

## Business rates guidance

Non-Domestic Rates, or business rates, collected by local authorities are the way that those who occupy non-domestic property contribute towards the cost of local services. Under the business rates retention arrangements introduced from 1st April 2013, authorities keep a proportion of the business rates paid locally. This provides a direct financial incentive for authorities to work with local businesses to create a favourable local environment for growth since authorities will benefit from growth in business rates revenues. The money, together with revenue from council tax payers, revenue support grant provided by the Government and certain other sums, is used to pay for the services provided by local authorities in your area. Further information about the business rates system, including transitional and other reliefs, may be obtained at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

### Rateable Value

Apart from properties that are exempt from business rates, each non-domestic property has a rateable value which is set by the valuation officers of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), an agency of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. They draw up and maintain a full list of all rateable values, available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency). The rateable value of your property is shown on the front of your bill. This broadly represents the yearly rent the property could have been let for on the open market on a particular date. For the revaluation that came into effect on 1st April 2017, this date was set as 1st April 2015.

The valuation officer may alter the value if circumstances change. The ratepayer (and certain others who have an interest in the property) can appeal against the value shown in the list if they believe it is wrong. Full details on your rights of appeal are available from the Valuation Office Agency. Authorities can only backdate any business rates rebate to the date from which any change to the list is to have effect.

Further information about the grounds on which appeals may be made and the process for doing so can be found on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website.

### National Non-Domestic Rating Multiplier

The local authority works out the business rates bill by multiplying the rateable value of the property by the appropriate multiplier.

There are two multipliers: the standard non-domestic rating multiplier and the small business non-domestic rating multiplier. The former is higher to pay for small business rate relief. Except in the City of London where special arrangements apply,

the Government sets the multipliers for each financial year for the whole of England according to formulae set by legislation. The current multipliers are shown on the front of your bill.

## **Business Rates Instalments**

Payment of business rate bills is automatically set on a 10-monthly cycle. However, you may choose to pay over 12 months, if you wish to take up this offer, you should contact the local authority as soon as possible.

## **Revaluation 2017 and Transitional Arrangements**

All rateable values are reassessed at a general revaluation. The most recent revaluation took effect from 1st April 2017.

Revaluations make sure each ratepayer pays their fair contribution and no more, by ensuring that the share of the national rates bill paid by any one ratepayer reflects changes over time in the value of their property relative to others.

A £3.6 billion transitional relief scheme limits changes in rate bills as a result of the 2017 revaluation. To help pay for the limits on increases in bills, there are also limits on reductions in bills. Under the transitional scheme, limits continue to apply to yearly increases and decreases until the full amount is due (rateable value times the appropriate multiplier). The scheme applies only to the bill based on a property at the time of the revaluation. If there are any changes to the property after 1st April 2017, transitional arrangements will not normally apply to the part of a bill that relates to any increase in rateable value due to those changes. Changes to your bill as a result of other reasons (such as changes to the amount of small business rate relief) are not covered by the transitional arrangements.

The transitional arrangements are applied automatically and are shown on the front of your bill. Further information about transitional arrangements and other reliefs may be obtained from Cambridge City Council or the website [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates).

## **Unoccupied Property Rating**

Business rates will not be payable in the first three months that a property is empty. This is extended to six months in the case of certain industrial properties. After this period rates are payable in full. In most cases the unoccupied property rate is zero for properties owned by charities and community amateur sports clubs. In addition, there are a number of exemptions from the unoccupied property rate. Please contact

us for full details of exemptions or visit our website at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/business-rates](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/business-rates).

## Partly Occupied Property Relief

A ratepayer is liable for the full non-domestic rate whether a property is wholly occupied or only partly occupied. Where a property is partly occupied for a short time, the local authority has discretion in certain cases to award relief in respect of the unoccupied part. Full details can be obtained from the local authority.

## Small Business Rate Relief

Ratepayers who occupy a property with a rateable value which does not exceed £50,999 (and who are not entitled to other mandatory relief or are liable for unoccupied property rates) will have their bills calculated using the lower small business non-domestic rating multiplier.

In addition, generally, if the sole or main property is shown on the rating list with a rateable value which does not exceed £15,000, the ratepayer will receive a percentage reduction in their rates bill for this property of up to a maximum of 100%. For a property with a rateable value of not more than £12,000, the ratepayer will receive a 100% reduction in their rates bill.

Generally, this percentage reduction (relief) is only available to ratepayers who occupy either:

- a) One property, or one main property and other additional properties providing those additional properties each have a rateable value which does not exceed £2,899.

