

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF CHARTER FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

Introduction

Herefordshire Council recognises that the voluntary and community sector make a major contribution to the economy, health and wellbeing of the people who live and work in Herefordshire. This covers both children's and adults' services. The county needs a healthy voluntary and community sector (VCS) to provide:

- **Local community based services** - many VCS organisations (including social enterprises) are community based and may therefore be better able to work with harder to reach groups;
- **Choice** - by supporting VCS organisations (including social enterprises) the council hopes to provide a greater choice for local people in terms of the services they are able to access and being responsive to changing local need;
- **Opportunities for people to participate** - as volunteers as well as service users;
- **Specialist services** - many VCS organisations develop expertise in the particular needs of a client group.

Herefordshire is also committed to protecting facilities and services in rural areas, as they improve the resilience of communities and support those who are more vulnerable and isolated. These services provide:

- **A social hub** - a focal point for the whole community and a place for people to meet; find out what's going on locally and to interact socially. This is particularly important for the sections of the community that might otherwise be socially excluded, particularly the elderly living alone, or those with disabilities;
- **Facilities for those with limited transport options** - very local facilities provide a lifeline for those unable to travel further afield, due to lack of public transport, poverty or limited mobility;
- **Employment** - rural retail services provide employment opportunities and are often flexible opportunities which provide employment to young people and those seeking part time work;
- **Support for local producers** - rural retail services provide a valuable outlet for local producers.

The council also recognises that the Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR)¹ is paid for in part, by council taxpayers, and therefore the council has a duty to ensure that public funds are spent wisely, with due transparency and accountability. By awarding DRR, the council is effectively awarding grant aid to those organisations, so they can use their resources towards achieving the aims of this charter rather than paying the rates that would otherwise be due.

Aim

The aim of the Discretionary Rate Relief scheme is to support organisations to run and further develop facilities, services or activities which directly benefit Herefordshire residents and meet the priorities of the council.

Council's priorities and how your organisation can help

The council's priorities are to:

- Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life
- Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives
- Invest in projects to improve roads, create jobs and build more homes

In order to meet these priorities the council seeks to encourage individuals, communities and organisations to do more for themselves and their local area.

Priority	Examples of how your organisation can help
Keeping children and young people safe and giving them the best start in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide services and activities which support vulnerable children and their families;• Engage with children and young people about what things they would like to take place;• Make your services and activities accessible and open to children and young people.
Enabling residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide services and activities which support people to live independently and stay healthy;• Engage with more vulnerable residents about what things they would like to take place;• Make your services and activities accessible and open to the more vulnerable and socially excluded;• Enabling communities to help themselves through improved local coordination of activities which support vulnerable and socially excluded residents.
Investing in projects to improve roads, create jobs and build more homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support local producers;• Offer local employment, training and volunteering opportunities;• Reduce journey times by increasing access to local services.

Evidence needed for eligibility

VCS organisations will need to describe how they deliver and intend to develop activities to meet the council's priorities and to what level they believe these services / activities will directly benefit Herefordshire residents.

Organisations will need to commit to provide and update information on their services and activities as advised by Herefordshire Council.

It is known that many VCS organisations already deliver activities that satisfy the priorities, but there is an expectation that "additionality" will be evidenced by doing and offering more in their communities.

ⁱ Types of relief available

There are two types of business rate relief – Mandatory and Discretionary.

Mandatory Rate Relief is funded nationally and granted to the following categories of business rates payer:

- Registered charities;
- Village post offices, general stores, specialist food shops, public houses and petrol filling stations – if they are in a designated rural settlement;
- Registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs).

Local authorities also have the power to grant **Discretionary Rate Relief** as follows:

- To make a further award on top of Mandatory Rate Relief to those categories listed above and also:
- In respect of sports grounds and clubs;
- To other non-profit making organisations including asset locked social enterprises, such as Community Interest Companies;
- To other rural businesses situated within a designated rural settlement.