

Central Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ

**This meeting
may be filmed.***



**Central
Bedfordshire**

please ask for Rebecca Preen
direct line 0300 300 4193
date 4 December 2014

NOTICE OF MEETING

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date & Time

Tuesday, 16 December 2014 10.00 a.m.

Venue at

Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Cllrs P A Duckett (Chairman), Miss A Sparrow (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs C F Chapman MBE, Dr R Egan, R W Johnstone, J Murray, Mrs M Mustoe,
N Warren and T Woodward

[Named Substitutes:

Mrs B Coleman, C C Gomm, B Saunders, J A G Saunders and A M Turner]

All other Members of the Council - on request

**MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THIS
MEETING**

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AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence and notification of substitute members

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 October 2014 and to note actions taken since that meeting.

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest and of any political whip in relation to any agenda item.

4. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

5. **Petitions**

To receive petitions from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

6. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

To receive any questions, statements or deputations from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of part A4 of the Constitution.

7. **Call-In**

To consider any decision of the Executive referred to this Committee for review in accordance with Procedure Rule 10.10 of Part D2.

8. **Requested Items**

To consider any items referred to the Committee at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

9. **Executive Member Update**

To receive a brief verbal update from the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources.

Reports

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
10	Budget Consultation and Residents Survey To receive a report and presentation on the responses to the Budget Consultation and results of the Residents Survey.	* 7 - 14
11	NNDR Discretionary Relief Policy To receive a report on the NNDR Discretionary Relief Policy.	* 15 - 72
12	Energy Efficiency Update To receive a report regarding the Council's Energy Efficiency Progress.	* 73 - 84
13	Councillor Code of Conduct Complaints To receive a report regarding Councillor Code of Conduct Complaints.	* To follow

The report provides Members with details of the currently drafted Committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

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Meeting: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16th December 2014
Subject: 2015 Budget Consultation and Resident Survey
Report of: Cllr Maurice Jones, Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Summary: The report outlines the methodology used to seek public feedback on financial issues and wider perceptions of the Council and the area. Headline results are also included in the report, in advance of a full presentation at Committee.

Advising Officer: Deb Broadbent Clarke, Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
Contact Officer: Georgina Stanton, Chief Communications Officer
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS	
Council Priorities:	
1.	<p>Public and stakeholder consultation is both a statutory requirement and a local priority for the Council. In terms of shaping policy and developing services the views of our customers, the residents of Central Bedfordshire, are vitally important.</p> <p>Whilst the feedback on financial issues will be particularly relevant in the context of delivering “value for money – freezing council tax”, public views on a range of community and council issues will also inform assessment of the Council’s performance in relation to all of its priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow. • Improved educational attainment. • Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable. • Better infrastructure – improved roads, broadband reach and transport. • Great universal services – bins, leisure and libraries. • Value for money – freezing council tax.
Financial:	
2.	<p>The Communications and Insight Team hold responsibility for supporting public consultation and market research exercises on behalf of the Council and the resources required to gain feedback in relation to the Budget and the wider resident survey are met from the existing budgets of this team.</p>

Legal:

3. There is a legal requirement on the Council to consult with council tax payers and non domestic rate payers on its revenue budget and council tax options. Whilst the formal consultation on the budget will take place in January 2015, the market research work conducted in September 2014 provides public feedback on broad financial principles.

Risk Management:

4. Not Applicable

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

5. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. The combined research methods of a telephone survey to a representative sample of residents together with a more general survey of the community enable the Council to consider feedback in the knowledge that the opinions of people from all sections of our community including different ethnic groups, disabled people and those from various age ranges are included.

Public Health

7. Whilst there are no specific implications for public health within the report, local health services are included on a list of community issues which respondents were invited to rate in terms of the important and their need of improvement.

Community Safety:

8. Whilst there are no specific implications for Community Safety within the report, levels of crime and anti social behaviour are included on a list of community issues which respondents were invited to rate in terms of the important and their need of improvement.

Sustainability:

9. Whilst there are no specific implications for sustainability within the report, the provision of affordable housing was included on a list of community issues which respondents were invited to rate in terms of the important and their need of improvement.

Procurement:

10. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to:-

- 1. Consider the findings of the Budget 2015 survey and the residents survey feedback in the context of the Executive's development of a proposed budget for 2015/16.**

Context

11. In order to comply with the legal requirement on the Council to consult with council tax payers and non domestic rate payers on its revenue budget and council tax options, a plan for communications and engagement has been developed. The plan includes three phases of activity; market research, consultation and feedback. The market research element of this plan is now complete. In addition to the research on budget related issues, customers have also been surveyed on their perceptions of the area, the council and its services.
12. This report explains the methodology for the research and gives headline findings. A fuller presentation of the results and analysis will be presented to the December meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Market Research Methodology

13. This exercise sought feedback from the community on local priorities and attitudes towards council tax and efficiency.

By conducting both exercises, it is possible to report reactions from the public in general and a sample which reflects the broader community in terms of age, gender and other demographic characteristics.

14. The feedback was gathered through two discrete exercises.

Firstly, a survey was distributed to all households via the autumn edition of News Central. Copies of this survey were also distributed to key service outlets such as Libraries, Leisure Centres and Customer Service Centres. Members took an active role in promoting the survey through their surgeries and the exercise was highlighted in the local media and via our own website.

During the same time period a representative group of residents were invited to respond to the same questions via a telephone survey. Additionally, they were invited to answer a range of other questions relating to the Council, its services and the local area.

15. By conducting both exercises, it is possible to report reactions from the public in general and a sample which reflects the broader community in terms of age, gender and other demographic characteristics.

Levels of Engagement

16. In total some 2,500 Central Bedfordshire residents participated in the market research.

1,286 responses were received through the Budget 2015 survey that was distributed to the community in general.

A further 1,211 residents took part through a telephone survey conducted by an independent research company.

Results Relating to Budgetary Issues

17. Whilst there was some variation in the results from the two exercises, there was broad consensus on attitudes to council tax, efficiency measures and community priorities.

18. **On Council Tax**, 68% of respondents to the telephone survey indicated that they would favour a council tax freeze, (compared to 60% of those who responded to the general survey).

22% of respondents to the telephone survey indicated that they would support an increase in council tax (compared to 27% of those who responded to the general survey) and 10% favoured a reduction in council tax (compared to 13% of respondents to the general survey).

19. With regard to **efficiency measures** the most support was given to the option of getting better value from our contracts (87% of phone survey respondents supported this and 80% of respondents to the general survey).

Other well supported options were sharing services across the public sector (80% support from the phone survey and 69% from the general survey) and generating income from our assets (72% from the phone survey respondents and 58% of respondents to the general survey).

Less supported efficiency options were changing eligibility criteria (supported by 35% of phone respondents and 26% of respondents to the general survey).and introducing or increasing charges (favoured by 32% of phone survey respondents and just 17% of those who responded to the general survey).

Finally, residents were invited to indicate those issues which they felt were most important in making an area a good place to live.

The most selected issues were:

- Clean streets
- Levels of crime and anti social behaviour
- Parks and open spaces
- Shopping
- Education
- Road and pavement repairs
- Sport and leisure facilities.

The least selected issues were:

- Decent/affordable housing
- Job prospects
- Libraries
- Community spirit
- Traffic congestion

And the issues that were most frequently cited as being in need of improvement were:

- Road and pavement repairs
- Levels of crime and anti social behaviour
- Shopping
- Public transport
- Sport and leisure facilities
- Clean streets.

Next Steps

20. The first of the three phases of activity in our Budget Communications Plan is now complete.

The second phase of this plan will be to consult on the draft budget. Once this has been prepared and published, the draft budget report will be extensively promoted to the community including local business, the media, the equalities forum and other stakeholder groups in order to elicit further feedback on the proposals within it. Feedback from this phase of activity will feed into the Executive and Full Council consideration of the budget in February 2015.

The final phase of activity will be to feedback to the community and stakeholders, the decisions of the Council through a range of communication channels and activities including the conventional leaflet together with social media, our website and face to face opportunities.

Results relating to perceptions of the Council, its services and the area:

Since Central Bedfordshire Council was created, it has committed to conduct regular market research in order to measure and monitor how its customers are experiencing the Council. This research informs policies and strategies, such as those relating to customer services and communications.

The telephone survey with a representative sample of customers included a number of core indicator questions as recommended by the Local Government Association.

On overall customer satisfaction, the Council has more than doubled the proportion of customers who express satisfaction. In 2009, 35% of respondents were satisfied, compared to 78% in 2014.

One of the key drivers of overall satisfaction is perception of Value for Money. In 2009, 19% of residents indicated that they felt the Council offered Value for Money. By 2014, this had increased to 62%.

Other factors that influence satisfaction are communications and service experience.

In the 2014 survey, 67% of respondents felt informed about the Council, compared to a national average of 66%.

74% believe that the Council [provides good quality services (an improvement of 35% since 2011) with marked improvements in satisfaction with specific services such as litter and refuse collection (up 15%), pavement maintenance (up 20%) and sports and leisure facilities (up 31%).

Whilst satisfaction with the area as a place to live remains high (at 91%), fewer residents feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area than those who do not.

Results Relating to Perceptions of the Area, the Council and its Services

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Meeting: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16 December 2014
Subject: National Non Domestic Rates, Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
Report of: Cllr Maurice Jones, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Summary: The report summarises the Council's draft Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and the results of the public consultation on the Policy.

Advising Officer: Charles Warboys, Chief Financial Officer
Contact Officer: Gary Muskett, Head of Revenues & Benefits
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. By awarding financial assistance to businesses, charities and organisations associated with sport, the arts and well being, the proposed Discretionary Rate Relief scheme is designed to support the Council's Medium Term Priorities of:
 - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
 - Improved educational attainment.
 - Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.

Financial:

2. Rate relief is not separately funded by Central Government. From April 2013, with the localisation of business rates, the existing costs of mandatory and discretionary reliefs have been accounted for within local authorities' business rates baselines. However, any changes in these costs are shared as a cost between central government (50%), the Council (49%) and the Fire Authority (1%). This was confirmed in the Local Government Finance Act and in the detailed calculations to provide baseline funding for 2013/14. The Council now collects business rates and receives an amount from the National Non Domestic Rates Collection Fund which is 49% of the net income after appeals, and other losses incorporating an adjustment for mandatory and discretionary reliefs. This figure is then subject to an additional levy, leading to a net retention of c.37% of the total NNDR income.

3. The budget for discretionary rate relief falls within the Business Rate Retention Scheme and in 2014/2015 the budget totals £613,000, which is payable to 294 organisations.

Legal:

4. The Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended, gives the Council discretionary powers to award rate relief in certain circumstances. This Policy relates to the exercise of these discretionary powers in accordance with:
 - (i) Section 44(a) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which relates to properties that are only partly occupied for a temporary period;
 - (ii) Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which allows the Council to award rate relief, having given consideration to the interest of local Council Taxpayers, where it considers that the ratepayer would suffer hardship should an award not be made;
 - (iii) Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1998 as amended by Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 which gives the Council a general power, having given consideration to the interest of local Council Taxpayers, to award rate relief to any ratepayer.
5. In exercising a discretionary power the Council is required to act in a reasonable manner and a decision taken under discretionary powers may be challenged by way of judicial review should an applicant be dissatisfied with a decision. Establishing an agreed policy for the exercise of this discretion in a manner which is fair, consistent and transparent will assist in minimising the risk of a decision being found to be unreasonable should an application be made for judicial review.

Risk Management:

6. There is a risk that a ratepayer dissatisfied with an award of rate relief or the refusal of an award may seek a judicial review of the decision. This risk can be mitigated by putting in place a formal Policy to assist in the consideration of awards and by consulting local non-domestic ratepayers as part of the process of determining the Policy.
7. There is a risk that the financial resources available to the Council may be diminished through the award of rate relief. The proposed policy requires that the interest of Council Taxpayers are taken into account in considering any award and, therefore, awards will only be made where the benefits of the award are considered to outweigh any disadvantages, including a reduction in financial resources.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

8. Not Applicable

Equalities/Human Rights:

9. Public authorities have a statutory duty to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. An equality analysis was conducted which determined that no major change is required to the proposed Policy because the proposal has a neutral impact on the Councils statutory equality duties.

Public Health

11. None

Community Safety:

12. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

13. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

14. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to:-

1. **Review and comment on the Council's draft Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.**
2. **Make any recommendations to Executive arising from this review**

Background

15. National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) are payable by owners of non residential premises in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Until April 2013 business rates were collected by the Council and passed to Central Government, who then distributed the returns nationally.
16. From April 2013, changes to the Local Government Finance regime have meant that income from business rates now more directly impacts the Councils financial position. The Council now retains 49% of business rates collected (subject to a further levy), with 1% payable to the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and 50% payable to Central Government.
17. Awards of discretionary rate relief will reduce the rates yield and, therefore, will directly affect the Councils finances.

18. The Council has discretionary powers to award rate relief in certain circumstances and it is generally recognised to be good practice to adopt a Policy to assist with the exercise of this discretion to ensure that applications are considered in a fair and consistent manner.
19. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Localism Act 2011 require the Council to maintain a Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme to award business rates relief of up to 100% to certain organisations which operate within specified criteria
20. These criteria cover:
- Charitable bodies already in receipt of mandatory relief at 80% – the Council has further discretion to ‘top up’ this relief to 100% of the rates due;
 - Registered community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) already in receipt of mandatory Relief at 80% – again the Council has further discretion to ‘top up’ this relief to 100% of the rates due;
 - Non-profit making organisations – the Council has discretion to grant ‘standard’ discretionary rate relief of between 0-100% of the business rates due;
 - Property that is in a qualifying rural settlement and is a qualifying foods shop, general store, Post Office, sole public house or sole petrol station already in receipt of mandatory relief of 50% – the Council has further discretion to ‘top up’ this relief to 100% of the rates due;
 - Businesses to which the Council considers it wishes to grant relief – the primary reason will be to encourage regeneration in Central Bedfordshire. In this regard;
 - There are 2 specific categories of property for which 100% discretionary relief can be awarded on a time limited basis (See section 13 of Appendix A):
New Build Empty Property
Long Term Empty Property
There is also the award of £1,000 Retail Rate relief in respect of qualifying retail premises (See section 12 of Appendix A)
21. The Council also has the power to reduce or remit the business rates charged in certain circumstances where the applicant organisation is enduring temporary financial difficulties. This is known as Discretionary ‘Hardship’ Relief (DHR) and may be awarded where the Council is satisfied that:
- The ratepayer would sustain financial hardship if the Council did not do so; And,
 - It is reasonable for the Council to grant relief, with regard to the interests of its Council Tax payers.
22. Prior to the creation of Central Bedfordshire Council, each District Council had its own set of policies and guidance on the application of rate relief and Officers have been working to a Central Bedfordshire Council guidance document which follows accepted good practice but a formal Policy has not previously been agreed by Members.

