



CABINET – 29TH JULY 2015

**SUBJECT: NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF GRANT FUNDING – WG
'WALES RETAIL RELIEF SCHEME' 2015/16**

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND S151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Welsh Government (WG) Minister for Economy, Science and Transport has announced a new national non-domestic rate (NNDR), also known as business rate, 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme' 2015/16. Relief granted by the Authority under this new scheme is to be reimbursed by WG by way of a specific cash-limited grant but, before any relief is awarded, the Authority must consider and adopt the new scheme. Approval is therefore sought to adopt the new retail relief scheme in accordance with the guidance set out at Appendix 1.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report gives details of a new rate relief scheme offered by WG and attaches at Appendix 1 details of the new Scheme. Adoption of the new scheme as set out at Appendix 1 is obligatory because WG has prescribed the details for the scheme. The Authority must formally adopt the new scheme set out in the guidance at Appendix 1 in order to obtain the WG grant funding.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This grant-funded initiative is aimed at developing economic activity in Wales. This is linked to the Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Prosperous theme from the Caerphilly Delivers - Single Integrated Plan.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 WG has announced the 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme' 2015/16 (the Scheme). It is intended that the relief under the Scheme will be made available subject to the Authority adopting the new Scheme as set out in the guidance at Appendix 1 and accepting the grant offer.
- 4.2 The Scheme aims to provide assistance for eligible occupied retail non-domestic properties with a rateable value of £50,000 or less by offering relief of up to £1,500 on the business rate bill for the financial year 2015/16, subject to State Aid limits. The estimated funding for the Scheme in respect of this Authority is £724k but the grant terms allow the Authority to submit evidence no later than 31st October 2015 to WG to increase this, if the estimate proves inadequate.

- 4.3 This is the second consecutive year in which WG has established a 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme'. The only difference between this year's scheme and last year's scheme is the amount of relief offered; in 2014/15 the maximum relief offered was £1,000 whereas in 2015/16 this amount has been increased to £1,500.
- 4.4 Relief is to be provided under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 in accordance with the criteria and conditions specified in the guidance set out at Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.5 Appendix 1 is a guidance document issued by WG which in effect prescribes the detailed criteria and conditions for the Scheme.
- 4.6 In order to qualify for this rate relief, the guidance requires that the ratepayer completes an application form issued by the Authority relating to the Scheme; such application to be submitted to the Authority within the time periods detailed in the guidance.
- 4.7 As a condition of accepting the grant offer, the Authority must make the business community aware of the Scheme through its usual channels, such as its website, Town Centre Newsletter and the 'Newsliner' publication. In addition, the Authority must write to ratepayers that it considers to be eligible for relief under the Scheme to inform them about the availability of relief and to provide information on the application process. The Authority's Business Rate Team will therefore write to all eligible businesses enclosing the appropriate application form to try and maximise take up of the Scheme.
- 4.8 Full details of the Scheme, including the qualifying criteria, are included in the guidance set out at Appendix 1.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 WG has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) regarding their 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme'. No evidence has been identified to suggest that the Scheme would have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics. Each application will be dealt with on its own merits, but will follow the guidance set out in Appendix 1

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications to the Authority as the Authority will be reimbursed by Welsh Government for any relief granted, provided it can evidence no later than 31st October 2015 (if needed) that any additional expenditure falls within the terms of the 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme' 2015/16 grant offer.
- 6.2 Based on an initial assessment of qualifying businesses for the 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme' 2015/16, this funding will be utilised for circa 560 businesses. These figures are subject to change due to the daily amendments made to the Authority's rating list.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Regarding the 'Wales Retail Relief Scheme' 2015/16, a small administration grant of £1,500 is offered by WG regarding the work undertaken to deliver the scheme.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses which have not been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet adopts, with immediate effect, the Wales Retail Relief Scheme 2015-2016, in accordance with the guidance set out at Appendix 1 and the provisions of section 47(1)(a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure that the Authority complies with the grant conditions in order to obtain and fully utilise the grant funding in respect of any rate relief awarded under the WG Scheme as detailed in the guidance set out at Appendix 1.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Finance Act 1988 and Local Government Act 1972, 2000 and 2003.

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Background Papers:

Contact Council Tax and NNDR Manager (ext. 3421)

Appendix 1: 'Wales Retail Relief 2015-16 - Guidance'