

Policy for considering applications for Discretionary Rate Relief

Charitable and not for profit organisations

Under National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) legislation the Council has the power to award discretionary rate relief to certain charitable or not for profit organisations where the following conditions are satisfied.

All or part of the property is occupied by one or more institutions or organisations which are:

- Not established for profit, **and**
- Whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts; or
- Used wholly or mainly for recreation by a not-for-profit club or society.

Discretionary rate relief cannot be awarded if the ratepayer is a billing or precepting authority.

The process for considering applications is as follows:

- Not-for-profit organisations are asked to apply for discretionary rate relief (in isolation or as ‘top-up’ every two years, all applications to be considered at the same time.
- Cabinet to decide annually which organisations are to receive relief based on criteria including how the organisation assists the Council to achieve its priorities (see below). This includes deciding the level of relief to be granted in each case.

Criteria	Explanation
Links to Council priorities	The extent to which the activities of the organisation support the Council’s priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan, and specifically supporting and developing the local economy and providing good value for money through a balanced budget.
Evidence of financial need including reserve levels and assets	Organisations with high levels of reserves (covering more than 12 months’ expenditure) or who cannot demonstrate a financial need would not be a priority for rate relief.

Membership within District	As 40% of the relief is funded by SDC taxpayers priority will be given to those organisations with a high proportion of members from within the District.
Membership open to all	To give all residents an opportunity to benefit from the rate relief, priority should be given to organisations where membership is open to all.
Membership fee levels	Where membership fees are charged they should not be so high as to exclude any of the community.
Extent to which activity is based around Bar and use of profits from it	Priority would not be given to those organisations where the bar is the main activity. It would be expected that any profits from the bar would be put back to fund club expenses.

Discretionary rural rate relief

Certain types of business in rural villages, with a population below 3,000, may qualify for rate relief of 50%. Businesses that qualify for this relief are the sole general store and the sole post office in the village, provided it has a rateable value of up to £8,500, any food shop with a rateable value of up to £8,500 and the sole pub and the sole petrol station in the village provided it has a rateable value of up to £12,500. The Council has discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill on such property.

The Council may decide to give up to 100% relief to any other business in such a rural village, with a rateable value of up to £16,500, if it is satisfied that the business is of benefit to the community and having regard to the interests of its council tax payers.

Hardship Relief

Hardship relief is granted in exceptional circumstances, any business can apply for hardship relief if they can show the following:

- The business would suffer hardship if relief was not granted; and
- It is in the interests of council tax payers for relief to be granted.

An application needs to be supported by current trading figures as well as previous audited accounts or accounts accepted by HMRC. In assessing an

application regard will be had to employment issues for the company or any related business and the impact that the loss of business would have on the local area. The current approval process is that the Finance Team carries out a review of the business's accounts and the Chief Finance Officer decides whether hardship relief is appropriate based on each case's merits. In practice hardship relief has been granted in only exceptional cases to date.