and national funding streams and financial position of the CASC.
- A.18 The Council wishes to support and enable appropriate businesses to start, develop and continue with their operations that deliver outcomes directly related to the Council’s aims and vision. In the main, this will be done through other means rather than granting discretionary relief. There may be occasions where applications are made for such relief or where a package of measures, including discretionary relief, are appropriate in supporting businesses.

Appendix B

Discretionary Relief - Non-Profit Making Organisations including Recreation.

Discretionary Relief – Non-Profit Making Organisations including Recreation.

General explanation

Non-Profit

- B.1 The legislation⁸ allows the Council to grant discretionary relief where the property is not an *excepted* one and all or part of it is occupied for the purposes of one or more institutions or other organisations none of which is established or conducted for profit and each of whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature, or the fine arts.
- B.2 Relief cannot be granted to any premises occupied by the Council, or any town, parish council or major Precepting Authority (*excepted premises*).
- B.3 A number of issues arise from the term 'not established or conducted for profit'. This requires the Council to make enquiries as to the overall purpose of the organisation although if surpluses and such amounts are directed towards the furtherance or achievement of the objects of the organisation then it does not necessarily mean that the organisation was established or conducted for profit.⁹

Recreation Clubs

- B.4 Ideally all recreation clubs should be encouraged to apply for Community Amateur sports Club (CASC) status, which would automatically entitle them to 80% relief. The relief granted to CASCs is covered earlier within this policy.
- B.5 Recreation clubs can also apply to the Charity Commissioners for registration as a Charity (thereby falling under the mandatory provisions for 80% relief) where they meet the following conditions:
- a. The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation and by the provision of facilities for the playing of particular sports; and
 - b. The advancement of the physical education of young people not undergoing formal education.
- B.6 Where sports clubs do not meet the CASC requirement, and are not registered charities, discretionary relief can be granted (0-100%) where the property is not an *excepted* one, it is wholly or mainly used for purposes of recreation and all or part of it is occupied for the purpose of a club, society or other organisation not established or conducted for profit.

⁸ S47 Local Government Finance Act 1988

Definition of Recreation

B.7 Recreation is clearly defined by the Sports Council as any of the following¹⁰

Aikido	Croquet	Kabaddi	Real Tennis	Tang Soo Do
American Football	Crossbow	Karate	Roller Hockey	Tenpin Bowling
Angling	Curling	Kendo	Roller Skating	Trampolining
Archery	Cycling	Korfball	Rounders	Triathlon
Arm Wrestling	Disability Sport	Lacrosse	Rowing	Tug of War
Association Football	Dragon Boat Racing	Lawn Tennis	Rugby League	Unihoc
Athletics	Equestrian	Life Saving	Rugby Union	Volleyball
Australian Rules Football	Fencing	Luge	Sailing	Water Skiing
Badminton	Fives	Modern Pentathlon	Sand/Land Yachting	Weightlifting
Ballooning	Flying	Motor Cycling	Shinty	Wrestling
Baseball	Gaelic Football	Motor Sports	Shooting	Yoga
Basketball	Gliding	Mountaineering	Skateboarding	
Baton Twirling	Golf	Movement, Dance, Exercise & Fitness	Skiing	
Biathlon	Gymnastics	Netball	Skipping	
Bicycle Polo	Handball	Orienteering	Snowboarding	
Billiards and Snooker	Hang/Para Gliding	Parachuting	Softball	
Bobsleigh	Highland Games	Petanque	Sombo Wrestling	
Boccia	Hockey	Polo	Squash	
Bowls	Horse Racing	Pony Trekking	Skater/Street Hockey	
Boxing	Hovering	Pool	Sub-Aqua	
Camogie	Hurling	Quoits	Surf Life Saving	
Canoeing	Ice Hockey	Racketball	Surfing	
Caving	Ice Skating	Rackets	Swimming & Diving	
Chinese Martial Arts	Jet Skiing	Raquetball	Table Tennis	
Cricket	Ju Jitsu	Rambling	Taekwondo	
	Judo			

Access to clubs

- B.8 Guidance issued by the DCLG (now DLUHC) also requires the Council to consider access to clubs within the community before granting discretionary relief.
- B.9 Membership should be open to all sections of the community. There may be legitimate restrictions placed on membership which relate for example to ability in sport or to the achievement of a standard in the field covered by the organisation or where the capacity of the facility is limited, but in general membership should not be exclusive or restrictive.

¹⁰ Definition last reviewed by Sport England in 2002

- B.10 Membership rates should not be set at such a high level as to exclude the general community. However, membership fees may be payable at different rates that distinguish the different classes of membership such as juniors, adults, students, pensioners, players, non-players, employed and unemployed. In general, the club or organisation must be prepared to show that the criteria by which it considers applications for membership are consistent with the principle of open access.
- B.11 The Council also asks the following question to help establish the level of access 'Does the organisation actively encourage membership from particular groups in the community e.g., young people, women, older age groups, persons with disability, ethnic minorities' etc.?'

Provision of facilities

- B.12 Clubs which provide training or education are encouraged, as are those who provide schemes for particular groups to develop their skills e.g., young people, the disabled, retired people.
- B.13 A number of organisations run a bar. The mere existence of a bar will not in itself be a reason for not granting relief. However, the Council focuses on the main purpose of the organisation. The Council is encouraged to examine the balance between playing and non-playing members.
- B.14 Within this area, the Council also considers whether the facilities provided relieve the Council of the need to do so or enhance and supplement those that it does provide.