23. The Council last reviewed awards of Discretionary Rate Relief in 2012 and in light of the financial constraints on the Council's budget and recent Government initiatives it is appropriate to formally adopt a Policy and to then review all existing awards of relief in line with the updated Policy.
24. The proposed Policy at Appendix A details the circumstances in which the Council has discretion to award rate relief.
25. There is a statutory requirement to consider the interests of local Council Taxpayers when determining an award of discretionary rate relief on the grounds of hardship or under the general power to award relief. The proposed Policy also introduces a requirement to consider the interests of local Council Taxpayers when determining an award of rate relief in respect of partly occupied properties. Whilst this is not a statutory requirement it is considered appropriate to consider these interests given the potential impact on the Council's overall financial resources.
26. In certain circumstances the award of rate relief may assist in securing longer-term benefits for the Council and local residents, for example, should an award encourage the development of new or enhanced business properties leading to economic growth, increased employment opportunities for residents and growth in the Non-Domestic Rating tax base. The proposed Policy requires each application for rate relief to be considered on its individual merits and allows sufficient flexibility to enable awards to be made where there are longer-term benefits, subject to an award being considered to be in the best interests of local Council Taxpayers.

Ratepayers currently receiving Rate Relief

Summary of Discretionary Awards	Value of Awards
180 registered charities receiving 20% "Top Up" Charity relief	£251,160
92 not for profit or charitable organisations receiving up to 100% relief	£322,202
22 rural businesses receiving up to 100% relief	£40,260
294 awards of discretionary relief totalling	£613,624
Summary of Mandatory Awards	
387 registered charities receiving 80% mandatory relief	£5,897,403
29 rural businesses receiving 50% mandatory relief	£42,450
10 sports clubs receiving mandatory relief (CASC's)	£111,881
426 awards of mandatory relief totalling	£6,051,734
Small Business Rate Relief (Fully funded by Central Government)	
2,343 small businesses receiving relief	£4,319,088
Retail Relief (Introduced w.e.f. 1 April 2014) (Fully funded by Central Government)	
1,161 businesses awarded relief	£1,029,269
Grand Total of Rate Reliefs awarded in 2014/15	£12,013,715

Developments in Government Policy for Rate Reliefs

27. In 2013 the Government announced some policy initiatives in order to support businesses. Rather than introduce these as mandatory adjustments as it has with Small Business Rate relief, it has requested that, if Councils wish to award the reliefs, that they use discretionary powers conferred under Clause 69 of the Localism Act 2011 which amended section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1988 to allow local billing authorities to fund their own local discounts.
28. With effect from 1 April 2012, the Council is able to grant business rates discounts entirely as it sees fit within the limits of the primary legislation and European rules on state aid.
29. The powers under Section 47 of the LGFA 1988 can be used to grant specific reliefs that the Government has initiated, namely, Retail Relief, New Build Empty Property Relief and Long Term Empty Property Relief.

30. As granting the reliefs will reduce the level of Business Rate income, the Government has advised that it will finance the full cost of any awards made as per paragraph 29 above. Clearly as these reliefs align to Council policy and encourage new business and investment, as well as support local shops or community services it is advantageous to enable Central Bedfordshire Council ratepayers to receive these reliefs.
31. It is therefore proposed that these reliefs are incorporated in the DRR policy and that the reliefs are automatically applied to appropriate business accounts.

Summary of Consultations and Outcome

32. In order to ensure that the Council's final Policy for the Award of Discretionary Rate Relief properly reflects the needs of local rate payers and that the Council complies with its statutory equality duty a 6 week public consultation process was undertaken.
33. It was recognised that it is important to consult with current recipients of DRR to advise of the proposed review of the Policy, especially where they might be adversely affected. A letter was issued to all recipients of DRR as well a number of internal stakeholders including our own economic policy team, seeking views on the Policy. The letter directed the recipients to the Council's website where the proposed Policy was available and where there was the opportunity to put views forward.
34. The consultation ran from 5th September 2014 until it closed on 17th October 2014. The consultation invited responses to 21 questions.
35. Eighty Four consultation responses have been received from a cross section of organisations, including sports clubs, non-profit organisations, local charities, village shops, owners of high street retail outlets, village hall committees, as well as our own Business Support Officer, providing differing views to the proposed Policy.
36. Feed back from the consultation was generally very positive. In particular between 77% and 83% either agreed or strongly agreed with the majority of the draft Policy. The only exceptions related to the question on support for businesses that temporarily occupy part of a premises, where 63% supported the award of relief, and a question about the level of relief awarded to high street retail outlets where 60% supported the current level of support which is set nationally by central government.
37. Specific comments were received which generally supported the existing provision of rate reliefs and asked that the level of reliefs are not reduced. In particular several respondents mentioned the need to support local organisations and rural businesses as opposed to national charities.
38. The proposed Policy reflects the general expectations of organisations which may be eligible for DRR and no amendments are required.

39. It is important to note that as a result of the introduction of this policy there is likely to be little impact on the majority of organisations in receipt of DRR..
40. The results of the consultation can be seen at Appendix B.

Conclusion and Next Steps

41. The introduction of a Member agreed Policy for Discretionary Rate Relief will deliver an equitable and transparent decision making process.
42. It is recommended that the DRR Policy be introduced from 1 April 2015 and that a review of all current awards of relief be undertaken before 1 April 2015 in order to give advance notice to current beneficiaries of any changes to their entitlement. Any negative change in entitlement requires at least one full financial years notice being given to the ratepayer before an award of relief can be reduced.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
Appendix B – Public Consultation Results

Background papers and their location: (open to public inspection)

Local Government Finance Act 1988, Local Government & Rating Act 1997 Non Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations, Local Government Act 2003, Localism Act 2011.

Central Bedfordshire Council's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

Revenues & Benefits Service



**Central
Bedfordshire**

Approved by Executive:

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1. Introduction

The Council recognises the importance of supporting local businesses and organisations to promote the provision of local facilities, economic growth, employment and investment to improve prosperity across Central Bedfordshire and in particular support the most disadvantaged communities.

Councils have the power to grant discretionary rate relief to organisations that meet certain criteria. Public funds are not however unlimited, with a proportion of the costs of relief granted being borne by council tax payers. In making decisions the Council must be confident that money invested in this way will be repaid in economic and/or community benefit.

The powers for granting discretionary rate relief by councils' is provided in Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which has been amended by subsequent legislation to incorporate wider powers to grant relief under local discretion.

This policy document outlines the areas of local discretion and the Council's approach to the various discounts. There is also a summary provided of the reliefs which are awarded by Government under national initiatives.

Exceptions to this Policy

In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Chief Finance Officer may determine discretionary rate relief applications which fall outside the scope of this approved Policy.

2. General Principles

All decisions in respect of applications for discretionary rate relief must be taken in accordance with statutory requirements and give due consideration to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Decisions shall be taken in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

In addition to these requirements the following shall apply in respect of all requests for rate relief under the powers set out above.

The Interests of Central Bedfordshire Council's Council Taxpayers

In determining an award of rate relief consideration shall be given to the interests of the Central Bedfordshire Council's Council Taxpayers in making an award. Awards shall only be made where the benefits to the Central Bedfordshire Council's Council Taxpayers are considered to outweigh any detriment to those interests including, but not limited to, the financial impact of the award.

Reviews and Appeals

Decisions on the award or otherwise of rate relief will normally be taken by Head of Revenues & Benefits and the decision will be final. Although not legally required the Council has an internal appeal process in the form of a report being issued to the Chief Finance Officer for him to review the decision undertaken by the Head of Revenues & Benefits in respect of the granting or not granting relief. There will be no automatic right of appeal. An applicant may make a request for the decision maker to review a decision but only where either:

1. Additional information that is relevant to the application and that was not available at the time the decision was made becomes available; or
2. There are good grounds to believe the application or supporting information was not interpreted correctly at the time the decision was taken.

A request for a review must be made within four weeks of notification of the decision and must set out the reasons for the request and any supporting information.

Right of appeal for refusal to grant part occupied relief under section 44a Local Government Finance Act 1988 can be challenged by judicial review under Section 138 Local Government Finance Act 1988.

How to make an Application for Judicial Review

Within 3 months of the date when the grounds first arose, the applicant must submit a Notice of motion to a High Court Judge. This application must state the grounds on which the application is made

The application is made “ex parte” (i.e.) by one party without notice to the other and is supported by an affidavit detailing the facts. The purpose of this is to ensure applications are dealt with quickly and without necessary expense

If the judge considers that there appears to be reasonable grounds for a challenge, leave will be granted. This allows 14 days to submit a *Notice of motion* to the high court. This document details the issues to be examined, and any relief that is being sought.

Copies of the notice are served on all parties affected who have the right to submit affidavits if they so wish. They must exercise this right within 56 days.

Hearings may be heard by up to 3 judges who consider all the evidence before them. This is sometimes considered with the benefit of only one view of the issues if there is failure to respond by any party.

Requirements for Applications

Applications will only be considered where a written application is received from the ratepayer, or where the ratepayer is an organisation a person properly authorised to make an application on behalf of the organisation. Where the Council provides an application form the application must be made on that form.

The Council shall request such supporting evidence as it considers necessary to enable the Council to properly assess the merits of the application.

Ratepayers submitting an application shall set out, as part of the application; the benefits that the ratepayer considers will accrue to Central Bedfordshire Council's Taxpayers as a result of the award.

Timescale for Decisions

The Council will aim to make a decision regarding the application within four weeks of receiving the application and all supporting evidence considered necessary to enable the application to be considered.

Each application for discretionary rate relief will be considered on its individual merit but in making a decision on the award the decision maker will give due consideration to the requirements of this Policy.

Requirement to Make Payment of Amounts Falling Due

Ratepayers must continue to pay any amount of rates that falls due whilst an application is pending. In the event that payments are not received as due the Council may continue with its normal procedures to secure payment.

Awards for Retrospective Periods

With the exception of applications on the grounds of hardship, rate relief will not normally be awarded in respect of any day prior to the day that an application is received. However, in exceptional circumstances consideration may be given to awarding rate relief for a retrospective period where the ratepayer can demonstrate good cause for not submitting the application earlier.

Where the application is on the grounds of hardship an award may be made for a respective period where it is considered that the business suffered hardship during that period.

No consideration shall be given to an award for a retrospective period where the Council is not able to verify to its satisfaction that the circumstances giving rise to the application pertained for that period.

State Aid

Rate relief shall not be awarded in any circumstances where it appears that an award will result in the ratepayer receiving state aid that is above the current de minimis level. Each application must be accompanied by a statement signed by the appropriate person representing the business setting out the amount of state aid, including but not limited to discretionary rate relief, which the ratepayer has received within the previous three years. Applications shall not be considered until this statement is received.

General Overview of Reliefs

Mandatory Rate Relief Scheme

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the Council to grant Mandatory Rate Relief of 80% of the business rates to the following categories of business rates payers:

- Registered charities where the property is wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes
- Registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) for any club with the appropriate registration with HMRC.
- Rural shops and businesses

Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the Council to maintain a Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme that can award up to 100% Business Rates Relief to certain organisations which operate within locally specified criteria. These organisations are:

- a) A further award to registered charities up to 100%, known as discretionary “top up” relief, where the property is wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes;
- b) A further award of 20% on top of mandatory relief to registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs); and
- c) Other non-profit making organisations where the property is used for charitable purpose concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts; or is used wholly or mainly for recreation by a not-for-profit club or society.

In determining applications the Council may:

- Grant relief up to a maximum of 100% of the business rates due;
- Grant relief for a sum less than 100% of the business rates due; or
- Refuse any application for additional relief.

Detailed below are the criteria applied.

3. Charities and Kindred Organisations

Mandatory Relief

Where a property is occupied by a charity or trustees for a charity, and it is used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes (whether of that charity solely, or of that and other charities), the ratepayers will qualify for a Mandatory Allowance of 80%, and therefore the rate liability will be 20% of the full rate.

Where the owner of an unoccupied property is a charity or trustees for a charity, and it appears that "when next in use" the property will be wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes (whether of that charity, or of that and other charities), the ratepayers will qualify for a Mandatory Allowance of 80%, on the 50% unoccupied charge otherwise payable, and therefore the rate liability will be 10% of the full rate.

The Authority has no discretion regarding whether to award Mandatory Relief, however the Authority must satisfy itself that the statutory criteria is met. To assist the Authority in this task, guidance is provided in both the LGFA 1988, and by reference to other enactments and case law.

A "CHARITY" is defined as

"an institution or other organisation established for charitable purposes only, or any persons administering a trust established for charitable purposes only".

Confirmation of Charity Status

There are a number of sources that can be used to confirm "charitable status", the most common is by reference to:

- The Register of Charities maintained by the Charity Commissioners under Section 4 Charities Act 1960, and an entry in this register is conclusive proof that an organisation is a charity.
- Absence from the register does not mean an organisation has not been established for charitable purposes as certain organisations are exempt from registration.

These are:

- the Church Commissioners;
- units of the Boy Scouts or Girl Guides;
- any registered society within the meaning of the Friendly Societies Act 1896 - 1974;
- Voluntary schools within the meaning of the Education Act 1944 - 1980.

If neither of the above are applicable, the determination of whether an organisation has been established for charitable purposes may be difficult.

However, 4 general principles have been established through case law

- that it should be a trust for the relief of poverty; or,
- a trust for the advancement of religion; or,
- a trust for the advancement of education; or,
- a trust for other purposes that is beneficial to the community.

and these may be used to consider an organisations claim if no other evidence is available.

Once it has been established that an organisation is charitable by any of the above methods, to award the relief the Authority must also be satisfied that the hereditament is used wholly or mainly for a charitable purpose. This covers charitable use "over half of the time" or "use of half the property all of the time" or a combination of both amounting to more than 50%. To assist the Authority to confirm these criteria are satisfied, reference can be made to case law.

Charity Shops

Charity shops are entitled to Mandatory Relief if they use premises:

- wholly or mainly for the sale of goods donated to the charity; and,
- the net proceeds of the sale of goods are applied to the purpose of the charity.

**There is no definition of "wholly or mainly" and therefore interpretation in the literal sense must be on the basis of "more than half". However, this could be based on floor area, volume of sales or value of sales. The latter should be determined by if the net sales income from donated goods exceeds sales income from bought in goods to satisfy the term "mainly".

Charitable Relief, Relief for Registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) and Discretionary Relief

Charities are entitled to relief from rates on any non-domestic property that is wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. Registered CASCs also qualify for relief on any non domestic property that is wholly or mainly used for the purpose of that club or that club and of other such registered clubs. Relief is given at 80 per cent of the bill. Local councils have discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill.

Award of Mandatory Relief

The Authority requests that an application for Mandatory Relief be in writing, and that renewal of applications be made in writing at the beginning of each financial year.

There is also no effective date prescribed from when relief can commence so relief awards can be retrospective.

Appeals against refusal to grant Mandatory Relief

Appeal against refusal to grant relief is to the Magistrates court at a liability order hearing.

