

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 8th February 2016

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor Rob Anderson, Commissioner for finance & strategy

PART I **KEY DECISION**

BUSINESS RATES POLICY CHANGES

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is for members to consider all Business Rates related policies in one document and to review and comment on these before approving the range of policies and therefore reliefs available.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) That the Business Rates policies included in Appendix A be approved.
- (b) That the reliefs which have ended be noted.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Slough Borough Council supports businesses facing financial issues by referring them to business coaches that can provide expert advice on how to strengthen and grow their business. This is part of a collaboration between the Council, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Business Growth Hub. This support prevents businesses from decline and closure and can provide routeways out of financial hardship.

The report indirectly supports all of the strategic priorities and cross cutting themes. The maintenance of good governance within the Council to ensure that it is efficient, effective and economic in everything it does is achieved through the improvement of corporate governance and democracy by ensuring effective management practice is in place.

4 Other Implications

- (a) Financial

Wherever the Council exercises discretion over Business Rates, there is a cost to the overall taxpayer. As part of the financial planning assumptions for the year ahead, the Council makes an estimated assessment as to the level of Business Rates discretionary relief that will be awarded, though the final award will be based around compliance with the various policies and the enabling legislation included within this report. If members decide to take a different approach to the policies included in this report it will have an impact on the next year's budget position; for example if an extra period of relief was granted then there would be a cost in the next financial year, the estimated Business Rates income for the Council would fall, and extra savings would need to be delivered.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal		
Property		
Human Rights		
Health and Safety		
Employment Issues		
Equalities Issues		
Community Support		
Communications		
Community Safety		
Financial – changed policies lead to more applications	The criteria have been changed in some policies to further comply with the Council's objectives and make a more focussed level of discretion	Demand falls for these policies, leading to less Business Rates being paid
Timetable for delivery		
Project Capacity		
Other		

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

None.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

No identified need.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 The Council has a variety of policies in place in respect of Business Rates and these include the following. The table below sets out an update on these policies in respect of Business Rates, and where changes to existing policies that are continuing have been made these are included in appendix A.

Policy	Changes for 2016-17
Discretionary Business Rate Relief to Charities and other Not-for-Profit Organisations	None
Rate Relief for Properties that are Partially Unoccupied for a Temporary Period	Amendments to fit with 5YP – see appendix A
Hardship Relief	None
General Rate Relief	None
Reoccupation Relief	Removed per the Autumn Statement
Retail Relief	Removed per the Autumn Statement
Inward Investment Policy	None
To extend the existing Business Rate relief policy in respect of flooding	None

5.2 At the Autumn Statement, the Government also announced that Small Business Rate Relief will continue for a further 12 months.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

N/A

7 **Conclusion**

This report summarises a range of changes to existing Business Rates related policies and, if approved, these will be placed in the same updated document on the Council's website.

8 **Appendices Attached**

'A' - Changes to Business Rate Relief policies

9 **Background Papers**

'1' - Existing Business Rates relief policies 2015