Discretionary Relief - Non-Profit Organisations including Recreation - the Council's Policy

- B.15 The Council will consider applications for discretionary rate relief from non-profit making organisations on their own merits on a case-by-case basis. In determining the application, the following matters will be taken into consideration (The list is not exhaustive):
- How the organisation supports and links into the Council's corporate vision and priorities;
 - Whether the facilities provided include education and/or training for members as a whole or for special groups;
 - The extent to which the facilities provided reduce the demand for Council services or produce savings;
 - Any membership and fee structure and whether the facilities are accessible to all residents, including whether there are concessions for certain groups, for example people on a low income or young people under 18;
 - If covered by a membership scheme, membership numbers and the number and percentage of these members that are local residents; and
 - If the organisation has due regard to equality issues and if its facilities are used by all members of the community, for example black and minority ethnic residents, people over 50 and people with disabilities.
- B.16 The Council will also require additional financial information including:
- If the organisation runs a bar or food provision, the level of income from this activity and how this money is used.; and
 - Whether the organisation operates at a local or national level and where appropriate, the local and

national funding streams and financial position of the organisation.

Appendix C
Discretionary Relief - Rural Rate Relief - Mandatory Relief
recipients

Discretionary Relief - Rural Rate Relief - Mandatory Relief recipients

What are the qualifying criteria for Mandatory Relief?

- C.1 For a Post Office or General Store to be entitled to 50% Mandatory Relief, all the following criteria must be met:
- The Rateable Value of the property must not exceed £8,500 (from 1 April 2023);
 - The property must be used as a Post Office or a General Store (see below for definition), or both;
 - The property must be the only Post Office or the only General Store within the Rural Settlement.
- C.2 For a Public House or Petrol Filling Station to be entitled to 50% Mandatory Relief, all the following criteria must be met:
- The Rateable Value of the property must not exceed £12,500 from 1 April 2023);
 - The property must be used as a Public House (see below for definition) or a Petrol Filling Station (see below for definition); and
 - The property must be the only Public House or the only Petrol Filling Station within the Rural Settlement.
- C.3 For a village food shop to be entitled to 50% Mandatory Relief, all the following criteria must be met:
- The Rateable Value of the property must not exceed £8,500 from 1 April 2023); and
 - The property must be used as a shop selling mainly food (see below for definition).

What rural settlements exist within the Maldon District Council's area?

- C.4 The following are deemed to be rural settlements within the District Council's area:

Althorne – North	Althorne _ South	Asheldham
Bradwell-On-Sea	Bradwell Waterside	Cold Norton
Dengie	Goldhanger	Great Braxted
Great Totham – North	Great Totham -South	Hazeleigh
Heybridge Basin	Langford	Latchingdon
Little Braxted	Little Totham	Mundon
North Fambridge -North	North Fambridge -South	Purleigh
St. Lawrence	Steeple	Stow Maries
Tillingham	Tollesbury	Tolleshunt D'arcy
Tolleshunt Knights	Tolleshunt Major	Ulting
Wickham Bishops	Woodham Mortimer	Woodham Walter

What is the definition of a General Store?

- C.5 For the purposes of Rural Rate Relief, 'General Store' means a business or trade, which wholly or mainly sells by retail both food (other than confectionery) for human consumption and general household goods. Where there are two or more General Stores within the same Rural Settlement, none can qualify

for Mandatory Relief on that basis, although if one of them functions as a Post Office or a Food Shop relief may be claimed independently on that ground. However, both a General Store and a Post Office in the same Rural Settlement will qualify for Mandatory Relief, provided that, they both meet the criteria. Although a General Store or a Post Office may not meet the criteria for Mandatory Relief, they may still be eligible to apply for Discretionary Relief.

What is the definition of a Public House?

- C.6 For the purposes of Rural Rate Relief, 'Public House' means any premises as defined in the Licensing Act 2003, which has a premises license authorising sale by retail of alcohol for consumption on the premises. In addition, the premises must be used principally for retail sales of alcohol to members of the public for consumption on the premises, and sales must not be subject to the condition that buyers reside at or consume food on the premises.

What is the definition of a Petrol Filling Station?

- C.7 For the purposes of Rural Rate Relief, 'Petrol Filling Station' means premises where petrol or other automotive fuels are sold retail to the general public for fuelling motor vehicles intended or adapted for use on roads.

What is the definition of a Food Shop?

- C.8 For the purpose of Rural Rate Relief, 'Food Shop' means a trade or business consisting wholly or mainly of the sale by retail of food for human consumption (excluding confectionery and catering – in this context catering means any supply of food for consumption on the premises on which it is supplied and any supply of hot food for consumption off the premises). This definition may also include shops, which sell mainly household foods, and which may partly also sell hot take away food or food consumed on the premises. But shops whose main business is a restaurant, tearoom, take-away, or confectionery sales are not food shops and so will not qualify for mandatory relief.

What are the qualifying criteria for Discretionary Relief?

- C.9 The Council may grant up to 50% Discretionary Relief in respect of any property which qualifies for 50% Mandatory Relief and the Council may also grant up to 100% Discretionary Relief to any rural business which does not meet the mandatory provisions. It should be noted that for 2023 onwards Central Government has requested that Council grant 50% discretionary relief to all ratepayers who receive 50% mandatory rural rate relief.

Rural Rate Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients, the Council's Policy for granting discretionary relief.

- C.10 As Central Government has requested and fully funds any additional relief granted to ratepayers who receive mandatory rural rate relief, the Council will automatically grant the additional 50% until such

time as primarily legislation is changed.

Appendix D

Discretionary Relief - Premises within Rural Settlements

Discretionary Relief – Premises within Rural Settlements

- D.1 In addition to having the ability to grant discretionary relief to those in receipt of mandatory relief, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 allows discretionary relief of up to 100% to be granted where the rateable value is £16500 or less and:
- (a) Property is used for purposes which are of benefit to the local community; and
 - (b) It would be reasonable for the billing authority to award relief, having regards to the Council's Council Taxpayers.
- D.2 As with most discretionary relief, part of the cost, is met by Central Government and the balance from local sources.
- D.3 The main criteria for granting discretionary relief in respect of rural rate relief is that premises are used to benefit the local community.