Discretionary Relief for Charities – “Top Up”

The Council will consider applications for a discretionary rate relief top up from charities based on their own merits, on a case by case basis.

Discretionary Relief may be awarded where the ratepayer is a charity or trustees for a charity, and the property is wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes (as with Mandatory Relief). In such cases, discretionary relief granted can be anything from 0% to 20%, as 80% will already have been awarded,

In determining the application the following matters will be taken in to consideration:

- ‘Top Up’ relief of up to 20% is only awarded to local charities who can clearly demonstrate financial hardship.
- Unless a special case for hardship can be proved, ‘Top Up’ relief to national charities including charity shops or other premises should not be granted.
- Local charity to be defined as set up with the sole purpose of assisting local residents of Central Bedfordshire Council and whose main office is situated within Central Bedfordshire Council
- Academy, Free, Grant Maintained, Faith and Trust Status schools are classified as charities and therefore receive 80% mandatory relief. Top up relief for schools and educational establishments who receive central or local government support should not be granted unless a special case for hardship can be proved.

The scoring criteria for awards of “Top Up Relief” is as follows:

Maximum Relief Available 20%

Narrative	% of relief
National Charity Not specific affiliation to the area (not including staff employment)	0%
Local Charity	15%

Affiliated to local area	
Reserves as % of gross rate liability Less than 300%	5%

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4. Discretionary Relief Only

Applications for up to 100% discretionary relief can also be made by any business that does not qualify for mandatory relief and where the property is not an excepted property, and where all or part of it is occupied by one or more institutions or other organisations which are – not established or conducted for profit, and, whose aims should be charitable or otherwise philanthropic, or concerned with the promotion of social welfare, education, science, literature or the fine arts.

Also discretionary relief may be granted where the property is wholly or mainly used for the purpose of recreation and all or part of the property is occupied for the purpose of a club, society or other organisation not established or conducted for profit.

Discretionary Relief to any one organisation will be limited to a total Rateable Value of £150,000 (Approximately £72,300 of rate relief).

The Council will consider applications for discretionary rate relief from non profit making organisations based on their own merits, on a case by case basis.

(NB. Sports Clubs have a separate qualify criteria – see page 16)

- **The application will be considered on the following three criteria**

1. Members resident in Central Bedfordshire

Whilst the Council accept that clubs and organisations provide a valuable leisure facility, it must be remembered that any relief granted is partially paid for by the Council Tax payers of Central Bedfordshire. As such, consideration is given as to the percentage of members/users of the facility who reside in Central Bedfordshire area.

Residents of Central Bedfordshire as Percentage of Overall Membership	% of Relief
Between 75% and 99%	50%
Between 50% and 74%	35%
Between 25% and 49%	20%
24% and below	0%

2. How are funds raised?

The Council is keen to see how clubs or organisations are trying to help themselves and be self sufficient wherever possible. Whilst income can be received by external grants from other bodies (e.g.) the lottery or another

public sector body, charging subscriptions and running fundraising events can also raise income.

Self Financing Income	% of Relief
60% and Over	25%
Between 25% to 60%	15%
24% and below	0%

3. Level of Reserves or Savings

This is a very important factor to take into account and information will be drawn from the audited balance sheet provided in support of applications. Where this is not available, copies of bank statements with a profit and loss position must be provided. Failure to supply adequate records will result in no award under this heading.

Reserves as a Percentage of Net Annual Rate Liability	% of Relief
Over 300% or more	0%
Between 100% and 299%	15%
Between 0% and 100%	25%

5. Community Interest Companies

CIC's are a new type of limited company designed specifically for those wishing to operate for the benefit of the community rather than for the benefit of the owners of the company. This means that a CIC cannot be formed or used solely for the personal gain of a particular person, or group of people. CIC's can be limited by shares, or by guarantee, and have a statutory "Asset Lock" to prevent the assets and profits being distributed, except as permitted by legislation. This ensures the assets and profits are retained within the CIC for community purposes, or transferred to another asset-locked organisation, such as another CIC or charity. A company that is a charity cannot be a CIC, unless it gives up its charitable status.

- **Discretionary relief to any one organisation will be limited to a total rateable valuation of £150,000 (Approximately £72,300 of rate relief).**
- **The application will be considered on the following three criteria**

1. Users resident in Central Bedfordshire

It must be remembered that any relief granted is partially paid for by the Council Tax payers of Central Bedfordshire. As such, consideration is given as to the percentage of members/users of the facility who reside in Central Bedfordshire area.

Residents of Central Bedfordshire as Percentage of people using the facility	% of Relief
Between 75% and 99%	50%
Between 50% and 74%	35%
Between 25% and 49%	20%
24% and below	0%

2. How are funds raised?

The Council is keen to see how clubs or organisations are trying to help themselves and be self sufficient wherever possible. Whilst income can be received by external grants from other bodies (e.g.) the lottery or another public sector body, charging subscriptions and running fundraising events can also raise income.

Self Financing Income	% of Relief
60% and Over	25%
Between 25% to 60%	15%
24% and below	0%

3. Level of Reserves or Savings

This is a very important factor to take into account and information will be drawn from the audited balance sheet provided in support of applications. Where this is not available, copies of bank statements with a profit and loss position must be provided. **Failure to supply adequate records will result in no award under this heading.**

Reserves as a Percentage of Net Annual Rate Liability	% of Relief
Over 300% or more	0%
Between 100% and 299%	15%
Between 0% and 100%	25%

An Excepted Property

An excepted property is one occupied by a Billing or Precepting Authority" and prevents authorities awarding relief to themselves.

Award of Discretionary Relief

The Authority requests that an application for Discretionary Relief be in writing, and that renewal of applications be made in writing biennially at the beginning of each financial year.

Changes in Liability

The Organisation must inform the Council of any change in circumstances, which might affect eligibility for Relief.

6. Discretionary Rate Relief for Sporting Organisations

Introduction

When an application has been received from a rate payer for Discretionary Rate Relief, the following questions must be asked and considered. Remembering that the Authority must only work within guidelines, each application must be looked at individually; the Authority must not have a blanket policy.

First of all, we will check to see if the organisation qualifies for a mandatory relief, such as Small Business Rate relief, as unlike discretionary relief, there would be no cost to the Council. If it does qualify, then this will be applied first and then topped up by the discretionary relief. *(If a club fails to complete the necessary forms to apply for a mandatory relief, discretionary rate relief will not be granted.)*

Questions the Authority must ask when considering an application

1. Does the organisation have a licensed bar?

Some sporting Clubs in the area have a licensed bar which is open throughout the year, not only for members who participate in the sporting activities offered, but also used by members who have no direct interest in the clubs activities only the reduced cost of drinks

The bar profits of clubs who are open throughout the year contributes towards a substantial portion of a club's income, and there has been evidence in the past to suggest that members subscriptions have been artificially low when a thriving bar exists.

Where Sports Clubs in Central Bedfordshire are only open seasonally or on match days, for these clubs the bar trading is a significant help towards the overall running expenses.

Licensed Bar	% of Relief
Full license operating throughout the year	No relief
Seasonal License/ Hire only	10%
Open match days only	15%
No bar	20%

2. How else are funds raised (excluding bar takings)?

The Council is keen to see how clubs or organisations are trying to help themselves and be self sufficient wherever possible. Whilst income can be received by external grants from other bodies (e.g.) the lottery or another public sector body, charging subscriptions and running fundraising events can also raise income.

Self Financing Income	% of Relief
60% and Over	15%
Between 25% to 60%	5%
24% and below	0%

3. Level of Reserves or Savings

This is a very important factor to take into account and information will be drawn from the audited balance sheet provided in support of applications. Where this is not available, copies of bank statements with a profit and loss position must be provided. Failure to supply adequate records will result in no award under this heading.

Reserves as a Percentage of Net Annual Rate Liability	% of Relief
Over 300% or more	0%
Between 0% and 299%	10%

4. Members resident in Central Bedfordshire

Whilst the Council accept that clubs and organisations provide a valuable leisure facility, it must be remembered that any relief granted is partially paid for by the Council Tax payers of Central Bedfordshire. As such, consideration is given as to the ratio of members within the club who reside in Central Bedfordshire to the overall membership.

Residents of Central Bedfordshire as Percentage of Overall Membership	% of Relief
Between 75% and 99%	30%
Between 50% and 74%	15%
Between 25% and 49%	5%
24% and below	0%

Also we are keen to know a split on what level of the membership play an active role in the clubs activities as opposed to merely being social members.

Percentage of Active Members as Percentage of Overall Membership	% of Relief
66% or more	15%
Between 33% and 65%	5%
32% and below	0%

5. How you contribute to the development of your organisation.

Clubs within Central Bedfordshire are encouraged to have an active Youth Development Policy, provide their facilities for use by disabled people or special interest groups, provide coaching/workshops/training and/or their facilities free of charge or at reduced rates to these groups. The Council also wishes to see facilities provided that compliment its own or that it does not provide. All this will contribute to providing opportunity and access to encourage participation by as wide a group as possible.

Youth Policy	% of Relief
Youth Policy, Disabled or Special Interest Group Activities/Training and Access to facilities for all or reduced fees for special groups	10%
Access to facilities for all or reduced fees for special groups	5%

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7. Rural Rate Relief

Introduction

Rural Rate Relief is a scheme of relief for qualifying businesses situated in rural areas.

Businesses that qualify are General Stores, Post Offices, Petrol Filling Stations, Public Houses and Food Stores.

The business must be in a rural area that has a population of no more than 3,000 people on 31st December of the preceding financial year.

Relief is only available on occupied properties.

Mandatory Rate Relief

This will automatically entitle the only general store and post office in a qualifying rural settlement to Mandatory relief of 50% on the full rates payable provided that the rateable value is below a specified threshold. This has been agreed at a rateable value of £8,500 or less.

Any award of Mandatory can be backdated across financial years if it has not been applied correctly as it is a statutory entitlement.

General Stores, Post Offices and village food shops with a rateable value of less than £8,500, Public Houses and Petrol Filling Stations with a rateable value of no more than £12,500, are entitled to mandatory relief. The business must be the only one of its type in the rural area and the amount of relief is 50% of the full rate.

A general store is defined as being a trade or business consisting “wholly or mainly” of selling (by retail) food for human consumption (not confectionery) and general household goods. The phrase “wholly or mainly” is not defined but is generally household goods and is generally accepted to mean “more than half”. A store that only sold food would not qualify and vice versa.

A qualifying post office is a hereditament (or part of) used for the purposes of the post office and is the only hereditament in the area.

The mandatory scheme was extended in April 2001 to entitle the sole Public House or Petrol Filling Station in a qualifying rural area to relief. The business must be cited in a property with a rateable value of not more than £12,500.

The scheme was extended further in August 2001; this entitled any shop selling (by retail) food for human consumption (not catering or confectionery), meaning shops that sell mainly confectionary, food eaten on the premises or hot food to take away will not qualify. The business must be cited in a property with a rateable value of not more than £8,500.

Any award of mandatory relief can be backdated across financial years if it has not been applied correctly. This is because it is a statutory entitlement.

If the circumstances change after the beginning of the financial year

If another qualifying shop opens in a designated rural area settlement during a financial year and Mandatory Relief has been awarded by the Council to another shop, this will continue until the end of the financial year in question.

Likewise if the rateable value increases above the £8,500 rateable value threshold, relief will still be awarded based on 50% rate liability until the end of the financial year.

Discretionary Rate Relief

Businesses that qualify for mandatory relief can also request the Council consider increasing the amount of relief up to 100%.

Applications for discretionary relief can also be made by any business that doesn't qualify for mandatory relief. The business must be a property that has a rateable value of not more than £16,500. For example, where there are two general stores in a rural settlement, neither would be entitled to mandatory relief but both could apply for discretionary relief.

Applications for discretionary relief can also be made by any business that does not qualify for mandatory relief and where the property is not an excepted property, and where all or part of it is occupied by one or more institutions or other organisations which are – not established or conducted for profit, and, whose aims should be charitable or otherwise philanthropic, or concerned with the promotion of social welfare, education, science, literature or the fine arts. Also discretionary relief may be granted where the property is wholly or mainly used for the purpose of recreation and all or part of the property is occupied for the purpose of a club, society or other organisation not established or conducted for profit.

When assessing whether to award discretionary relief, the council must consider the importance of the business to the local community. Would its absence have a detrimental effect on the lives of the community?

Gross Profit expressed as a % of Turnover	Relief to be Awarded
Up to 20%	50% (maximum that can be awarded)
21% - 25%	40%
26% - 30%	30%
31% - 35%	20%
36% - 40%	10%
Over 40%	Nil

Three years accounts are required to support each application; the figure used for recommendation purposes will be an average of the last three years gross profit expressed as a percentage of annual turnover, i.e. the overall profitability of the business before taking into account expenses.

Where no accounts are available, because it is the first year of trading, you will be granted the same relief as the previous occupier of the premises. This will be reviewed after the first year of trading.

A fresh application is required each year, together with updated accounts to consider future applications, this ensures a consistent approach is applied and assistance is targeted towards businesses most in need.

Financial Implications

Rate relief is not separately funded by Central Government. From April 2013, with the localisation of business rates, the existing costs of mandatory and discretionary reliefs have been accounted for within local authorities' business rates baselines. However, any changes in these costs i.e. by the awarding of further Mandatory or Discretionary relief, is shared as a cost between central government (50%), the Council (49%) and the Fire Authority (1%).

However, where rate relief is awarded under the powers contained in section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 the full amount of the resulting reduction in rate yield is to be deducted from the local share of the rates yield.

8. Applications under Section 44a (Partly Occupied Property)

The Council has discretion under Section 44a of the Local Government Finance Act to award rate relief where part of a property is unoccupied for a temporary period. The amount of rate relief that is awarded is determined by statute and is calculated by reference to the rateable value ascribed to the unoccupied area by the Valuation Office Agency.

The council has discretion to accept or refuse such a request. If the request is accepted, then the Valuation Office Agency is asked to supply a certificate indicating the relevant values for the occupied and unoccupied portions and this certificate is binding on the Council.

It is not intended that Section 44a be used where part of a property is temporarily not used or its use is temporarily reduced. Instead Section 44a is aimed at situations where there are practical difficulties in occupying or vacating a property in one operation perhaps because new accommodation to which the ratepayer is moving is not fully ready for occupation and it is phased over a number of weeks or months.

In determining an award of rate relief, consideration shall be given to the interests of Central Bedfordshire Council Taxpayers in making an award. Awards shall only be made where the benefits to the Central Bedfordshire Council Taxpayers are considered to outweigh any detriment to those interests, but not limited to, the financial impact of the award.

The decision whether or not to recommend an apportionment to the Valuation Office is taken by the Revenues Manager in conjunction with one of the Council's property inspectors.

The effect of the apportioned values applies for the **operative period**, which is defined as the period beginning with the day on which the hereditament became partly unoccupied and ending with the first day on which one or more of the following events occurs.