The rateable value of the property mentioned in (a), or the aggregate rateable value of all the properties mentioned in (b), must not exceed £19,999 outside London or £27,999 in London on each day for which relief is being sought. If the rateable value, or aggregate rateable value, increases above those levels, relief will cease from the day of the increase.

The Government has introduced additional support to small businesses. For those businesses that take on an additional property which would normally have meant the loss of small business rate relief, the Government has confirmed that they will be allowed to keep that relief for a period of 12 months.

Where a ratepayer meets the eligibility criteria and is not in receipt of the relief, they should contact their local authority. Provided the ratepayer continues to satisfy the

conditions for relief which apply at the relevant time as regards the property and the ratepayer, they will automatically continue to receive relief in each new valuation period. Certain changes in circumstances will need to be notified to the local authority by a ratepayer whose in receipt of relief (other changes will be picked up by the local authority). The changes which should be notified are:

- a) The ratepayer taking up occupation of an additional property, and
- b) An increase in the rateable value of a property occupied by the ratepayer in an area other than the area of the local authority which granted the relief.

## **Charity and Community Amateur Sports Club Relief**

Charities and registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs are entitled to 80% relief where the property is occupied by the charity or the club, and is wholly or mainly used for the charitable purposes of the charity (or of that and other charities), or for the purposes of the club (or of that and other clubs).

The local authority has discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill. Full details can be obtained from the local authority.

## **Relief for Local Newspapers**

The Government is providing further funding to local authorities so that they can provide a discount worth up to £1,500 a year on office space occupied by local newspapers. This was due to run for 2 years from 1st April 2017 however at the Autumn Budget 2018; the government extended the scheme for an additional year (2019/20). This scheme provided a maximum of one discount per local newspaper title and per hereditament, and up to state aid limits. The relief will be delivered through local authority discretionary discount powers (under section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988).

## **Spring Budget 2017 Relief Scheme: Supporting Small Business**

Ratepayers losing Small Business Rate Relief as a result of the 2017 revaluation will have their increases limited to the greater of either:

- (i) A cash value of £600 per year, or
- (ii) The matching cap on increases for small properties in the transitional relief scheme.

This relief will run until the next revaluation in 2021 and ratepayers will receive the relief until this date or they reach what their bill would have been within the relief scheme, whichever is first.

This relief will be delivered through local authority discretionary discount powers (under section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). Further information can be obtained from the Council.

## **Spring Budget 2017 Relief Scheme: Discretionary Scheme**

The Government is providing £300 million of funding to local authorities over 4 years to 31st March 2021 to provide discounts to ratepayers in their area on a discretionary basis.

Each authority has been allocated a share with which to design and implement a scheme to deliver targeted support to ratepayers. The £300m will cover the 4 years from 2017/18: £175m in 2017/18; £85m in 2018/19; £35m in 2019/20 and £5m in 2020/21.

Local authority allocations can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/discretionary-business-rates-relief-scheme>

This relief will be delivered through local authority discretionary discount powers (under section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). Further information can be obtained from the Council.

## **Retail Discount**

In the Autumn Budget 2018, the Government announced a one-third discount for eligible retail businesses with a rateable value of less than £51,000, up to state aid limits. This scheme will run for two years from April 2019. This discount will be applied to the bill after the application of any other reliefs, excluding any local discounts.

The Government has issued guidance on the operation of the scheme, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>.

This relief will be delivered through local authority discretionary discount powers (under section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). It is intended that for the majority of qualifying ratepayers in Cambridge this relief will be awarded without the requirement to claim it or complete an application form. This will help us deliver the relief quickly and it will be shown on your bill. Further information can be obtained from the Council.

## State Aid

The award of 'Local Discounts' is considered likely to amount to state aid. However it will be state aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations EC 1407/2013. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 'de minimis' aid over a rolling three year period. If you are receiving, or have received, any 'de minimis' aid granted during the current or two previous financial years (from any source), you should inform the Cambridge City Council immediately with details of the aid received.

## Hardship Relief

The local authority has discretion to give hardship relief in specific circumstances. Full details can be obtained from the Council.

## Rating advisers

Ratepayers do not have to be represented in discussions about their rateable value or their rates bill. However, ratepayers who do wish to be represented should be aware that members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS - website [www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org)) and the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV - website [www.irrv.org.uk](http://www.irrv.org.uk)) are qualified and are regulated by rules of professional conduct designed to protect the public from misconduct. Before you employ a rating adviser, you should check that they have the necessary knowledge and expertise, as well as appropriate indemnity insurance. Take great care and, if necessary, seek further advice before entering into any contract.

## Information Supplied with Demand Notices

Information relating to the relevant and previous financial years in regard to the gross expenditure of the local authority is available at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/).