Benefit to the local community

- D.4 Whilst each application for the relief will be considered on its own merits, there are certain factors which weigh heavily in the decision-making process. It is this Council's belief that the spirit of the legislation is to assist businesses and amenities, which contribute significantly to the quality of life of the people who have their main home in the Rural Settlement.
- D.5 To be successful for consideration, a business must show that its existence is a significant benefit to the local community with the majority of local residents directly benefiting from services or facilities provided by that business

Rural Rate Relief – the Council's Policy for granting discretionary relief.

- D.6 The Council will also consider applications for a discretionary rural rate relief from all ratepayers, not entitled to mandatory relief up to a maximum of 100%.
- D.7 In determining the application the following matters will be taken into consideration:
- The granting of any discretionary relief will be essential in ensuring the viability of any business within the rural settlement;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief is proportionate given the level of any business rates charged compared with the overall turnover of the business;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief will assist the business in continuing to be viable and / or prevent the business from failing;
 - The business is considered by the Council to be essential to the community and that any reduction or withdrawal of the business will have a serious detrimental effect on the rural settlement;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief is reasonable having regard to the effect on taxpayers of the District.

Appendix E

Discretionary Relief - Localism Act 2011

Discretionary Relief – Localism Act 2011

General explanation

- E.1 Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 amended Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. These provisions allow all Councils to grant discretionary relief in **any** circumstances where it feels fit having regards to the effect on the Council Taxpayers of its area.
- E.2 The provisions are designed to give authorities flexibility in granting relief where it is felt that to do so would be of benefit generally to the area and be reasonable given the financial effect to Council Taxpayers.

Discretionary Relief – Localism – the Council’s Policy

- E.3 Applications will be considered from any ratepayer who wishes to apply. However, where a ratepayer is suffering hardship or severe difficulties in paying their rates liability then relief can be granted under the existing provisions as laid down by Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. There will be no requirement to grant relief in such cases under the Council’s discretionary relief policy.
- E.4 Any ratepayer applying for discretionary rate relief under these provisions and who does not meet the criteria for existing relief (charities, non-profit making organisations etc.) must meet **all** of the following criteria and the amount of relief granted will be dependent on the following key factors:
- (a) The ratepayer **must not** be entitled to mandatory rate relief (Charity or Rural Rate Relief);
 - (b) The ratepayer **must not** be entitled to Central Government funded reliefs;
 - (c) The ratepayer **must not** be an organisation that could receive relief as a non-profit making organisation or as a sports club or similar;
 - (d) The ratepayer **must** occupy the premises (no discretionary rate relief will be granted for unoccupied premises);
 - (e) The premises and organisation **must** be of *significant* benefit to residents of the Council’s area;
 - (f) The premises and organisation **must** relieve the Council of providing similar facilities;
 - (g) The ratepayer **must**;
 - Provide facilities to certain priority groups such as elderly, disabled, minority groups, disadvantaged groups; **or**
 - Provide *significant* employment or employment opportunities to residents of the Council; **or**
 - Provide the residents of the area with such services, opportunities or facilities that cannot be obtained locally or are not provided locally by another organisation;
 - (h) The ratepayer **must** demonstrate that assistance (provided by the discretionary rate relief) will be for a *short time only* **and** that any business / operation is financially viable in the medium and long term;
 - (i) whether the premises occupied are considered to be reasonable having regard to the size and location of the premises, the size and nature of the organisation, and the use being made of the premises by the organisation; **and**

- (j) The ratepayer **must** show that the activities of the organisation are consistent with the Council's core values and priorities.

E.5 Where a ratepayer can demonstrate that **all** of the above criteria are met, relief will be considered for initially a short period.

Appendix F

Local Newspaper Relief

General Explanation

- F.1 This is a temporary relief that will be awarded until 2025 and the Government is not changing the legislation around the reliefs available to these properties. Central Government will reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers (under section 47(3)) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance.
- F.2 The Council will be compensated by Central Government through a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Eligibility criteria

- F.3 The scheme will provide a £1,500 relief for office space occupied by local newspapers up to a maximum of one discount per local newspaper title and per hereditament.

Local Newspapers

- F.4 The relief is to be specifically for local newspapers and by that, the Council means what would be considered a “traditional local newspaper.” The relief will not be available to magazines.

Office Space

- F.5 The hereditament **must** be occupied by a local newspaper and wholly or mainly used as office premises for journalists and reporters.

Amount of Relief

- F.6 The amount of relief is limited to a maximum of one discount per newspaper title (e.g., per newspaper name) **AND** per hereditament.

Local Newspaper Relief – the Council’s policy for granting discretionary relief.

- F.7 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

Appendix G

Supporting Small Businesses Relief (until 31st March 2026)

General Explanation

- G.1 For the financial years 2023/24 to 2025/26, the Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out below, reimburse the Council if it uses its discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended), to grant 2023 Supporting Small Business relief.
- G.2 It will be for the Council, which administers the 2023 Supporting Small Business (2023 SSB) relief, to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to this guidance, to grant relief under section 47.
- G.3 Central government will reimburse the Council and major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the 2023 Supporting Small Business relief that falls within the definitions in this policy.

Who is eligible for the 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief (2023 SSB) and how much relief will be available?