- The occupation of any of the unoccupied part of the property
- The ending of the financial year in which the apportionment was required
- The requiring of a further apportionment or
- The complete occupation of the property
- The complete vacation of the property

Applications will only be considered in respect of unoccupied parts of a property that can be clearly defined and are reasonably segregated from the occupied part of the property.

For the purposes of this policy a period of up to 12 calendar months shall be considered to be temporary and longer periods shall not be considered to be temporary.

No award shall be made where it appears to the Council that the reason that part of the property is unoccupied is wholly or mainly for the purposes of applying for rate relief.

A ratepayer making an application under section 44a shall provide a plan of the property showing the dimensions of the occupied and unoccupied area of suitable quality to enable the Valuation Office Agency to apportion the rateable value of the property between the occupied and unoccupied areas. Applications will not be considered until such time as the plan is provided.

Rate relief under this section will not be awarded in respect of partly occupied property where the partial occupation of the property may be considered to arise due to the ordinary day to day nature of the business (for example the operation of a warehouse).

Because the decision to grant a Section 44a is discretionary, any challenge relating to the non granting of the relief would be in accordance with Section 138 of the Local Government Act 1988 by way of judicial review.

Termination of Awards

Awards of rate relief shall end at the earliest occurrence of one of the following:

- a) The end of the statutory period for which relief may be allowed;
- b) The end of the financial year;
- c) All or part of the unoccupied area becoming occupied;
- d) The whole of the property becoming unoccupied;
- e) The ratepayer ceasing to be the person or organisation liable to pay non-domestic rates in respect of the property;
- f) Where all or part of the unoccupied area has remained unoccupied for one year;
- g) The commencement of a further award in respect of the property;
- h) The Council is unable to verify, following reasonable notice, that the area remains unoccupied.

Further Applications

A further application may be submitted in the following circumstances, however, where any part of an unoccupied area has remained unoccupied for more than 12 months the partial occupation shall no longer be considered to be temporary:

- a) There is a change to the area of the property which is unoccupied; or
- b) The commencement of a new financial year.

Verification of Unoccupied Areas

The ratepayer must allow a Council Officer access to the property by appointment during normal working hours within two weeks of the Council receiving the application in order to verify the occupation of the property.

Further access may be required on at least one occasion each month, during normal office hours, during the period for which relief is being awarded. In order to enable verification, access to the unoccupied area may be requested immediately without advanced notice. In the event that access is not allowed promptly without good cause the award of rate relief may be withdrawn.

Further Guidance for Applicants

All applications must be made in writing and be made either by the occupier or owner (if different) or persons acting on their behalf, e.g. agents, solicitors.

The applicant must submit with the application a plan, which clearly identifies the areas of occupation and areas unoccupied (estimated size must also be documented).

In considering the application, a visit will be made to the premises to confirm the accuracy of the submitted plan.

Relief will not be considered for a period after which full occupation has taken place (retrospective). An exception to this would be when it was possible to obtain independent evidence to support a backdated claim. Independent evidence might be in the form of surveyors' reports, dated photographs, solicitors letters, estate or letting agents records.

Applicants where favourable consideration would be likely would include although not limited to the following:

- Where there is a partial occupation of a warehouse, factory or commercial property to facilitate relocation of the company
- Where, because of a temporary downturn in trade, there is part occupation of the premises, or
- Where fire, flood or other natural disaster prevents full use of the premises

Favourable consideration would not normally be forthcoming if (but not limited to)

- For a period that has now passed
- Where the owner sublets part of the premises on a commercial basis

- Where the part occupation is likely to continue year on year
- Where there appears to be no effort to let, sell or occupy the empty part or
- Where part occupation is seasonal

At all times consideration will be made for the regulations contained within section 44a of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and any relevant case law.

9. Ratepayers that would otherwise suffer hardship (awards under section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988)

Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 allows the authority the discretion to reduce or remit the payment of rates, under section 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (occupied) or Section 45 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (unoccupied) either in part or full i.e. up to 100%.

The overriding principle shall be that each case is considered on its own merits based on the information supplied through the application process

The burden of proof for hardship lies with the ratepayer. Whilst the authority can award hardship rate relief there is no obligation to do so unless evidence of hardship can be established.

The principle purpose of awards of rate relief under this section of the Policy shall be to provide short-term assistance to businesses that are suffering unexpected hardship, arising from circumstances beyond the business' control and outside of the normal risks associated with running a business of that type, to the extent that the viability of the business would be threatened if an award were not made.

Rate relief on the grounds of hardship shall only be awarded where it is considered that:

- The ratepayer would sustain hardship if the Council failed to grant Hardship Relief; and
- It is reasonable to grant Hardship Relief having regard to the interest of person's subject to the Council Tax. For example, where employment prospects in the area would be worsened by a company going out of business or the amenities of an area would be reduced because they are the only provider of a service in the area.

The test of “hardship” need not be confined strictly to financial hardship and applicants should disclose all relevant factors affecting the ability of the business to meet its rate liability.

The “interest” of local Council Taxpayers may go wider than direct financial interests; for example, where employment prospects in an area would be worsened by a ratepayer going out of business, or the amenities of an area might be reduced by, for instance, the loss of a neighbourhood shop.

A business will not be considered to be suffering financial hardship in any annual accounting period during which it is profitable or has experienced a loss which is minor in comparison to the overall turnover of the business. In determining whether a business is profitable account shall be taken of reasonable drawings by the proprietor or reasonable remuneration of directors. For the purpose of this policy the reasonable remuneration shall be no more than 150% of the minimum wage.

Where the circumstances giving rise to the hardship pertain for a only part of the business’ normal annual accounting period the income and expenditure of the business for the period during which the circumstance pertain may be used to determine whether the business is profitable.

It is expected that businesses will take prompt action to mitigate any factors giving rise to hardship. Examples of mitigating actions may include seeking business advice, discounts and promotions, reviewing pricing, extending the range of stock or services, negotiating with creditors etc. Applications may be declined in circumstances where the business is unable to demonstrate that it is taking reasonable steps to alleviate the hardship.

Hardship caused to a ratepayer may be self evident, for example where a business has been affected by severe loss of trade due to external factors such as natural disaster.

The business must demonstrate the loss of trade or business by producing the following:

- Accounts
- Order books
- Till receipts
- VAT returns

They must show a marked decline in trade compared to corresponding periods in previous years. This can be done by the following questions being answered:

- Do the accounts show a profit or loss?
- How do previous years’ accounts compare to the current?
- What reserves are held?
- Are there long term investments which might not necessarily be reflected in the balance sheet?
- Is the ratepayer part of a larger organisation or family trust?

In addition the ratepayer must submit reasons giving rise to the application and what has contributed to them seeking hardship relief, they should also provide a business plan outlining how the award of any relief will contribute to the survival of the business. The rate payer should also indicate the impacts that closure of the business would cause to the local community e.g. how many local people are employed and where is the nearest similar facility.

In addition where the rate payer is a sole trader or operating as a partnership, details of drawings from the business and a break down of their personnel income and outgoings should also be supplied.

If they are a director of a limited company details should be provided of other interests and whether they have been involved in a business entering liquidation or ceasing to trade.

Hardship will only be granted for the period for which there is clear evidence of hardship for the ratepayer concerned.

Before any hardship is granted the Authority must be fully satisfied that the claim is from the ratepayer suffering genuine hardship.

Although applications for relief on the grounds of hardship need not be in writing the Authority does request such to ensure a consistent approach enabling elected members to consider the request having a full understanding of the situation.

Applicants must supply the last two years accounts, a current cash flow forecast and a comprehensive business plan in order for an application to be considered. Where the business has traded for less than two years accounts must be provided where available, and draft accounts or budget forecasts must be provided for the period since the business commenced trading.

No award shall be made where it appears to the Council that the proprietor of the business has failed to exercise due diligence to anticipate circumstances that may give rise to hardship, financial or otherwise, and/or to put in place measures to prevent or mitigate the circumstances

Applications will be viewed favourably where the criteria of the Policy are met and the business provides the only goods or services of that type in the local area or where the business is a niche business supplying specialist goods or services that are not widely available and vice versa.

New Businesses

4.11 Award of hardship rate relief will not be made for the purposes of enabling a new business to become established except where the viability of the business is threatened by events that could not reasonable have been foreseen when establishing the business.

Unoccupied Properties

4.12 Rate relief on the grounds of hardship in respect of rates payable for an unoccupied property will only be awarded in the most exceptional circumstances where there are clear and tangible benefits to local Council Taxpayers in making the award.

Relationship to other forms of Rate Relief

4.13 Applications for hardship rate relief shall be regarded as a last resort and will only be considered after consideration of any other forms of rate relief to which the applicant may be eligible.

Duration of Awards

4.14 All awards shall terminate at the end of the financial year if the award has not ended at an earlier date. Where the hardship continues a further application may be made in the new financial year, however in considering repeated applications consideration should be given to the number and value of previous awards. Where an application is repeated for a subsequent period the Council may require the applicant to provide evidence (preferably from an accountant or other professional adviser) regarding the long-term financial viability of the business.

10. In exercise of the Council's general power to award discretionary rate relief (awards under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended by Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011)

Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 amends the 1988 Act to allow local authorities the discretion to award rate relief to all types of businesses. The Plain English Guide to the Act addresses this as follows:

"The Localism Act gives councils more freedom to offer business rate discounts - to help attract firms, investment and jobs. Whilst councils would need to meet the cost of any discount from local resources, they may decide that the immediate cost of the discount is outweighed by the long-term benefit of attracting growth and jobs to their area."

This section sets out the Council's agreed policy for dealing with applications from such cases.

General Requirement

Applications for rate relief under this section of the Policy will normally only be considered favourably where the Council is satisfied that an award will result in tangible benefits to local residents and in particular where the award will directly result in attracting businesses, investment or jobs to the local area.

Maximum Amount of Awards

The Localism Act allows scope for the Council to award up to 100% rate relief in any one year for qualifying businesses. The maximum amount awarded shall normally be limited to no more than 50% of the rate liability except where there are exceptional circumstances which justify a greater amount.

Duration of Awards

Each amount of rate relief awarded under this policy shall normally apply for no more than one financial year at a time but new applications may be made each financial year.

In exceptional circumstances and where each of the following conditions are met an award may be made for up to three financial years:

- a. The award relates to Non-Domestic Rates payable in respect of a new hereditament or an increase in rateable value of an existing hereditament;
- b. New employment opportunities will be created as a result of the new hereditament or enhancements to an existing hereditament;

- c. The award is considered to be essential to securing the development of the hereditament;
- d. The award will not result in a lower amount of retained rates yield in respect of the hereditament than that retained prior to the development.

Information to Support Applications

All applicants are required to complete the Council's rate relief application form. Such information and evidence as the Council requires must be provided to support an application and in the event that the requested information and evidence is not provided the application may be refused.

In submitting an application the ratepayer must demonstrate with verifiable supporting evidence the benefits to the Central Bedfordshire Council Council Taxpayers that will accrue from making an award.

On receipt Council officers will prepare a report setting out the merits of the application. This report will detail, amongst other elements the economic, social and environmental benefits that may derive from granting the application.

Relationship to other forms of Rate Relief

Applications under this section will only be considered after consideration of any other forms of rate relief to which the applicant may be eligible (excluding hardship rate relief).

Guidelines for Making Awards

Each application will be considered on its individual merit but in making a decision on the award the following factors must be considered by the decision maker:

1. That awards should only be made in exceptional circumstances;
2. The value of any previous awards and the benefits to local Council Taxpayers realised from previous awards;
3. The cost to the Council, including the loss of income or of retained rates yield, in making an award;
4. The impact of the cost or loss of income in relation to the Council' overall financial situation;
5. The benefits to the Central Bedfordshire Council Council Taxpayers in making an award, and in particular whether the award will directly result in attracting businesses, investment or jobs to the local area;

6. The impact on other Non-Domestic Ratepayers in the Central Bedfordshire Council area

7. The Council's statutory equality duties;

8. That awards should normally only be made where the ratepayer' activities in the Central Bedfordshire Council area will contribute towards the aims and objectives of "Our Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012-2016", the details of which can be found at:

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/DeliveringYourPriorities_tcm6-32481.pdf#False

9. The extent to which an award will support the Council's aspiration to promote and encourage economic growth, and in particular growth in the Non-Domestic Rating tax base and in employment opportunities for residents of the Central Bedfordshire Council area;

10. The overall profitability of the business

11. Small Business Rate Relief

Small business relief came into effect from 1st April 2005. it is a self-funding scheme, which ensures that larger companies pay more business rates to enable the smaller business to pay less

Eligibility

Eligible businesses with rateable values of under £6,000 are entitled to a 50% reduction as rate relief on their liability, with additional relief available on a sliding scale of 1% for every £120 of rateable value over £6,000 and up to £11,999

Eligibility	% of Reduction
Rateable value under £6,000	50% reduction
£7,200	40%
£8,400	30%
£9,600	20%
£10,800	10%
£6,001 - £11,999	Additional 1% for each £120 i.e: .Rateable value £7,500–relief 37.5% Rateable value £9,000–relief 50% Rateable value £10,500–relief 12.5%

The relief is available to persons who are responsible for one property for which they pay non-domestic rates

Or

For one main property and other additional properties, providing the additional properties do not have rateable values of more than £2,600 and the combined rateable value of all properties is under £18,000

In addition to this relief on liability, eligible businesses with rateable values of between £12,000 and £18,000 that are not entitled to relief will be entitled to be included within the 'buffer zone' which means although they do not benefit from being granted relief they do not have to pay an additional amount towards small business relief.

With effect from 1 April 2010 the Government Doubled the amount of Small Business Rates to be awarded. This has now been extended to 31 March 2015.

A temporary change has been introduced by the Government with effect from 14 February 2014. This allows ratepayers receiving Small Business Rates Relief that take on an additional property, that would current disqualify them from receiving relief, to continue to receive the relief on the existing property for a further period of 12 months.

The application

An application form must be completed for either Small Business Relief or to be included within the buffer zone, (not having to pay towards small business relief).

All applications must be in writing. The application form will inform applicants that it is a criminal offence under section 61 Local Government Act 2003 to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement on an application for Small Business Rate Relief. Applications are renewable on an annual basis

Other Relief's taking priority over Small Business Relief

- If a ratepayer is entitled to rural rate relief, they will not be entitled to small business relief
- If a ratepayer is entitled to charity relief, they will not be entitled to small business relief
- If the ratepayer is entitled to former agricultural premises relief, they will not be entitled to small business relief

12. Retail relief of up to £1,000

Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied hereditaments with a rateable value of £50,000 or less, that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments, up to state aid limits. Determination and award of any exemption will be in accordance with DCLG Retail Relief Guidance. This relief will operate between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2016.

