



Cabinet

17 September 2008

Report of the Policy Development Committee: Discretionary Rate Relief for Charitable and Non Profit Making Organisations

1. Cabinet will recall that on 7 November 2007 a number of changes to the Council's policy on granting discretionary rate relief were recommended by the Policy Development Committee. Legislation stipulated that some organisations qualified for mandatory rate relief, and St Edmundsbury also had the ability to grant discretionary rate relief, either to "top up" the mandatory rate relief, or to give discretionary relief alone.
2. On 10 June 2008 the Chief Finance Officer made a presentation to the Grant Panel setting out the implications of the changes to the Policy, in particular the recommendation that future applications for "top up" discretionary rate relief should be considered by the Grant Panel, using a matrix score sheet. Given that 88 awards were made in 2007/2008, this could potentially be an onerous task for the Panel, particularly as the level of funding would need to be reviewed on an annual basis for each application, and also because the Chief Finance Officer was concerned at the complexity of the matrix proposed by the Committee.
3. Following discussion, the Grant Panel recommended that the changes agreed in 2007 be amended, in favour of a simpler and more practical system for operating the discretionary rate relief policy.
4. Section 1.6 of Report Z204 sets out a proposed new policy that was considered to be workable, fair and transparent. The main changes are that all applications for "top up" discretionary rate relief would be approved by the Chief Finance Officer unless there are specific unusual applications, which would be presented to Grant Panel; a new matrix will be used to score applications; and a cap of £10,000 will be set on all discretionary rate relief awards (whether "top up" or purely discretionary).

5. The full recommendations are set out in Section 1.6 of Report Z204, and the Committee has **RECOMMENDED that the policy for granting discretionary rate relief for charitable and non profit making organisations be amended as set out in Section 1.6 of Report Z204.**

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