- G.4 2023 SSBR will help those ratepayers who as a result of the change in their rateable value at the revaluation are losing some or all of their Small Business, Rural Rate Relief or 2017 SSBR and, as a result, are facing large increases in their bills.
- G.5 Charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs, who are already entitled to mandatory 80% relief, are not eligible for 2023 SSBR.
- G.6 To support these ratepayers, 2023 SSBR will ensure that the increase in the bills of these ratepayers is limited to a cash value of £600 per year. This cash maximum increase ensures that ratepayers do not face large bill increases in 2023/24 after transitional relief and small business rate relief (as applicable) have been applied. In order to simplify the scheme, the 2023 SSBR will not include minimum percentage bill increases (unlike the 2017 scheme).
- G.7 Those on 2023 SSBR whose 2023 rateable values are £51,000 or more will not be liable to pay the supplement (1.3p) to fund small business rate relief while they are eligible for 2023 SSBR.
- G.8 The 2017 SSBR scheme was provided to support small and medium ratepayers who had seen large increases in their bills at the 2017 revaluation. They have, therefore, had 6 years of support to allow them to adjust to their full 2017 bills. Therefore, for those ratepayers receiving 2017 SSB relief in 2022/23, any eligibility for 2023 SSBR will end on 31 March 2024.
- G.9 The Council will ensure this eligibility criteria is clear in the scheme approved and that relief for these ratepayers is awarded for one year only so that the relief can then be withdrawn on 31 March 2024 without further notice.

- G.10 A change of ratepayers will not affect eligibility for the Supporting Small Business scheme but eligibility will be lost if the property falls vacant or becomes occupied by a charity or Community Amateur Sports Club.
- G.11 There is no second property test for eligibility for the 2023 SSBR scheme. However, those ratepayers who during 2022/23 lost entitlement to Small Business Rate Relief (because they failed the second property test) but have, under the rules for Small Business Rate Relief, been given a 12 month period of grace before their relief ended - can continue on the 2023 SSBR scheme for the remainder of their 12 month period of grace.

Sequence of reliefs

- G.12 Hereditaments eligible for charity or Community Amateur Sports Club relief or hereditaments which are unoccupied are not eligible for 2023 SSBR. For the avoidance of doubt, small business rate relief or rural rate relief will not be applied to further reduce the bill found under 2023 SSBR (to avoid the double counting of relief).
- G.13 The same principle applies to properties for which a Section 44A certificate has been granted (apportionment of rateable values for partly occupied properties). The presence of a section 44A certificate will not further reduce the bill found under 2023 SSBR.
- G.14 All other discretionary reliefs, including those funded by section 31 grants, will be considered after the application of 2023 SSBR.

Subsidy control

- G.15 The 2023 SSBR is likely to amount to a subsidy. Therefore, any relief provided by the Council under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations.
- G.16 To the extent that the Council is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the Subsidy Control Act allows an economic actor (e.g., a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a three-year period (consisting of the 2023/24 year and the two previous financial years). MFA subsidies cumulate with each other and with other subsidies that fall within the category of 'Minimal or SPEI financial assistance'. BEIS COVID-19 business grants and any other subsidies claimed under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement should be counted under the £315,000 allowance.
- G.17 In those cases where it is clear to the Council that the ratepayer is likely to breach the MFA limit then the Council will withhold the relief. Otherwise, the Council may include the relief in bills and ask the ratepayers, on a self-assessment basis, to inform the Council if they are in breach of the MFA limit.
- G.18 MFA subsidies above £100,000 are subject to transparency requirements. This is not cumulated per beneficiary but applies per subsidy award. This means that for every individual subsidy provided of more than £100,000, the Council will include details of the subsidy on the subsidy control database.

Recalculations of reliefs

- G.19 As with other reliefs, the amount of SSBR awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or to the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.
- G.20 Under regulations made under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 authorities must give at least 12 months' notice of a revocation or variation of a rate relief scheme the effect of which would be to increase rate bills. Such a revocation or variation can only take effect at the end of a financial year (other than to comply with international agreements). But within these regulations, the Council may still make decisions which are conditional upon eligibility criteria. If a change in circumstances renders a property ineligible, the relevant bill can be amended in the year to reflect the loss of the relief.
- G.21 Therefore, when making an award for SSBR, the Council will ensure the conditions of the award that the relief are subject to the property's continuing eligibility. If the use of the property changes so that it is no longer eligible, the relevant chargeable amount must be recalculated to reflect that fact.
- G.22 The Council will also ensure that the scheme provides that eligibility for those ratepayers previously in the 2017 SSBR scheme in 2022/23 are eligible for one year of relief only and that the relief will then be withdrawn from those ratepayers on 31 March 2024 without further notice.

Supporting Small Business Rates Relief (2023/24 to 2025/26) - the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

- G.23 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

Appendix H

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief (2022/23 only)

Purpose of the Policy

- H.1 The purpose of this policy is to determine the level of discretionary relief to be awarded in respect of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief Scheme for the financial year commencing 1st April 2022.
- H.2 This is a government led initiative and the Council is keen to support businesses as far as possible.

General Explanation

- H.3 The 2022/23 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief scheme will provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality, and leisure properties with a 50% relief, up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business.

Who is eligible for the relief?

- H.4 Hereditaments which benefit from the relief will be those which for a chargeable day in 2022/23:
- (a) meet the eligibility criteria; and
 - (b) the ratepayer for that chargeable day has not refused the relief for the eligible hereditament. The ratepayer may refuse the relief for each eligible hereditament anytime up to 30 April 2023. The ratepayer cannot withdraw their refusal for either all or part of the financial year.
- H.5 In line with the legal restrictions in section 47(8A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council may not grant the discount to themselves certain precepting authorities (e.g., a parish or county council) or a functional body, within the meaning of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.

How much relief will be available?

- H.6 Subject to the £110,000 cash cap per business, the total amount of government-funded relief available for each property for 2022/23 under this scheme is for chargeable days from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, 50% of the chargeable amount.
- H.7 The relief will be applied after mandatory reliefs and other discretionary reliefs funded by section 31 grants have been applied, but before those where the Council has used their wider discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act 2011, which are not funded by section 31 grants.
- H.8 Subject to the cash cap, the eligibility for the discount and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis. The formula that will be used to determine the amount of relief to be granted for a chargeable day for a particular hereditament in the financial year 2022/23 is $V \times 0.5$, where V is the daily charge for the hereditament for the chargeable day after the application of any mandatory relief and any certain other discretionary reliefs.