The list of the types of properties which are considered to be both eligible and not eligible is provided at Appendix 1. However the Council will consider each award based on individual merits and will refuse the award where it is considered that the business/retail property is not supporting the Council's wider objectives or determined to be having a detrimental impact on neighbourhoods and communities.

This is especially relevant for off licenses, take away and late night food establishments and pubs, bars and shisha bars where applications will be considered in the context of their impact on the neighbourhood and community, for example the Council would be unlikely to favourably consider an application for relief if a retail property/business has had their premises licence reviewed within the last twelve months.

This list is not exhaustive and the Council reserves the right to decline any application or withdraw any award where the retail property and business is determined to be having a detrimental impact on the neighbourhood or community.

Properties not included on the list or are mixed use will be reviewed by the Heads of Revenues & Benefits on a case by case basis to determine eligibility to the relief.

State Aid

State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Financial support from public bodies to businesses could have the potential to be anti-competitive and affect trade between member states of the EU.

EU state aid rules generally prohibit government subsidies to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers can in some cases be deemed to be State Aid.

There is, however, a general exception to the state aid rule where the aid is below a "de minimis" level. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to currently receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). The De Minimis Regulation and limit is subject to update and changes in

legislation.

To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the Council to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. The Council will ensure compliance with the legal requirements and any permitted exemptions. Each case will be considered based on the organisation's individual circumstances in full consideration of the state aid rules.

Business ratepayers who receive the retail relief, reoccupation relief or new build relief will be sent a letter attached to their ratepayer information which will require them to make a declaration if they have or are receiving state aid. This is particularly likely to affect large retail chains where the cumulative retail relief may cause them to exceed the €200,000 limit

13. New build empty property relief

All newly built commercial property completed between 1st October 2013 and 30 September 2016 will receive empty property rates relief for the first 18 months, up to state aid limits. Determination and award of any exemption will be in accordance with DCLG New Build Empty Property Guidance. The aim of the relief is to stimulate the construction industry and to incentivise property projects to go ahead.

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically, taking into account Council policies and priorities and any changes in legislation.

APPENDIX 1- RETAIL RELIEF GUIDANCE

Types of uses that will be considered to be retail use for the purpose of this relief.

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

- Shops (such as: florist, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licence, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc.)
- Charity shops
- Opticians
- Post offices
- Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
- Car/ caravan show rooms
- Second hand car lots
- Markets
- Petrol stations
- Garden centres
- Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Hair and beauty services (such as: hair dressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc.)
- Shoe repairs/ key cutting
- Travel agents
- Ticket offices e.g. for theatre
- Dry cleaners
- Launderettes
- PC/ TV/ domestic appliance repair
- Funeral directors
- Photo processing
- DVD/ video rentals
- Tool hire
- Car hire

iii. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/ or drink to visiting members of the public:

- Restaurants
- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bars

To qualify for the relief the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used as a shop, restaurant, cafe or drinking establishment.

Therefore, hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

The list set out above is not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list the many and varied retail uses that exist. There will also be mixed uses. However, it is intended to be a guide for authorities as to the types of uses that government considers for this purpose to be retail.

Authorities should determine for themselves whether particular properties not listed are broadly similar in nature to those above and, if so, to consider them eligible for the relief. Conversely, properties that are not broadly similar in nature to those listed above should not be eligible for the relief.

As the grant of the relief is discretionary, authorities may choose not to grant the relief if they consider that appropriate, for example where granting the relief would go against the authority's wider objectives for the local area.

The list below sets out the types of uses that government does not consider to be retail use for the purpose of this relief. Again, it is for local authorities to determine for themselves whether particular properties are broadly similar in nature to those below and, if so, to consider them not eligible for the relief under their local scheme.

Types of uses that will not be considered to be retail use for the purpose of this relief.

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureau de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
- Other services (e.g. estate agents, letting agents, employment agencies)
- Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, tutors)
- Post office sorting office

ii. Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public

The Council will consider each award based on individual merits and will refuse the award where it is considered that the business/retail property is not supporting the Council's wider objectives or determined to be having a detrimental impact on neighbourhoods and communities.

This is especially relevant for off licenses, take away and late night food establishments and pubs, bars and shisha bars where applications will be considered in the context of their impact on the neighbourhood and community, for example the Council would be unlikely to favourably consider

an application for relief if a retail property/business has had their premises licence reviewed within the last twelve months.

The relief will be applied against the net bill after all other reliefs.

Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties, subject to State Aid De minimis limits. State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However Retail Relief will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013).

The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years).

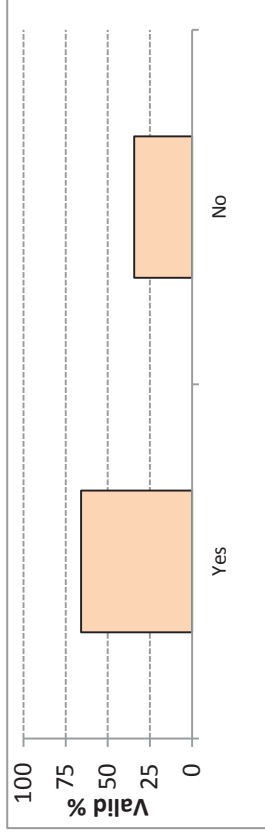
This list is not exhaustive and the Council reserves the right to decline any application or withdraw any award where the retail property and business is determined to be having a detrimental impact on the neighbourhood or community.

**Non-domestic rate discretionary rate relief
Based on 84 responses**

Q1 - As a business rate payer are you aware of following reductions:

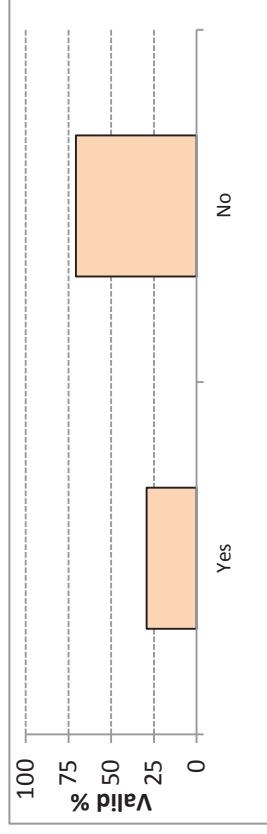
Q1.a - Charitable or Kindred Organisation Relief

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	46	54.8	65.7
No	24	28.6	34.3
Total	70	83.3	100.0
Missing	14	16.7	
Total	84	100.0	



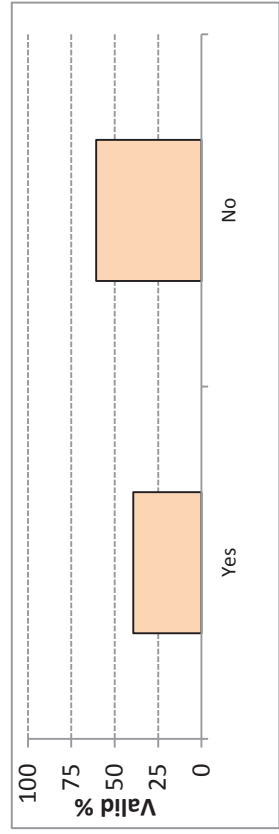
Q1.b - Hardship Relief

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	17	20.2	29.3
No	41	48.8	70.7
Total	58	69.0	100.0
Missing	26	31.0	
Total	84	100.0	



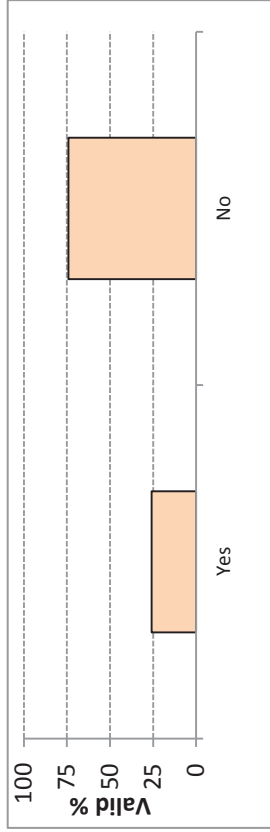
Q1.c - Part Occupied Relief

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	22	26.2	39.3
No	34	40.5	60.7
Total	56	66.7	100.0
Missing	28	33.3	
Total	84	100.0	



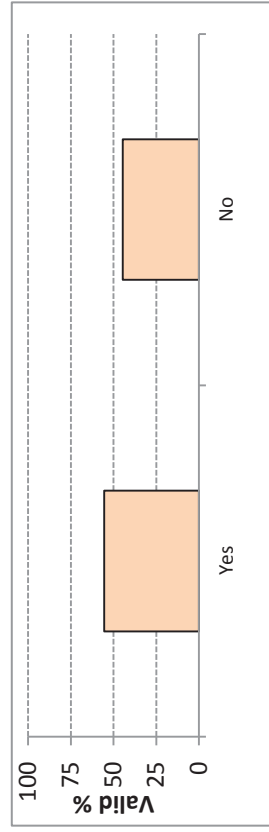
Q1.d - Rural Shop Relief

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	15	17.9	25.9
No	43	51.2	74.1
Total	58	69.0	100.0
Missing	26	31.0	
Total	84	100.0	



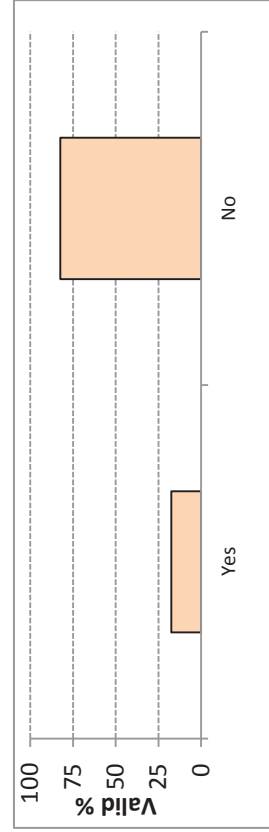
Q1.e - Small Business Relief

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	36	42.9	55.4
No	29	34.5	44.6
Total	65	77.4	100.0
Missing	19	22.6	
Total	84	100.0	



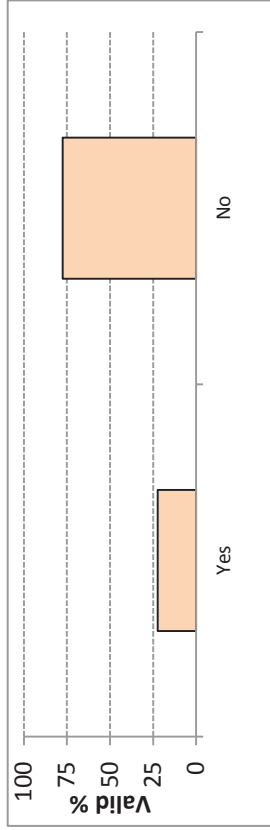
Q1.f - Retail Relief

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	10	11.9	17.5
No	47	56.0	82.5
Total	57	67.9	100.0
Missing	27	32.1	
Total	84	100.0	



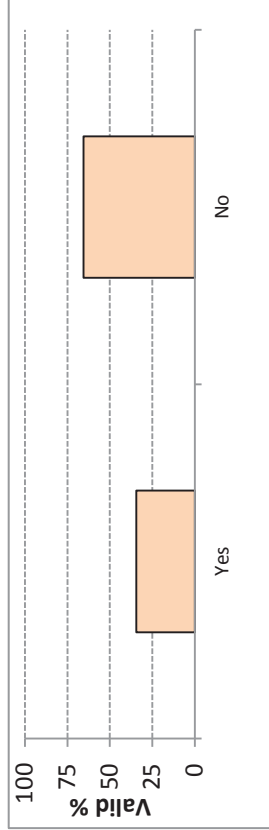
Q1.g - Reoccupation of Empty Retail Premises Relief

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	13	15.5	22.4
No	45	53.6	77.6
Total	58	69.0	100.0
Missing	26	31.0	
Total	84	100.0	



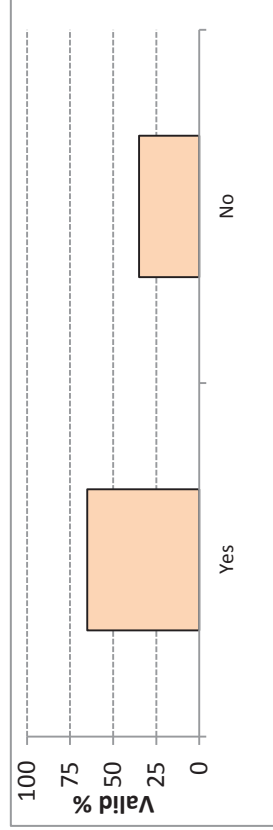
Q1.h - Discretionary relief for sporting organisations

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	21	25.0	34.4
No	40	47.6	65.6
Total	61	72.6	100.0
Missing	23	27.4	
Total	84	100.0	



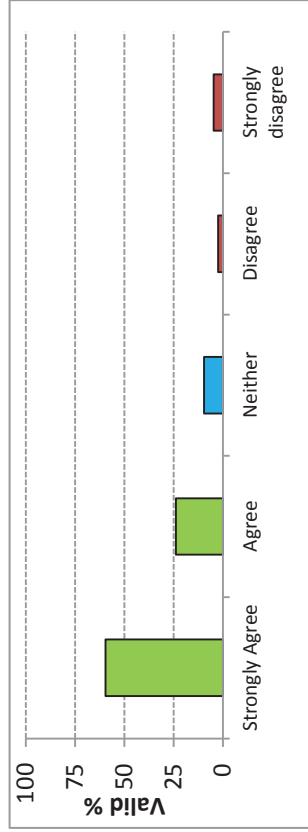
Q2 - Are you currently in receipt of any of the above?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Yes	52	61.9	65.0
No	28	33.3	35.0
Total	80	95.2	100.0
Missing	4	4.8	
Total	84	100.0	



Q4 - Discretionary relief can also be paid to organisations whose aims should be charitable or otherwise philanthropic (working to improve the lives of Central Bedfordshire residents), or concerned with the promotion of social welfare, education, science, literature or the fine arts as well as recreation/sports. How far do you agree or disagree with this?

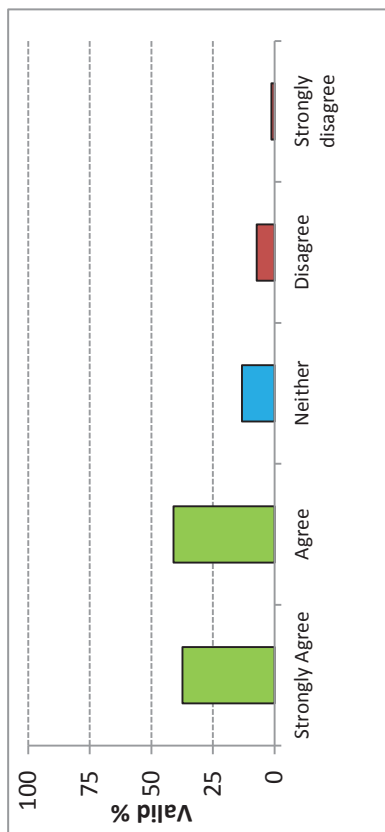
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	50	59.5	59.5
Agree	20	23.8	23.8
Neither	8	9.5	9.5
Disagree	2	2.4	2.4
Strongly disagree	4	4.8	4.8
Total	84	100.0	100.0



Q5 - Whilst the Council accepts that clubs and organisations provide a valuable leisure facility, it must be remembered that any relief granted is partially paid for by the Council Tax payers of Central Bedfordshire. Because of this, consideration is given as to the ratio of members within the club who reside in Central Bedfordshire to the overall membership (for example, a club based in Central Bedfordshire with the majority of members living in central Bedfordshire will be more likely to receive rate relief than a club with the majority of members living in Hertfordshire).

