

Consultation on proposals on the design and implementation of the locally administered Business Rates Relief Scheme

Summary of Questions and Responses

Preamble

Before responding to the specific questions we would wish to seek clarification as to whether the management and administration of this scheme is to be or should be covered under the New Burdens Doctrine.

Question 1: Do you agree that individual local authorities should be responsible for designing and implementing their own discretionary relief schemes, having regard to local circumstances and reflecting local economies?

Agree.

Question 2: Are the Government's assumptions about the design of local discretionary relief schemes reasonable?

The assumption that the scheme should benefit those facing the most significant increase in bills is right. It should be for local government to decide on how best to design and implement the local scheme in the best way to support their own businesses.

Question 3: Is the allocation methodology reasonable?

Proposed allocation methodology seems reasonable, provided it is not skewed by large increases in ratepayer bills in a few areas, which would therefore benefit these few areas at the cost of the whole of the rest of the country.

Question 4: Do you think that authorities should have some flexibility to switch resources between years to ensure relief provided meets local need and provides maximum value for money?

Authorities should have the flexibility to switch resources between years if they choose to do so.

Question 5: Do you agree with the proposal that s.31 grant should be paid to compensate authorities for their loss of income under the rates retention scheme up to the maximum of that year's "total pot"?

Agree.

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposals for administering payments, including in-year payments based on estimates, end-year reconciliations and payments quarterly in arrears?

Agree with the proposals for administering payments, other than that payments are made in advance (except the first payment).

Question 7: Do you agree the grant conditions are appropriate?

There should be no formal requirement to consult where the total discretionary rate relief granted under a local scheme is to be capped at that year's allocation. Also note the consultees to be those organisations in the Business Rates Retention Scheme which is not necessarily one and the same as major precepting authorities.