- H.9 Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties up to the maximum £110,000 cash cap, per business.

The cash cap and subsidy control

- H.10 Under the cash cap, no ratepayer can in any circumstances exceed the £110,000 cash cap across all of their hereditaments in England.
- H.11 Where a ratepayer has a qualifying connection with another ratepayer then those ratepayers will be considered as one ratepayer for the purposes of the cash caps. A ratepayer shall be treated as having a qualifying connection with another:
- (a) where both ratepayers are companies, and
 - (i) one is a subsidiary of the other; or
 - (ii) both are subsidiaries of the same company; or
 - (b) where only one ratepayer is a company, the other ratepayer (the "second ratepayer") has such an interest in that company as would, if the second ratepayer were a company, result in its being the holding company of the other.
- H.12 Furthermore, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme is likely to amount to subsidy. Any relief provided by the Council under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations.
- H.13 To the extent that the Council is seeking to provide relief that falls within the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance Allowance, Article 364 of the TCA allows an economic actor (e.g., a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to 325,000 Special Drawing Rights (£343,000 as at 9th December 2021) in a three-year period (consisting of the 2022/23 year and the two previous financial years). Expanded Retail Discount granted in either 2020/21 or 2021/22 does not count towards the £343,000 allowance but BEIS business grants (throughout the 3 years) and any other subsidies claimed under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit should be counted.
- H.14 In those cases where it is clear to the Council that the ratepayer is likely to breach the cash cap or the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit then the authority will automatically withhold the relief.
- H.15 The amount of relief awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.

Eligibility for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme

- H.16 Hereditaments that are eligible for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure scheme will be occupied hereditaments which meet all of the following conditions for the chargeable day:
- (a) they are wholly or mainly being used:
 - (i) as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas, or live music venues;
 - (ii) for assembly and leisure; or

(iii) as hotels, guest & boarding premises, or self-catering accommodation.

H.17 The Council considers shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas, and live music venues to mean:

(i) Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

- Shops (such as: florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licences, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc);
- Charity shops;
- Opticians;
- Post offices;
- Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors);
- Car/ caravan show rooms;
- Second-hand car lots;
- Markets;
- Petrol stations;
- Garden centres; and
- Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire).

(ii) Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Hair and beauty services (such as: hairdressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc);
- Shoe repairs/ key cutting;
- Travel agents;
- Ticket offices e.g., for theatre;
- Dry cleaners;
- Launderettes;
- PC/ TV/ domestic appliance repair;
- Funeral directors;
- Photo processing;
- Tool hire; and
- Car hire.

(iii) Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/or drink to visiting members of the public:

- Restaurants;
- Takeaways;
- Sandwich shops;
- Coffee shops;
- Pubs; and
- Bars.

(iv) Hereditaments which are being used as cinemas

(v) Hereditaments that are being used as live music venues:

- Live music venues are hereditaments wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience. Hereditaments cannot be considered a live music venue for the

purpose of business rates relief where a venue is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or a theatre, for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended);

- Hereditaments can be a live music venue even if used for other activities, but only if those other activities (i) that are merely ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (e.g. the sale/supply of alcohol to audience members) or (ii) do not affect the fact that the primary activity for the premises is the performance of live music (e.g. because those other activities are insufficiently regular or frequent, such as a polling station or a fortnightly community event).

H.18 The Council considers assembly and leisure to mean:

(i) Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of sport, leisure, and facilities to visiting members of the public (including for the viewing of such activities):

- Sports grounds and clubs;
- Museums and art galleries;
- Nightclubs;
- Sport and leisure facilities;
- Stately homes and historic houses;
- Theatres;
- Tourist attractions;
- Gyms;
- Wellness centres, spas, massage parlours; and
- Casinos, gambling clubs and bingo halls.

(ii) Hereditaments that are being used for the assembly of visiting members of the public:

- Public halls; and
- Clubhouses, clubs, and institutions.

H.19 The Council considers hotels, guest & boarding premises, and self-catering accommodation to mean:

(i) Hereditaments where the non-domestic part is being used for the provision of living accommodation as a business:

- Hotels, guest, and boarding houses;
- Holiday homes; and
- Caravan parks and sites.

H.20 To qualify for the relief, the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used for the above qualifying purposes. This is a test on use rather than occupation, therefore hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

H.21 The lists set out above are not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list the many and varied uses that exist within the qualifying purposes.

Ineligible uses

H.22 The lists below set out the types of uses that the government **does not** consider to be an eligible use for the purpose of this discount.

(i) Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Financial services (e.g., banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, short-term loan providers, betting shops);
- Medical services (e.g., vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors);
- Professional services (e.g., solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, employment agencies, estate agents, letting agents); and
- Post office sorting offices.

(ii) Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Scheme (2022/23) - the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

H.23 Over the past few years, a number of schemes have been led by government but without specific legislative changes. These are administered under S47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The Council is keen to support such initiatives especially where they are designed to help local businesses and will look to maximise both the reliefs given as well as maximise any grants receivable. However, the Council reserves the right to vary its approach where thought appropriate.

H.24 In the case of Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief scheme, the Council will grant the relief strictly in accordance with government guidance.

Effect on the Council's Finances

H.25 As this is a government led initiative, grants for the full amount awarded will be available through section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Appendix I

Retail Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme (2023/24)

General Explanation

- I.1. At the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022 the Chancellor announced the introduction of a new business rates relief scheme for retail, hospitality, and leisure properties worth around £2.1 billion in 2023/24. This will support the businesses that make our high streets and town centres a success and help them to evolve and adapt to changing consumer demands.
- I.2 The 2023/24 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief scheme will provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality, and leisure properties with a 75% relief, up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business.