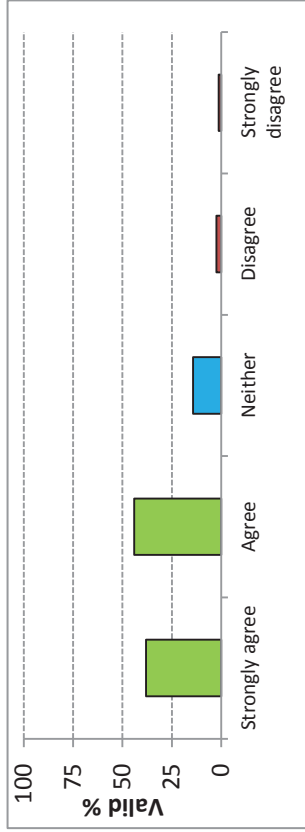
How far do you agree or disagree with this?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Strongly Agree	31	36.9	37.3
Agree	34	40.5	41.0
Neither	11	13.1	13.3
Disagree	6	7.1	7.2
Strongly disagree	1	1.2	1.2
Total	83	98.8	100.0
Missing	1	1.2	
Total	84	100.0	



Q6 - Clubs within Central Bedfordshire are encouraged to have an active Youth Development Policy, provide their facilities for use by disabled people or special interest groups. Clubs are also encouraged to provide coaching/ workshops/ training and/or their facilities free of charge or at reduced rates to these groups to ensure the opportunities are accessible and affordable to all residents. The Council also wishes to see facilities provided that compliment its own or new community initiatives that it does not provide so a discretionary rate is applied. How far do you agree or disagree with this?

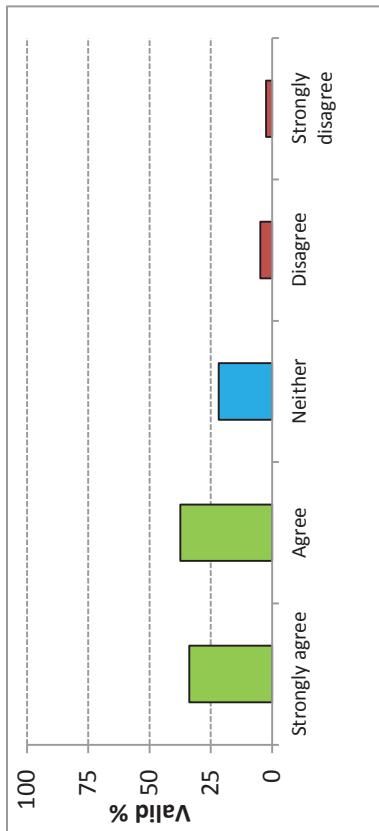
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly agree	32	38.1	38.1
Agree	37	44.0	44.0
Neither	12	14.3	14.3
Disagree	2	2.4	2.4
Strongly disagree	1	1.2	1.2
Total	84	100.0	100.0



Q7 - Community interest groups (CIC's) are a new type of limited company designed specifically for those wishing to operate for the benefit of the community rather than for the benefit of the owners of the company. This means that a CIC cannot be formed or used solely for the personal gain of a particular person, or group of people. CIC's can be limited by shares, or by guarantee, and have a statutory "Asset Lock" to prevent the assets and profits being distributed, except as permitted by legislation. This ensures the assets and profits are retained within the CIC for community purposes, or transferred to another asset-locked organisation, such as another CIC or charity. An example of a CIC in Central Bedfordshire is Preen.

How far do you agree or disagree that CIC's should receive discretionary rate relief?

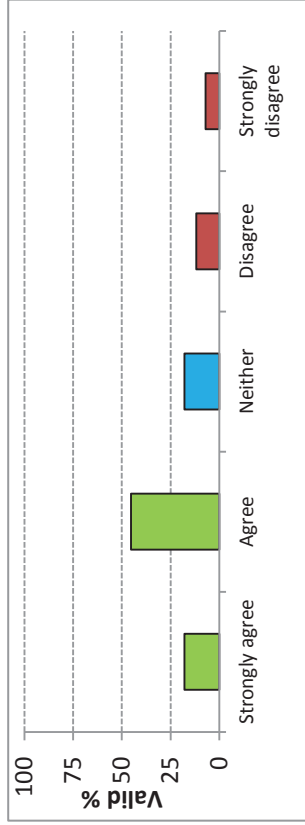
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Strongly agree	28	33.3	33.7
Agree	31	36.9	37.3
Neither	18	21.4	21.7
Disagree	4	4.8	4.8
Strongly disagree	2	2.4	2.4
Total	83	98.8	100.0
Missing	1	1.2	
Total	84	100.0	



Q8 - The Council receives requests from rate payers asking that the rateable value of a specific premise be split on a temporary basis between the occupied and unoccupied portions and that the Council then only charge rates of the occupied portion. The Council acknowledges that only part of a property may be occupied and charges accordingly for the temporary period.

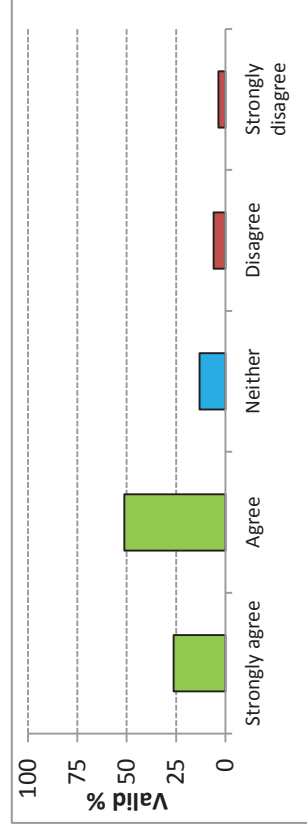
How far do you agree or disagree?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly agree	15	17.9	17.9
Agree	38	45.2	45.2
Neither	15	17.9	17.9
Disagree	10	11.9	11.9
Strongly disagree	6	7.1	7.1
Total	84	100.0	100.0



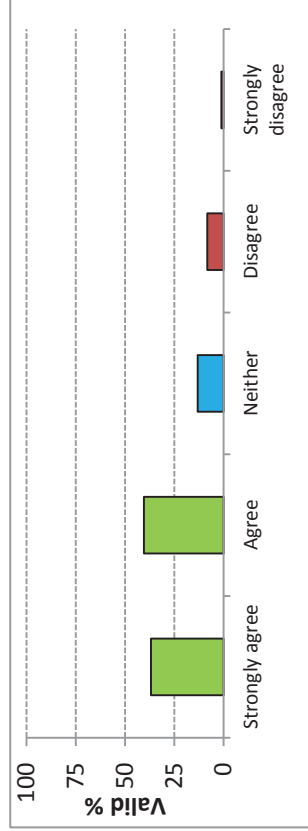
Q9 - The burden of proof for hardship lies with the rate payer. Whilst the authority can award hardship rate relief there is no obligation to do so unless evidence of hardship can be established. How far do you agree or disagree that rate payers who fulfil the above should receive discretionary rate relief?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly agree	22	26.2	26.2
Agree	43	51.2	51.2
Neither	11	13.1	13.1
Disagree	5	6.0	6.0
Strongly disagree	3	3.6	3.6
Total	84	100.0	100.0



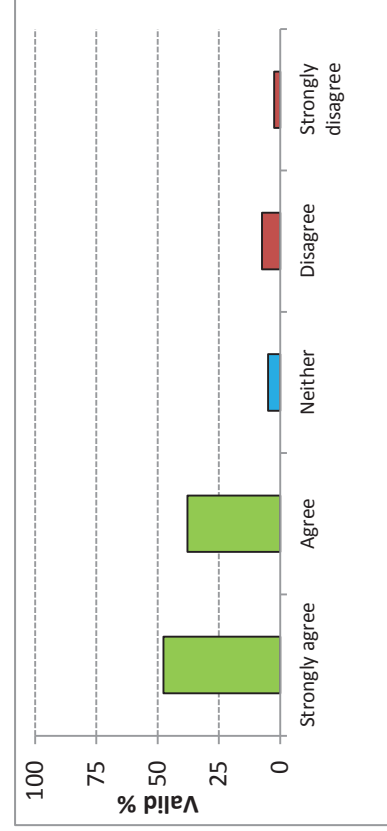
Q10 - To be eligible for Hardship relief, the rate payer must provide three years of trading accounts which should be included in the application. The rate payer must demonstrate that it is in the interests of the local council tax payers of the area that the rate relief is awarded by the Council as the award of relief is at a direct cost to the Council. How far do you agree or disagree that rate payers must provide the above information to qualify for discretionary rate relief?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly agree	31	36.9	36.9
Agree	34	40.5	40.5
Neither	11	13.1	13.1
Disagree	7	8.3	8.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.2	1.2
Total	84	100.0	100.0



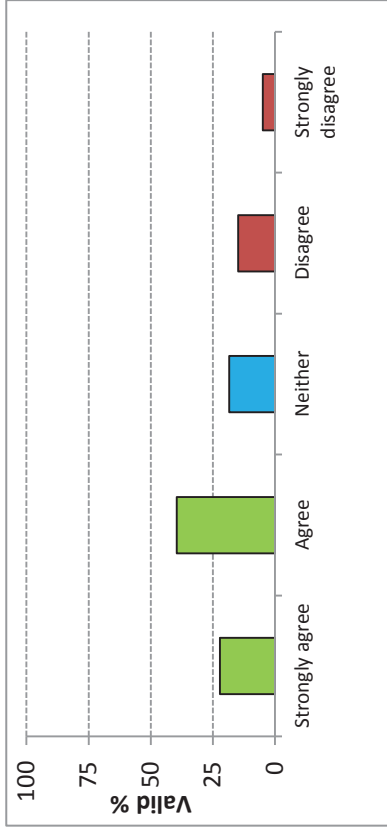
Q11 - Small business rate relief is a self-funding scheme, which ensures that larger companies pay more business rates to enable the smaller business to pay less. How far do you agree or disagree?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly agree	39	46.4	47.6
Agree	31	36.9	37.8
Neither	4	4.8	4.9
Disagree	6	7.1	7.3
Strongly disagree	2	2.4	2.4
Total	82	97.6	100.0
Missing	2	2.4	
Total	84	100.0	



**Q12 - Properties that will benefit from the relief must have a rateable value of £50,000 or less and are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments.
How far do you agree or disagree?**

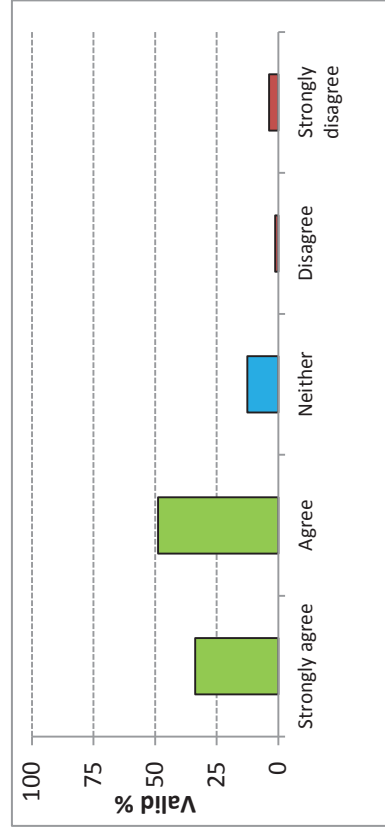
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Strongly agree	18	21.4	22.2
Agree	32	38.1	39.5
Neither	15	17.9	18.5
Disagree	12	14.3	14.8
Strongly disagree	4	4.8	4.9
Total	81	96.4	100.0
Missing	3	3.6	
Total	84	100.0	



Q13 - Rural Rate Relief is a scheme of relief for qualifying businesses situated in rural areas. Businesses that qualify are General Stores, Post Offices, Petrol Filling Stations, Public Houses and Food Stores.

The business must be in a rural area that has a population of no more than 3,000 people on 31st December of the preceding financial year. Relief is only available on occupied properties. The relief will only be awarded by a demonstration of the importance of the business to the local community by the applicant. How far do you agree or disagree with this?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid			
Strongly agree	27	32.1	33.8
Agree	39	46.4	48.8
Neither	10	11.9	12.5
Disagree	1	1.2	1.3
Strongly disagree	3	3.6	3.8
Total	80	95.2	100.0
Missing	4	4.8	
Total	84	100.0	



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Meeting: Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16th December 2014
Subject: The Council's approach to energy efficiency across the corporate and schools estate.
Report of: Cllr Maurice Jones, Executive Member for Corporate Resources.
Summary: This report provides further information on the Council's approach to energy efficiency across the corporate and school estate in response to a request from Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 21st October 2014. In 2013/14 the energy bill for the Corporate estate was £1.7m and schools paid a combined £3.2m. Since 2009/10 energy efficiency work has led to savings of £682k in the Corporate estate and £1.9m for Schools. Due to the predicted impact of increasing energy costs and Energy Market Reform (EMR), by 2020/21, without a continued proactive approach to energy efficiency, the annual energy cost for the corporate estate is predicted to be £3m with the schools estate facing a combined energy bill of £5.4m.

Advising Officer: Deb Broadbent-Clarke, Director of Improvement and Corporate Services
Contact Officer: Ben Finlayson, Head of Capital Projects
Stephen Mooring, Environmental Policy Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Taking positive and proactive steps to tackle climate change demonstrates leadership and contributes to the delivery of all the Council's priorities, particularly in relation to Value for money – freezing council tax.

Financial:

1. The 2013/14 annual expenditure on Energy by the Council was £1.7m (excluding schools). As set out in this report, the cost of Energy is increasing annually at a rate higher than inflation leading to additional pressure on the revenue budget each year. Therefore, any ability to reduce Energy use or deliver cheaper alternatives reduces this budget pressure and any savings allow the Council to divert its resources to other areas, delivering better value for money for residents.
2. Work undertaken to date to improve Energy Efficiency has seen energy expenditure reduce at a time when the cost of energy has continued to increase. Without any work in previous years to reduce energy consumption, the 2013/14 Corporate Energy bill would have been in the region of £2m.

