

CRITERIA TO BE USED IN DETERMINING APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

Previous awards of discretionary rate relief

The Council wishes to promote equality between organisations when granting discretionary rate relief. Therefore, when considering an application for discretionary rate relief, it will have regard to previous awards of relief to bodies of a similar nature to the applicant body. Unless specific considerations apply, the Council is likely to award relief to the same value as previously awarded to such similar bodies. Previous grants of relief for properties occupied by charities or non profit-making organisations are as follows:

100% discretionary rate relief granted to:

- Sports clubs if actively pursuing community amateur sports club status

80% discretionary rate relief granted to:

- Workshops occupied by West Kent YMCA and the Heart of Kent Hospice

5% discretionary rate relief granted to:

- Royal British Legion clubs

20% top-up relief granted to:

- Sports clubs if registered as community amateur sports clubs
- Recreational facilities, sports grounds and playing fields occupied by charities
- Community centres
- Day nurseries
- Village halls and properties of a similar nature
- Properties occupied by scouts or sea scouts or girl guides or brownies or the boys' brigade
- Halls occupied by the YMCA and St John Ambulance
- Social clubs run by charities
- Premises occupied by Age Concern
- Premises occupied by Citizens' Advice Bureaux
- Premises occupied by the non-trading arm of the Heart of Kent Hospice
- Offices where the occupying charity has a local focus

Applications where special considerations apply

Where the applicant body does not fall into one of the categories where relief has been awarded in the past (see above), relief will usually be granted only if the applicant body:

- caters for special needs (see below for an explanation of this term); or
- supplies facilities that would not otherwise be available in the area; or
- provides a service that supports the Council's key priorities. For the year 2007/08 these priorities are:
 1. Identify opportunities and achieve the benefits for Tonbridge and Malling flowing from the Strong and Prosperous Communities white paper.
 2. Enhance the vitality of Tonbridge town centre

3. Add to the supply of affordable housing and reduce the incidence of homelessness
4. Give priority to meeting the needs of young people
5. Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better maintained street scene and open space environment
6. Promote, encourage and provide opportunities for healthy living
7. Reduce anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, offences against the person, substance misuse and environmental crime
8. Make a positive contribution to tackling the causes and effects of climate change.

Meaning of 'special needs'

Does the organisation cater for a section of the community which the Authority considers particularly deserving of support, e.g. persons with disabilities, persons with learning difficulties, the very young or the very old?

Where the applicant body provides such special needs or supplies facilities that would not otherwise be available in the area or supports the Council's key priorities, the maximum amount of relief will generally be awarded, subject to the following.

Other considerations

In determining awards of relief, the Council will bear in mind all the facts of each case. In particular, the Council may consider the following factors:

- **Fees, charges etc**
Is the cost of membership such that it would exclude a large section of the community?
- **Access to facilities**
Are the organisation's facilities available generally or at certain times to non-members?
- **Provision of facilities**
Have the facilities been provided by self-help or grant aid from the Borough Council, local or public authorities or others?
- **Development of skills**
Does the organisation provide training or education for its members? Are there schemes for particular groups, e.g. young people, the disabled, the retired, the unemployed etc?

Restrictions on the granting of relief

In determining whether relief should be awarded, the Council will be inclined not to grant relief or to limit the amount of relief awarded in the following cases.

- **National charities**
As a general rule, the Council is unlikely to grant relief to national charities located within the Council's area unless there is some specific benefit to the residents of Tonbridge and Malling over and above the benefit to the residents of other areas in which the charity operates.

- **Charity shops and shops operated by trading arms of charities**
The Council is unlikely to grant relief to charity shops or shops operated by the trading arms of charities.
- **Bodies operating in only part of the Council's area**
Where an applicant body is a national organisation but operates only in part of the Council's area, any relief awarded will generally be reduced pro rata the population of the area of the Borough that receives benefit from that organisation. This restriction will not generally apply if the body is not a national body and has been established to benefit only a part of the Council's area.
- **Bodies operating a restrictive membership policy**
It is not the Council's general policy to grant relief to bodies that operate a restrictive membership policy unless such restrictions are necessary because of the size of the property occupied by the body or in order to ensure a pre-determined level of ability or required standard of achievement for a particular sport or activity.

Special cases

The Council recognises that there will be occasions when an applicant body does not satisfy the above criteria. These criteria are not restrictive and nothing in them shall be taken as restricting the Council's ability to depart from its general policy as to the granting of relief if it sees fit to do so bearing in mind the facts of the case.

Affordability

Applicants for discretionary rate relief should note that some of the cost of awards of such relief is borne by the Council. As such, in determining the level of relief to be granted, the Council must have regard to its budgetary position. Although the Council will aim to achieve equality between organisations in terms of the level of relief that it grants, this might not always be possible. The Council has the right, subject to giving the requisite notice required by law, to vary the level of relief that it has previously granted either in respect of a particular organisation or in respect of a class of organisation or to all organisations in receipt of relief.