How will the relief be provided?

- I.3 As this is a temporary measure for 2023/24, Government is not changing the legislation relating to the reliefs available to properties. Instead, Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse the Council if it uses its discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) to grant relief. It will be for the Council to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to this guidance, to grant relief under section 47.
- I.3 Government will fully reimburse the Council and major precepting authorities for their loss of income under the rates retention scheme as a result of awarding the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance, using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- I.4 The government expects the Council to apply and grant relief to qualifying ratepayers from the start of the 2023/24 billing year.

Which properties will benefit from relief?

- I.5 Hereditaments which benefit from the relief will be those which for a chargeable day in 2023/24:
- (a) meet the eligibility criteria; and
 - (b) the ratepayer for that chargeable day has not refused the relief for the eligible hereditament. The ratepayer may refuse the relief for each eligible hereditament anytime up to 30 April 2024. The ratepayer cannot subsequently withdraw their refusal for either all or part of the financial year.
- I.6 The Council has decided that, for the purposes of section 47 of the 1988 Act, hereditaments where the ratepayer has refused the relief are outside of the scheme and outside of the scope of the decision of which hereditaments qualify for the discount and are therefore ineligible for the relief.
- I.7 In line with the legal restrictions in section 47(8A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council may not grant the discount to themselves or precepting authorities

How much relief will be available?

- I.8 Subject to the £110,000 cash cap per business, the total amount of government-funded relief available for each property for 2023/24 under this scheme is for chargeable days from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, 75% of the chargeable amount.
- I.9 The relief will be applied after mandatory reliefs and other discretionary reliefs funded by section 31 grants have been applied, but before those where the Council has used its wider discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act 2011, which are not funded by section 31 grants. However, the former categories of discretionary relief available prior to the Localism Act 2011 (i.e., charitable relief etc.) will be applied first in the sequence of discretionary reliefs and, therefore, before Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief. Authorities may use their discretionary powers to, at cost to themselves, offer further discounts outside this scheme or additional relief to hereditaments within the scheme. However, where the Council applies a locally funded relief under section 47, this will be applied after the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief.
- I.10 The ordering **will** be applied in following sequence:
- Transitional Relief
 - Mandatory Reliefs (as determined in legislation)
 - S.47 Discretionary Relief in the following order:
 - (i) 2023 Supporting Small Business (SSB);
 - (ii) Former categories of discretionary relief available prior to the Localism Act 2011 (i.e., charitable, CASC, rural top up, and not for profit) will be applied first in the sequence of discretionary reliefs, after SSB;
 - (iii) Other discretionary (centrally funded);
 - (iv) 2023/24 Retail Hospitality and Leisure relief scheme; and
 - (v) Other locally funded schemes (such as section 49 hardship).
- I.11 Subject to the cash cap, the eligibility for the discount and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis. The following formula will be used to determine the amount of relief to be granted for a chargeable day for a particular hereditament in the financial year 2023/24:
- Amount of relief to be granted = $V \times 0.75$ where:
 - V is the daily charge for the hereditament for the chargeable day after the application of any mandatory relief and any certain other discretionary reliefs in line with 5.3 above.
- I.12 This will be calculated ignoring any prior year adjustments in liabilities which fall to be liable on the day.
- I.13 Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties up to the maximum £110,000 cash cap, per business.

The Cash Cap and Subsidy Control

- I.14 Under the cash cap, no ratepayer can in any circumstances exceed the £110,000 cash cap across all of their hereditaments in England.

- I.15 Where a ratepayer has a qualifying connection with another ratepayer, then those ratepayers will be considered as one ratepayer for the purposes of the cash caps. A ratepayer shall be treated as having a qualifying connection with another:
- (a) where both ratepayers are companies, and
 - (i) one is a subsidiary of the other, or
 - (ii) both are subsidiaries of the same company; or
 - (b) where only one ratepayer is a company, the other ratepayer (the "second ratepayer") has such an interest in that company as would, if the second ratepayer were a company, result in its being the holding company of the other.
- I.16 The Retail Hospitality and Leisure Scheme is likely to amount to subsidy. Any relief provided by the Council under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations.
- I.17 To the extent that the Council is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the Subsidy Control Act allows an economic actor (e.g., a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a 3-year period (consisting of the 2023/24 year and the 2 previous financial years). MFA subsidies cumulate with each other and with other subsidies that fall within the category of 'Minimal or SPEI financial assistance'. Expanded Retail Discount granted in 2021/22 does not count towards the £315,000 allowance but BEIS COVID-19 business grants and any other subsidies claimed under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement will be counted.
- I.18 In those cases, where it is clear to the Council that the ratepayer is likely to breach the cash cap or the MFA limit, then the Council will automatically withhold the relief.
- I.19 MFA subsidies above £100,000 are subject to transparency requirements. This is not cumulated per beneficiary but applies per subsidy award. This means that for every individual subsidy provided of more than £100,000, the Council will include details of the subsidy on the subsidy control database.

Splits, mergers, and changes to existing hereditaments

- I.20 The relief will be applied on a day-to-day basis using the formula set out above. A new hereditament created as a result of a split or merger during the financial year, or where there is a change of use, will be considered afresh for the relief on that day.

Recalculations of relief

- I.21 The amount of relief awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.
- I.22 Under regulations made under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 the Council must give at least 12 months' notice of a revocation or variation of a rate relief scheme the effect of which would

be to increase rate bills. Such a revocation or variation can only take effect at the end of a financial year (other than to comply with international agreements). But within these regulations, the Council may still make decisions to ensure the scheme is administered in accordance with the extant rules. If a change in circumstances renders a property ineligible, the relevant bill can be amended in the year to reflect the loss of the relief.