Legal:

3. The Climate Change Act (2008) commits the UK to meeting targets for Carbon Emission reductions. These will be delivered through a range of mechanisms which include interventions to drive forward energy efficiency and decarbonisation of the grid through the use of Renewables.
4. The Energy Act (2013) adds further detail to this and brings forward mechanisms to reduce peak electricity demand, incentivise renewable energy generation and modernise energy generation and transmission infrastructure through Energy Market Reform (EMR). Although many of these measures are not direct legal requirements on the Council, they do drive how energy efficiency is addressed. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive will be enacted into UK law during the next parliament, placing a legal requirement for new public buildings to be near or zero carbon by 2018, and all other buildings zero by 2020. It is not yet clear how the UK government will choose to implement these requirements.

Risk Management:

5. Taking a proactive approach to energy efficiency minimises financial risk and enhances the control of expenditure at a time when energy prices are predicted to continue to increase into the medium term.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

6. Not Applicable

Equalities/Human Rights:

7. There are no implications for equality or human rights.

Public Health

8. This will not have any implication on public health and wellbeing in the area.

Community Safety:

9. Not Applicable

Sustainability:

10. The proactive approach to energy efficiency being taken by the Council links strongly to key principles of sustainability which are; living within environmental limits, ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, and achieving a sustainable economy. The Council's Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan are based around the delivery of energy efficiency measures as a way to not only cut operational costs but to also reduce the Council's carbon footprint and contribute to mitigation of climate change.

Procurement:

11. A paper setting out how the Council procures energy was considered by this committee on the 21st October 2014. Whilst this plays an important role in controlling costs, ultimately the most effective approach is to use energy more efficiently, meaning that less has to be procured in the first instance.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to:-

- 1) Review the Council's approach to energy efficiency across the corporate and schools estate and comment on any specific aspects they consider to be appropriate in relation to the delivery of this work moving forward into 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- 2) Champion the good progress made to date and support the need for continued action in relation to energy efficiency across the corporate and schools estate, especially in relation to the likely future financial consequences of not adequately progressing this area of work.

Introduction – setting the context for action

12. The Council's annual energy bill for its corporate estate for 2013/14 (including street lighting but excluding schools) was £1.7m. The implementation of energy efficiency and other measures (such as YourSpace2) has contributed to reduced energy consumption of approximately 11% compared to 2009/10. In the same period the cost of energy has increased by around 5% per annum nationally. If energy consumption had continued at 2009/10 levels, the Council could have faced an energy bill of £2m in 2013/14. This demonstrates a saving of £294k in 2013/14 and an overall saving of £682k since 2009/10.
13. Between 2009/10 to 2013/14 the schools estate has seen a reduction in actual energy consumption of 23.5%. The combined annual energy bill for 2013/14 was £3.2 million, with the bill for a typical lower school in Central Bedfordshire being £13k, a typical middle school paying £40k and a typical upper school £110k. Without the energy efficiency support the Council provides, and taking into account the impact of increasing energy costs, the combined annual energy bill for schools could have been in region of £4.2m in 2013/14. This demonstrates a saving of £1m in 2013/14 and an overall saving of £1.9m since 2009/10.
14. If the lower end estimate from the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) energy price projections of 5.3% per year is applied, then by 2020/21, without continued energy efficiency action, the Council could be facing an energy bill for its corporate estate of £2.4m (an increase of £0.7m). Schools will see an increase in their combined energy bill of £1.4m, to just over £.6m.
15. In addition to the impact of increasing energy prices, 2016 will see the introduction of Energy Market Reform (EMR) which will see an additional charge applied to all electricity bills for the purpose of funding investment in new energy generation and transmission infrastructure. It is estimated that this could add an additional 20% to electricity bills, with this increasing to 50% from 2020/21. This would see the corporate energy bill (including street lighting) increase by a further 0.4m to £2.8m by 2019/20 and to £3m in 2020/21. The combined schools energy bill would increase by a further £0.5m to £5.1m by 2019/20 and £5.4m in 2020/21. This represents a 70% increase in the price of energy by 2020/21 compared to 2013/14.
16. Taking the impact of increasing energy costs and EMR in to account, this would mean that by 2020/21, without a proactive approach to energy efficiency in schools, the annual energy bill for a typical lower school in Central Bedfordshire is expected to be £22k, with a typical middle school paying £67k and a typical upper school £185k.

17. Alongside the financial impacts, the Council's Climate Change Strategy has set a target of reducing the carbon footprint of the council by 35% by 2015, working towards an overall 60% reduction by 2020 (from a 2009/10 baseline). Progress so far has seen a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint of 17% from last year and just under 24% from the 2009/10 baseline. When this is converted to the equivalent energy consumption – as shown in graph 1 in Appendix A, the Council is likely to have to hit these targets just to keep energy costs close to current levels and prevent additional financial pressures.
18. Alongside reducing energy consumption, another way of limiting the impact of increasing energy costs is by maximising opportunities for the Council to generate its own electricity through the deployment of Renewable energy generation systems, such as Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels. This not only reduces the consumption of energy from the grid, as a proportion is generated on site, it is also eligible for additional government incentive payments, such as the Feed-in-tariff (FIT).

Energy Efficiency in the Corporate Estate – Overview

19. The Council has an annual rolling capital budget of £300K, managed by the Capital Projects Team within Assets, assigned to the delivery of carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures. This budget increases to £400K in 2016/17 and is currently planned to continue until 2018/19, however, as discussed below work is currently underway to produce a strategy for the delivery of Energy Reduction across the corporate estate which may impact this budget profile. Alongside this specific budget, when undertaking any work on the corporate estate, energy efficiency is considered in the specification of any replacement or upgrade of equipment and building fabric items.
20. In the 2013/14 financial year a number of schemes were delivered utilising the carbon reduction budget, each of which focussed on reducing the revenue impact of energy bills on the corporate estate. This included major schemes such as Boiler and controls replacement at the Townsend Centre in Dunstable, installation of Thermostatic Radiator Valves on every radiator at Watling House Offices, a number of lighting replacement schemes at various properties and 3 large solar energy schemes at Bossard House (Leighton Buzzard), Priory House offices and Sandy Library.
21. Smaller schemes such as insulation improvements, Voltage Optimisation and the addition of energy efficient hand driers at some sites were also delivered, each of which contribute to the reduction in energy use across the estate. The team also rolled out the installation of Automated Meter Reading (AMR) at a number of sites allowing energy use to be tracked on a half hourly basis. This has led to a number of changes being made to Building Management Systems (BMS) where inefficiencies have been identified and has also allowed behavioural changes to be identified and rolled out with the aim of reducing energy consumption.

22. This financial year (2014/15), a proportion of the carbon reduction budget is being utilised to undertake detailed energy efficiency audits of 27 corporate buildings including offices, libraries and leisure centres. The information resulting from these audits, which will include investment grade proposals for recommended energy efficiency improvement measures, is being produced by WYG and will feed in to a report to CMT at the end of the financial year, seeking approval of a strategy for investment in energy efficiency going forward. The purpose of the reports is to identify those investment opportunities that have an acceptable payback period to allow the team to prioritise these and bid for any additional funds required to deliver them. Phase 1 of the programme has now been completed which covers 9 properties including; Priory House, Watling House and Saxon Pool. A number of measures have been identified at each site ranging from zero cost adjustments to significant capital schemes to improve energy efficiency and therefore reduce running costs for the Authority.
23. The remaining budget in 2014/15 is being utilised to undertake any projects identified by the surveys that can be delivered prior to year end such as LED lighting of Priory House car park which makes revenue savings in both energy and maintenance costs. A number of other schemes are also planned for delivery this year including work to the BMS at Priory House and the installation of Solar Panels at Flitwick Library.
24. The resulting recommendations from the full suite of WYG Energy audits will include detail of the financial returns, both in terms of reduced energy costs and any income in the case of generation schemes, associated with each of the proposed improvements, allowing a decision on the delivery of each scheme to be made on a cost benefit basis. Once all of the audits have been completed, the information will be collated and a strategy for the delivery of those schemes deemed to deliver suitable return on investment and improvements to the Authority's Carbon Footprint will be produced. This strategy will also consider work planned to be undertaken as part of the associated Corporate Rolling Programme capital budget which funds significant maintenance and improvement works at corporate sites and the general revenue maintenance budgets associated with each site.
25. Any site that has work identified under either of these budgets will be checked to see if works can be combined or adjusted to take account of the carbon reduction proposals. This will ensure a considered and value for money approach to the delivery of the proposed work. Also, the strategy will consider the estate as a whole in terms of the delivery model. For example if a number of sites are identified as benefitting from the same type of improvement this could be tendered as a package of work which would offer economy of scale benefits. The capital cost of delivering the improvements will not be known until the results of the Audits have been analysed, however any increase in budget will be requested through the Outline and Detailed Business Case process with full justification.
26. Examples of Energy Efficiency and Generation schemes delivered on Corporate sites is provided in Appendix 2.

Supporting Energy Efficiency in Schools - Overview

27. Energy use within the school estate makes up 51% of the council's carbon footprint. The council does not pay school energy bills directly, instead maintained schools are allocated a budget from which their energy bills must be paid. Academies receive funding direct from the Department of Education from which energy bills must be paid. In both cases individual schools are responsible for managing their own budgets. Reducing the energy use attributed to schools represents a significant challenge given:
 - a. the number of individual schools to work with (135);
 - b. on-going budget constraints being faced across the whole public sector;
 - c. the challenging nature of the schools estate (e.g. the age and structure of buildings), and;
 - d. the changes to how schools are organised, managed and funded – particularly in relation to Academies.
28. Motivation for reducing school energy bills comes from the need to divert more funding towards educational resources and staff, and away from utilities. This also mitigates against the impact of utility price increases. Since 2012 the Council has had a dedicated School's Energy Officer in post, funded by the Schools Forum to support schools to reduce energy use. Due to the number of schools and relative autonomy over their energy management, a large part of this role is about engagement, training and awareness raising to empower schools to take control of their energy use with a view to delivering efficiencies. An annual budget of £100k has been set up by the Schools Forum to support maintained schools to invest in energy efficiency and generation technologies on an invest-to-save basis.
29. From April 2013 to date, 42 schools have actively engaged with the Schools Carbon Reduction Action Plan (SCRAP) program leading to a total financial saving within the school estate of £265k in 2013/14 compared to the previous year. This represents an average saving of over £6k in each of the schools engaged in the SCRAP program. This has been achieved primarily through the use of smart metering and the associated efficiency actions that result. Over 55% of the school estate now have smart meters installed with an ongoing installation plan in place. In May 2014 the annual Energy Efficiency awareness event was held, attended by over 70 school representatives. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, clearly demonstrating that the schools are responding well to the support being offered.
30. Phase two of the SCRAP, which focuses on energy efficiency, was launched in May 2013 and saw the introduction of a more formalised engagement structure with schools. Participating schools now receive a site visit from the Schools Energy Officer that incorporates an energy audit and on-going one to one support specific to that school. The Energy Officer then works with the school to draw up an action plan with achievable goals for reducing energy use. This places an emphasis on the school taking ownership of the action plan with responsibility for completing the actions resting primarily with the school.

31. All action plans are proactively followed-up. This ensures actions are reviewed, next steps identified and a better understanding is gained of any barriers that are stalling progress. The site visit is also used as the primary way of engaging schools in the other energy services offered by the council, such as the Invest-to-Save scheme and Automated Meter Reading equipment. Schools have also started to take advantage of wider range of complimentary services provided by the Energy Officer including student workshops and eco school accreditation, both of which support the work being undertaken through the action plan.

32. Supporting Renewable Energy Generation in Schools

The most appropriate form of onsite energy generation within schools is Solar PV. This view is supported by Central Government and Third Sector organisations. Schools are particularly suited to Solar PV as they are in use during daylight hours, enabling them to utilise the energy generated by a solar PV system. They often have flat roofs, allowing for straightforward install and are usually not shaded by other buildings.

33. Schools benefit financially from Solar PV in three ways. Firstly the power generated by the panels reduces the power drawn from the grid, significantly reducing a school's energy bill. Secondly for every unit of energy produced by system the UK government will pay the school at a certain rate for 20 years through the Feed in tariff scheme (known as FiT's). Thirdly any power generated that the school is unable to use, such as during holiday periods, is sold back to the grid.

34. An extensive procurement exercise has recently been undertaken to acquire a purchasing framework for Solar Power installers (Photo Voltaic). The framework will be used to deliver Solar Power schemes through the Invest to Save fund to viable school sites as well as utilising it for corporate schemes. Three schools are signed up for this year which will utilise the budget allocation and two are signed up for next year with interest growing all the time.

35. Examples of Energy Efficiency and Generation schemes delivered at Schools are provided in Appendix 3.

Conclusion and Next Steps

36. As set out in the background information, the Authority spent around £1.8m on energy in 2013/14. This spend, the increasing costs of energy and work undertaken to date have demonstrated significant scope to reduce the revenue costs of the Council. Energy efficiency should be considered in all capital projects to ensure that the best materials and technologies are being used whilst also being mindful of cost and resulting payback. In this first round of Energy Audits the Authority has targeted 27 of its buildings, there is still a significant proportion of the estate that is yet to be reviewed and should be considered going forward.

37. The school estate spends more than £3m per year on energy. Any budget spent on energy cannot be directed towards educational resources. Funding is always challenging for schools, but by taking greater control over their energy use and therefore spending, schools can protect themselves against the impact of increasing energy costs.

38. Many of the schools in Central Bedfordshire have yet to engage with the SCRAP program and not all that have Smart Meter (AMR) technology are using it to best effect. Through the School's Energy Officer, the Council has reached a good level of engagement on this issue with schools, which has the potential to grow rapidly and to ensure the good work to date is built on in light of future challenges. Over the next year activity will include:
- a. Following analysis of the annual Green House Gas report data, the 20 schools with the greatest efficiency opportunities have been identified. These schools will form the primary focus of the SCRAP delivery plan with a view to engaging and facilitating these schools towards delivering efficiencies such as we have seen elsewhere in the school estate.
 - b. An installation plan to ensure maximum coverage of Smart Meters (AMR) within the school estate, will aim for 70% coverage by the end of the 2014/15. This will be supported by an ongoing training program to ensure that schools can take ownership and use their data effectively to drive out inefficiencies.
 - c. To encourage energy efficient behaviour, the BluEffect behaviour change tool will be promoted to schools. The tool is designed to link with the curriculum and encourage staff and students to make sustainable behaviour choices at home and in school.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Graph showing progress to date and future energy cost projections for the Council's Corporate Estate (2009/10 to 2020/21)

Appendix 2: Case studies of energy efficiency and generation projects undertaken on the Corporate estate.

Appendix 3: Case studies of energy efficiency and generation projects undertaken with Schools.