Eligibility for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme

I.23 The Council uses the following definitions to establish eligibility for the relief:

Hereditaments that meet the eligibility for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure scheme will be occupied hereditaments which meet all of the following conditions for the chargeable day:

- they are wholly or mainly being used:
 - (i) as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas, or live music venues,
 - (ii) for assembly and leisure; or
 - (iii) as hotels, guest & boarding premises, or self-catering accommodation

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

- Shops (such as: florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licences, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc)
- Charity shops
- Opticians
- Post offices
- Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
- Car/caravan show rooms
- Second-hand car lots
- Markets
- Petrol stations
- Garden centres
- Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Hair and beauty services (such as: hairdressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc)
- Shoe repairs/key cutting
- Travel agents
- Ticket offices e.g., for theatre
- Dry cleaners
- Launderettes
- PC/TV/domestic appliance repair
- Funeral directors
- Photo processing

- Tool hire
- Car hire

iii. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/or drink to visiting members of the public:

- Restaurants
- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bar

iv. Hereditaments which are being used as cinemas

v. Hereditaments that are being used as live music venues:

- Live music venues are hereditaments wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience. Hereditaments cannot be considered a live music venue for the purpose of business rates relief where a venue is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or a theatre, for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).
- Hereditaments can be a live music venue even if used for other activities, but only if those other activities (i) are merely ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (e.g., the sale/supply of alcohol to audience members) or (ii) do not affect the fact that the primary activity for the premises is the performance of live music (e.g., because those other activities are insufficiently regular or frequent, such as a polling station or a fortnightly community event).
- There may be circumstances in which it is difficult to tell whether an activity is a performance of live music or, instead, the playing of recorded music.

vi. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of sport, leisure, and facilities to visiting members of the public (including for the viewing of such activities).

- Sports grounds and clubs
- Museums and art galleries
- Nightclubs
- Sport and leisure facilities
- Stately homes and historic houses
- Theatres
- Tourist attractions
- Gyms
- Wellness centres, spas, massage parlours
- Casinos, gambling clubs and bingo halls

vii. Hereditaments that are being used for the assembly of visiting members of the public.

- Public halls
- Clubhouses, clubs, and institutions

viii. Hereditaments where the non-domestic part is being used for the provision of living accommodation as a business:

- Hotels, Guest, and Boarding Houses
- Holiday homes
- Caravan parks and sites

I.24 To qualify for the relief the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used for the above qualifying purposes. In a similar way to other reliefs (such as charity relief), this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

I.25 The list set out above is not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list the many and varied uses that exist within the qualifying purposes.

Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

I.26 The list below sets out the types of uses that the government does not consider to be an eligible use for the purpose of this discount. Again, it is for the Council to determine for themselves whether particular properties are broadly similar in nature to those below and, if so, to consider them **not** eligible for the discount under their local scheme:

- Financial services (e.g., banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, short-term loan providers, betting shops);
- Medical services (e.g., vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors);
- Professional services (e.g., solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, employment agencies, estate agents, letting agents); and
- Post office sorting offices.

Retail Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Scheme (2023/24) - the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

I.27 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

Appendix J

Heat Network Relief

General Explanation

- J.1 In the Spring Statement 2022, the Chancellor announced that the Heat Network Relief will apply from 1 April 2022 so, for the financial year 2022/23, the relief was delivered using existing local government discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, funded by Government by means of a S31 grant. This approach has now been extended to the 2023/24 financial year.
- J.2 The Council therefore intends to provide relief under the discretionary relief provisions for 2023/24 period as requested by Government in order to assist eligible ratepayers.
- J.3 Heat networks take heat or cooling from a central source(s) and deliver it to a variety of different customers such as public buildings, shops, offices, hospitals, universities, and homes. By supplying multiple buildings, they avoid the need for individual boilers or electric heaters in every building. Heat networks have the potential to:
- reduce bills;
 - support local regeneration; and
 - be a cost-effective way of reducing carbon emissions from heating.
- J.4 Heat networks play an important role in decarbonising heat and support delivery of Government's net zero commitments. They are uniquely able to unlock otherwise inaccessible large-scale renewable and recovered heat sources such as waste heat and heat from rivers and mines.

How will the relief be provided?

- J.5 As this is a temporary measure for 2023/24, Government is not changing the legislation. Instead, Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this policy, reimburse the Council if it uses its discretionary relief powers, under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, to grant relief.
- J.6 The Council will be reimbursed following the submission of outturn data in the National Non-Domestic Rates 3 (NNDR3) form for 2023/24. In addition, the Council is required to ensure that it is able to monitor and report the take up of the scheme at Parliamentary constituency level.

Who is eligible for the relief?

- J.7 In order to be eligible for Heat Network Relief, the hereditament must be:
- (a) wholly or mainly used for the purposes of a heat network; and
 - (b) the heat is, over the next 12 months, expected to be generated from a low carbon source (irrespective of whether that source is located on the hereditament or on a different hereditament).

- J.8 Government anticipates the test at (b) above being made based on a forecast at the commencement of the financial year. The Council is not required to revisit the forecast although it may undertake a review if thought necessary.
- J.9 For the purposes of this relief, a heat network is a facility, such as a district heating scheme, which supplies **thermal energy from a central source to consumers via a network of pipes for the purposes of space heating, space cooling or domestic hot water.**
- J.10 Hereditaments wholly or mainly providing heat for a different purpose (such as an industrial process) are not eligible.

Wholly or mainly

- J.11 The test for this relief should be applied to the hereditament as a **whole** and heat network relief is **not** available on part of a hereditament.
- J.12 Many small and medium scale heat networks, such as common heating systems in multi-occupied buildings or estates, do not give rise to a separate business rates liability. In these cases, the heat network forms part of the services of the properties which have a wider purpose (e.g., offices) and therefore would not be eligible for Heat Network Relief.
- J.13 It is expected that the networks eligible for the relief will be the larger facilities which have their own business rates assessment.