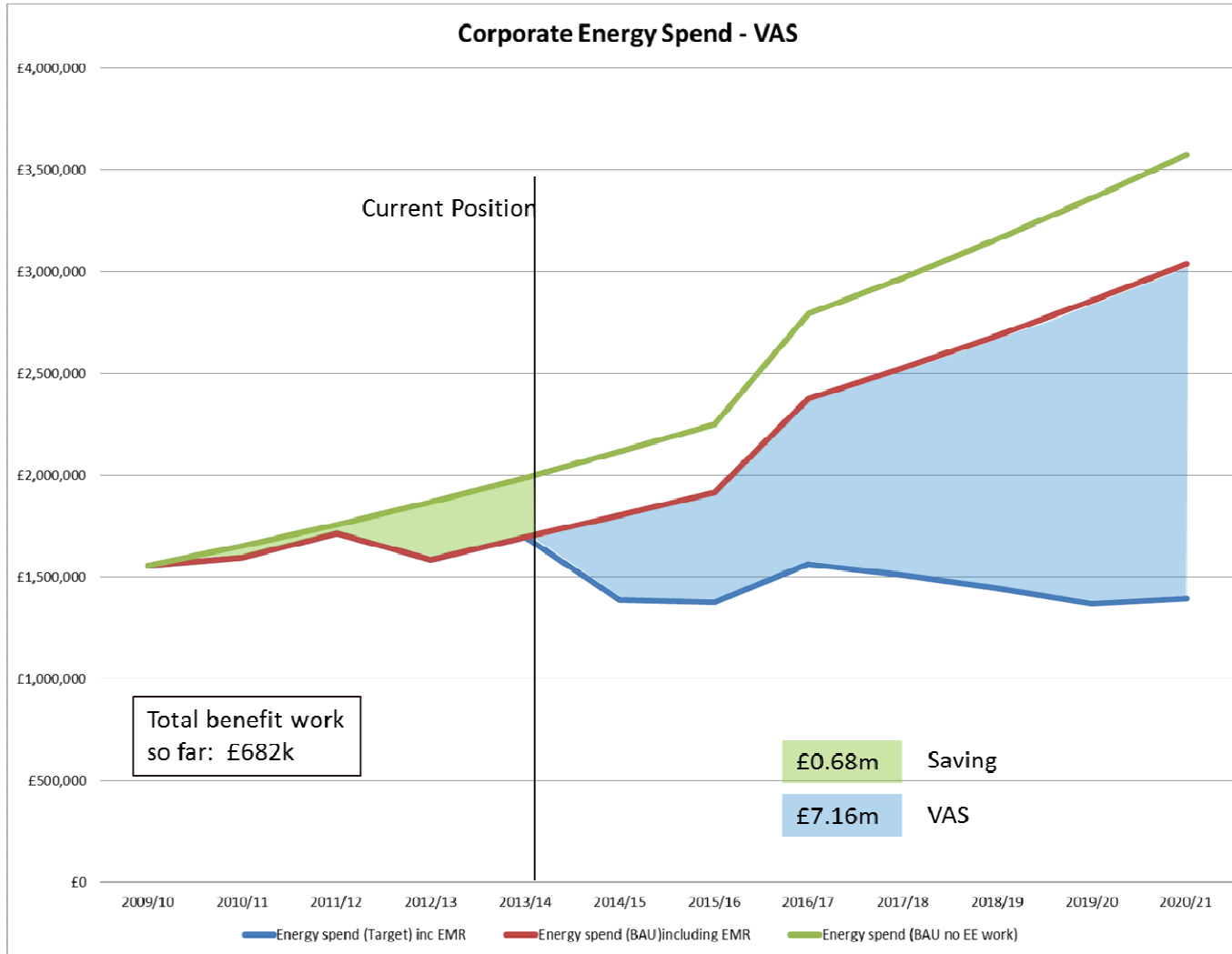
Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan

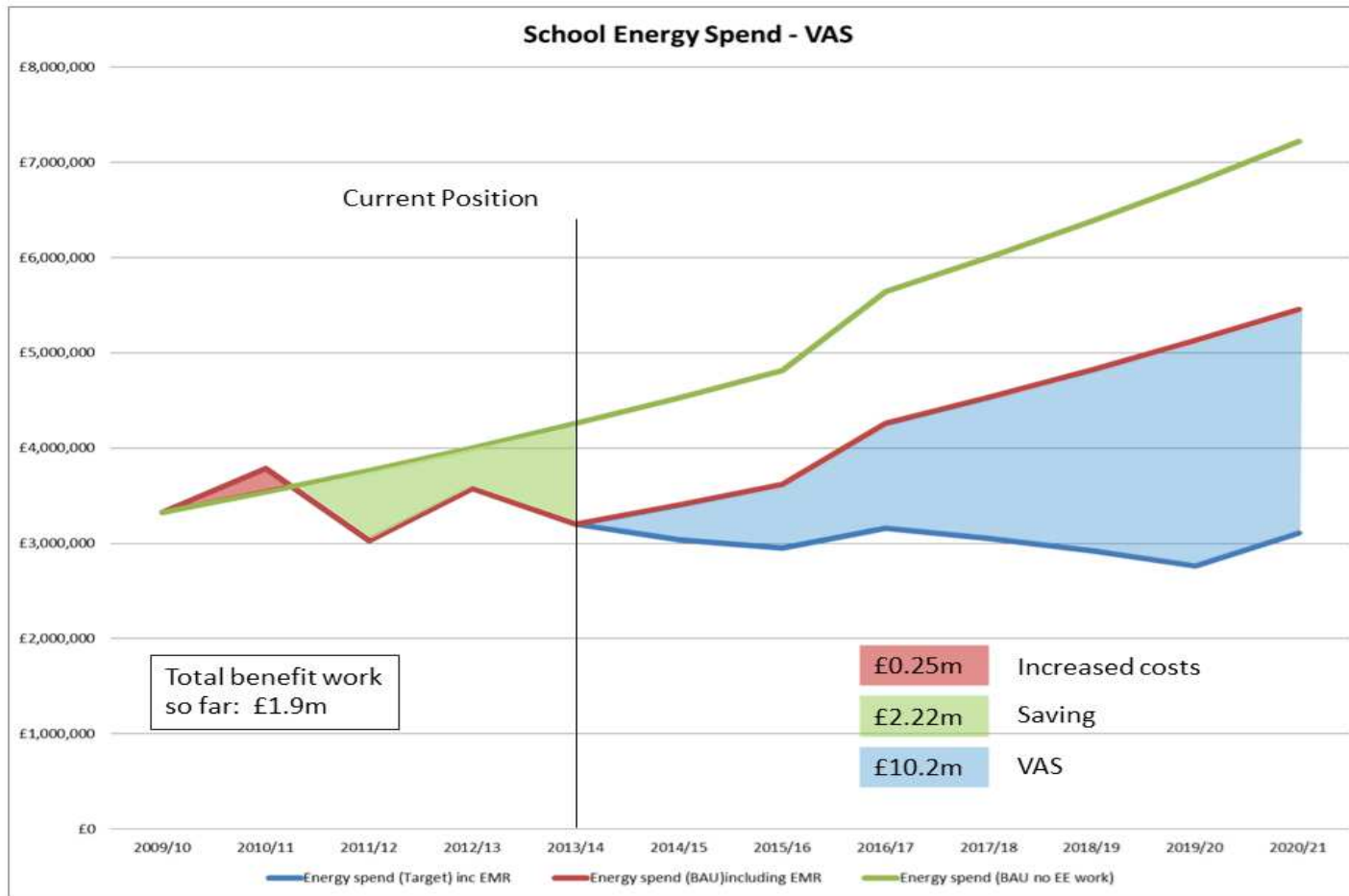
Both documents available from:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/environment/natural-environment/climate-change-sustainability.aspx>

Graph 1 - Progress to date and future energy cost projections for the Council's corporate estate (2009/10 to 2020/21)



Graph 2 - Progress to date and future energy cost projections for the Council's Corporate Estate (2009/10 to 2020/21)



Energy Efficiency in the Corporate Estate - Example

Energy efficiency work includes measures that seek to reduce the amount of energy that the Authority uses. It does not include the replacement of sources of energy which is covered by the generation section below.

Watling House Thermostatic Radiator Valve installation:

In November 2013, all of the radiators at Watling house (387) were adapted to include Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRV's). These valves, which are standard equipment on all new heating installations, automatically shut off the radiator once the ambient temperature reaches a set point. In doing this, if the heating is in operation, a radiator can shut itself off and reduce energy consumption if the area it is located in has reached the optimum temperature. As well as reducing costs, this process also provides a more stable and comfortable working environment with temperatures remaining at the programmed set point rather than remaining on and allowing areas to become too hot. This has addressed the issues of solar gain experienced in the building where the sunny side of the building gets too hot and the shaded side too cold.

Energy Generation in the Corporate Estate - Example

Energy Generation is also a key part of the work required to reduce the costs of Energy to the Authority but rather than reducing energy usage generation replaces conventional (expensive) sources of energy with alternative, generally greener sources such as wind and solar.

Priory House Solar Scheme:

In October 2013, 50Kw of Solar Photo Voltaic panels were installed on the roof of Priory House. From the 1st April to 22nd October this year the system generated 40,231KWh of electricity which has directly offset electricity provided from the grid and of course the associated cost of this. Due to the large amount of IT equipment etc. Priory House has a significant base electricity load which makes it ideal for a Solar scheme as the site utilises all energy produced by the panels at all times leading to maximum efficiency and financial benefit (compared to exporting at a lower rate).

As well as the reduction in electricity costs, the Authority is guaranteed index linked Feed in Tariff (FiT) generation payments for every KWh of electricity generated by the system until 2034. The scheme is subsequently predicted to pay for itself within 6 years (from the date of installation). However, the system is currently exceeding generation expectations, having generated nearly 90% of its expected annual levels over the last 8 months. In light of this the payback period could be reduced.

Supporting Energy Efficiency in Schools - Example

Caddington Village School – Combined Efficiency Project

With support from the council's Energy Officer, Caddington Village School has made significant savings on both their gas and electricity bills by taking a range of complimentary actions. This has resulted in a reduction to their annual energy bill of £12k when compared to the previous year.

Much of this has been achieved through proactive use of the Smart Meter technology installed by the council and support from the Schools Energy Officer. Wastage and efficiencies were identified in the data, and by working with key stakeholders at the school, potential solutions were identified. By adjusting opening times and ensuring the boilers are on much stricter timing and temperature controls, alongside a dedicated switch-off campaign the school has seen a reduction in energy use of over 30%. This has been maintained through ongoing monitoring of energy data and KPI's being set.

This, along with new windows and doors and the future replacement of 80% of the roof and the single skinned roof lights will result in a further sizeable reduction on gas and electricity usage going forward.

The school have also installed energy efficient T5 and LED lighting to the newly refurbished areas alongside movement sensors to control the lighting, thermostatic controls to radiators and the pupils have made their own "Hippos" to reduce water consumption from toilets.

The pupils have been eager participants in making the school more environmentally friendly, and as a result the school recently achieved Green Flag status against the national Eco School award scheme.

Supporting Energy Generation in Schools

Leedon Lower School – Solar PV installation

Leedon Lower School have completed a project to install a 50kW peak solar PV system onto their flat roofs as part of the Invest to Save scheme run through the Schools Carbon Reduction Action Plan (SCRAP)

The solar array is calculated to provide the school with up to 50% of the electricity requirement. This should see a dramatic reduction in utility bills over time, allowing for greater spend on educational services. Furthermore the school will be producing its own clean energy and the children will learn about energy issues through the information produced by the solar panel information display to be installed in the school foyer.

We chose Leedon Lower to pilot the solar PV 'Invest to Save' scheme as they have shown great interest and enthusiasm for the scheme and have the full backing of the Governors and Leadership team. The layout of the school's flat roofs allow for an easy installation and furthermore, the school is not connected to the gas grid and so uses a lot of electric powered heating, meaning that the school has a high electricity bill that CBC would like to help the school reduce.

Meeting: Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16 December 2014
Subject: Work Programme 2014 – 2015 & Executive Forward Plan
Report of: Chief Executive
Summary: The report provides Members with details of the currently drafted Committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

Contact Officer: Rebecca Preen, Scrutiny Officer
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The work programme of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee will contribute indirectly to all 5 Council priorities. Whilst there are no direct implications arising from this report the implications of proposals will be details in full in each report submitted to the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. that the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
 - (a) considers and approves the work programme attached, subject to any further amendments it may wish to make;**
 - (b) considers the Executive Forward Plan; and**
 - (c) considers whether it wishes to add any further items to the work programme and/or establish any Task Forces to assist it in reviewing specific items.**

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

1. Attached is the currently drafted work programme for the Committee.
2. The Committee is now requested to consider the work programme attached and amend or add to it as necessary.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Forces

3. In addition to consideration of the work programme, Members may also wish to consider how each item will be reviewed i.e. by the Committee itself (over one or a number of Committee meetings) or by establishing a Member Task Force to review an item in greater depth and report back its findings.

Executive Forward Plan

4. Listed below are those items relating specifically to this Committee's terms of reference contained in the latest version of the Executive's Forward Plan to ensure Members are fully aware of the key issues Executive Members will be taking decisions upon in the coming months. The full Executive Forward Plan can be viewed on the Council's website at the link at the end of this report.

Ref	Issue	Indicative Exec Meeting date
1.	West of A1 Stotfold - Approval to dispose of land including selection of appropriate methodology.	13 January 2015
2.	NNDR Discretionary Relief Policy - To approve the NNDR Discretionary Relief Policy.	13 January 2015
Non Key Decisions		
5.	Quarter 2 Performance Report	13 January 2015
6.	Draft Budget 2015/16	13 January 2015
7.	Budget 2015/16	10 February 2015
8.	Treasury Management Strategy	10 February 2015
9.	Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring	10 February 2015
10.	To consider the quarter 3 performance report.	31 March 2015

Conclusion

- 5 Members are requested to consider and agree the attached work programme, subject to any further amendments/additions they may wish to make and highlight those items within it where they may wish to establish a Task Force to assist the Committee in its work. This will allow officers to plan accordingly but will not preclude further items being added during the course of the year if Members so wish and capacity exists.

Appendix – Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

Background reports:

Executive Forward Plan (can be viewed at any time on the Council's website) at the following [link](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=577&RD=0):- <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=577&RD=0>

Appendix A – Item 14 CR OSC Work Programme

OSC Date	Report Title	Description
27 January 2015	Draft Budget 2015/16	To consider the draft budget for 2015/16
27 January 2015	Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring	To receive the quarter 2 budget monitoring reports for the revenue, capital and housing revenue account
27 January 2015	NEEPRO Update	To receive an update regarding the NEEPRO project
27 January 2015	Treasury Management Strategy	To consider the Treasury Management Strategy
17 March 2015	Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring	To receive the quarter 3 budget monitoring reports for the revenue, capital and housing revenue account
17 March 2015	Provision of recruitment services for temporary agency staff	To receive details on the new contract in the first three months of implementation

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