Thermal energy

- J.14 The test is on thermal energy. This means that the purposes of generating electricity does not count towards meeting the **wholly or mainly test** and, as a result, Government does not anticipate hereditaments comprising power stations and a heat recovery and network system to qualify.
- J.15 A hereditament comprising a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) facility where the generation of electricity at the hereditament was more significant than the generation and supply of heat would not qualify for the relief. However, if a heat recovery and network system taking heat from a power station was, for whatever reason, in a separate hereditament from the power station then it may still qualify subject to meeting the other tests of eligibility.
- J.16 Similar, considerations will apply where the heat is being taken from an incinerator or Energy from Waste (EfW) Plant. If the heat network forms part of the same hereditament as the incinerator or EfW plant then, unless it has been designed specifically as a heat network, it is unlikely to pass the wholly or mainly test (its primary purpose more likely being incineration of waste or generation of power). However, it may qualify (subject to the other tests of eligibility) if the heat network forms its own hereditament (i.e., if the heat is coming in from a different hereditament such as the case of a heat network which purchases heat from a separately assessed EfW plant).

The heat is generated from a low carbon source.

- J.17 A low carbon source is a source of which at least:
- (a) 50% is renewable as defined below;
 - (b) 50% is waste heat;
 - (c) 75% is cogeneration heat (where cogeneration' means the simultaneous generation in one process of thermal energy and electrical or mechanical energy); or
 - (d) 75% is a combination of the sources above.
- J.18 A renewable source is any of the sources listed in Class 1(e) of the Schedule to the Valuation for Rating (Plant and Machinery) (England) Regulations 2000 (SI 2000 No. 540) as inserted by regulation 2(b) of the Valuation for Rating (Plant and Machinery) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- J.19 Waste heat includes heat unavoidably generated as a by-product of another process, which would be wasted if not used for the purposes of a district heating network. This may include heat generated through the incineration of waste.
- J.20 Combined Heat and Power (CHP) sources will qualify as sources of cogeneration heat including gas CHP. However, a hereditament comprising a CHP facility would still have to meet the first test of the relief – that the hereditament was **wholly or mainly** used for the purposes of a heat network (and not for example wholly or mainly for the purpose of generating and selling electricity).

How much relief will be available?

- J.21 Relief is available at 100% of the chargeable amount for the hereditament for any day on which the eligibility criteria are met. Therefore, for eligible hereditaments the rates liability will fall to nil from 1 April 2023.
- J.22 Heat Network relief is **not** available on only part of the hereditament. If the eligibility criteria are met for the hereditament as a whole then full relief will be applied even if, for example, the hereditament contains some plant (such as a back-up boiler) which may not in isolation meet the low carbon tests.
- J.23 Equally, a hereditament which overall does not meet the eligibility criteria cannot receive partial relief on an individual item of plant which in isolation may have passed the tests.
- J.24 The Heat Network Relief will be applied after mandatory reliefs but before any other discretionary reliefs.

Recalculations of relief

- J.25 The amount of Heat Network Relief awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This may include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or to the hereditament.

- J.26 Under the Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989, the Council must give at least 12 months' notice of a revocation or variation of a rate relief scheme, the effect of which would be to increase rate bills. Such a revocation or variation can only take effect at the end of a financial year. But, within these regulations, the Council may still (and will) make decisions which are conditional upon eligibility criteria. If a change in circumstances renders a property ineligible, the Council will amend the rate liability to reflect the loss of the relief.
- J.27 In view of the above, when making an award for Heat Network Relief, the Council will ensure that the award will be subject to the property's continuing eligibility. If the use of the property changes so that it is no longer eligible, the relevant chargeable amount will be recalculated to reflect that fact.

Subsidy control

- J.28 The Heat Network relief is subject to the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations. Businesses eligible for relief will need to fulfil any requirements in place to ensure compliance with those obligations in advance of, during, and after claiming relief.

Effect on the Council's Finances

- J.29 As this is a Government led initiative, grants for the full amount awarded will be available through section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Heat Network Relief - the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

- J.30 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

Appendix K

Section 49 - Hardship Relief

General explanation

- K.1 The Council is able to exercise its discretion under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to provide either partial or full relief for non-domestic rate payments in cases of hardship where it would be reasonable to do so having due regard to the interests of council tax payers in general.

Section 49 Hardship Relief – the Council's Policy

- K.2 The Council will consider applications for hardship relief from individuals and organisations based on their own merits on a case-by-case basis. The Lead Specialist – Service Delivery will consider applications. Application forms are available at the following links:
- [General Discretionary application form](#)
 - [Hardship Discretionary additional questions](#)
- K.3 In making decisions on whether to award the relief the Council takes into account the following criteria (not listed in any priority):
- Any reduction or remission of rates on the grounds of hardship should be the exception rather than the rule;
 - Any reduction of the rates must be shown to be significant to the future viability of the business;
 - The business must continue to trade;
 - Cash flow forecasts for a minimum of the next twelve months must be provided together with a comprehensive Business Plan incorporating a brief history of the business;
 - The test of "hardship" is not strictly confined to financial hardship and that this, in itself, is not a deciding factor;
 - The loss of the business would reduce amenities of an area if it is the sole provider of a service in the area;
 - The loss of the business would worsen the employment prospects in the area;
 - The interests of the Council Tax payers of the area would be best served by awarding the relief;
 - The business must demonstrate how it is beneficial to the local community and why it is currently suffering financial hardship;
 - The business provides employment to local residents in an area where employment opportunities are limited;
 - Independent advice given by banks or financial advisors should be sought to demonstrate the future viability of the business;
 - Applications will only be considered where signed by the ratepayer, or, where an organisation is the ratepayer, an appropriately authorised representative of the organisation; and
 - The ratepayer will provide additional information as deemed necessary by the Council to be essential in order for a fair evaluation of the application.