

Discretionary & Hardship Relief Policy

Background

Views were sought on the revised Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Review policy.

- The survey was open between 16 September and 30 October 2024.
- A total of 20 responses were received.
- There were no responses from Parish Councils.

Comments from Charity or Third Sector Organisations

Total Comments from Charity & Third Sector Organisations - 14
The Faversham Society is extremely grateful for the rate relief we have received over the past few years for our premise at 10/13 Preston Street, Faversham and realise the need to review the above policy.
I'm unable to review the above draft document as the link will not find the necessary page. Many improvements have been carried out with support of Government both locally and nationally along with many grants, totalling over £100K since 2020, and all for the benefit of the community. These monies have been sourced for improvement and are therefore restricted for that purpose. Income from hirings, 2023/24 of £6200 paid for the day to day running, insurances and utilities that account for over £3000. Therefore if this cost was to be included then the charity would not be able to remain operational and would close with-in two to three years.
We would like to see our present situation continue.
Speaking on behalf of the village hall committee, we appreciate we are granted rates exemption. This hall is run solely by and for the community of Warden and Eastern Sheppey. the increased utility charges recently are putting a strain on finances and we are pleased in the proposal that rates relief stay at Status quo
The hall is used mostly by the local village community. Most users are either elderly or children. Because of this we do our best to keep hire rates as low,as possible. Due to the very high increases in our utility bills and insurance premium our annual income no longer covers our outgoings. Adding the expense of rates could well mean we can no longer afford to keep the hall open.
I am pleased to see that charities are entitled to 80% rate relief, and the additional discretionary relief up to 20% which we currently enjoy.
Bapchild Cricket Club has always been very appreciative of the Business Rate Discretionary Relief received by the Council. We are a non-profit club and a member of CASC and look to provide affordable cricket to anyone in the community. We currently have four mixed adult teams and three mixed junior teams with 50+ adult members and 60+ junior members as well as parents, grandparents, siblings etc and opposing teams that enjoy our cricketing community. We are run completely on volunteers, no one is paid and we look to be self sufficient. The Club has made a small operating loss for the last two years as running costs (such as loam, fertiliser, grass seed, utilities, general maintenance etc) have increased greatly while our membership has dropped since Covid. We have initiated new ECB (English Cricket Board) programmes in response to re-build our junior membership back up and we are currently heading in the right direction. We have had to reduce our outgoing costs where we can, for example, by placing the purchase of new machinery on hold by extending the life of existing equipment, some of which are over 50 years old; not undertaking major repairs to the pavilion; not apply top dressing to the square at the end of the season to name a few. We have also had to increase membership fees and match fees and while we still remain the cheapest club in the area, we are very aware that we need to continue to make cricket affordable to all. Therefore receiving the Discretionary Relief is very important to the Club from a financial point of view as if not received, or partially received, would mean the money would need to be found through increased fees or identifying further cuts. I am glad to see the policy supports CASC organisation and looks to support voluntary, non-profit organisations such as ourselves and that the Council look to continue to provide the 20% "top up". As Chair, while I speak on behalf of the Club, I recognise that organisations of all natures, but especially those community orientated, are struggling with "balancing the books". Any financial support is invaluable and can mean the difference between existence or closing. Many thanks for allowing the Club to give feedback.

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<p>Borden Parish Hall is used by a wide section of the Swale community and provides a number of local clubs with a venue for their activities. It is also used by Borden residents for local events, and celebrations. It is also used by Borden Primary School. The rate relief is important for the Hall to continue as it contributes to the costs of maintenance and upkeep of the building erected in 1987. The Hall is a registered charity and the continuation of this property will ensure the community has access to a hub where many ideas lead to great things.</p>
<p>Since the 1.2.2001 we have been providing 5 football pitches and several function and meeting rooms for the local community on a non profit basis. With increased energy costs we struggle to break even. Having to pay any contribution to Business Rates will cause extreme difficulties to run.</p>
<p>We are a small village and the hall is used by the whole community Our cost especially heating and lighting are our largest concern, but we are grateful for rate relief and it would put us under more pressure if we lost it. It would undoubtedly mean we would have to increase the hall charges which would be counterproductive, we would loose bookings and make less viable.</p>
<p>Bobbing Court & Lower Halstow Cricket Club has ben established, at Chapel Meadow, in Lower Halstow for many years.. We provide sporting opportunities for the local community. We are a small CASC registered cricket club and the top up to the Business Rate relief we receive is crittical to our continued viability. With running costs rising year on year it is not practicable to pass these increasing mambers' contributions. We provide cricket at as low a cost as possible to our members. Should our discretionary rate relief be reduced or withdrawn this would significantly increase our costs and the club would fold. This would not only affect our cricket club but also the junior football teams that use the facility in the winter months, and other cricket clubs in the area we allow to use our ground. The Club strongly support the continues rate relief provided by Swale Council as set out in the draft paper.</p>
<p>As a small rural village hall, run as a charity, for the benefit of the local community, we rely on the top up allowance to help us keep our running costs down, thus enabling us to keep our hire and usage costs down. We provide facilities for pre-school mum and toddler groups through to Age UK memory clinics, with a host of activities to benefit our local community. We strongly request that the top up relief remains in place for our community hall and other similar venues.</p>
<p>We are a not-for-profit registered Community Association Sports Club (CASC - CH1505) with HMRC. We are the only Indoor Bowling Club within the borough of Swale. Our club is open to all sections of the community, irrespective of race, religion or gender and the majority of our members live within the boundaries of Swale BC. We encourage schools, scouts and cub organisations etc to participate in the sport and have held numerous activity sessions for them. We also allow non members use of our facilities, for a one off nominal fee. We have a very active MS Swale group within our membership and as part of our care in the community programme we allow adults with learning difficulties from the Crawford Centre and Faversham Centre free use of our facilities, including coached bowling, every Tuesday morning. Over 85% of our membership are retired and enjoy bowling throughout the year. The Board of Directors and General Playing Committee are all volunteers and our main income is drawn from member subscriptions and playing fees. Any surplus funds accrued are solely used for the improvement and general maintenance of our facilities. Should Swale BC decide to withdraw the discretionary 20% subsidy, this would probably lead to us increasing our fees and the removal of free use enjoyed by those groups mentioned above.</p>
<p>As a non-profit community centre/hub we currently benefit from a reduced business rate. This allows us to provide low/no-cost activities to swale residents and other charities. We also provide a wide range of information on behalf of other charities and organisations across Swale, relating to their events and activities. Any increase in our business rate would impact on our ability to provide cultural and supportive activities which are to essential to those on lower incomes and the wider community. A further reduction in business rates would greatly improve what we be able to offer.</p>

Comments from Businesses

Total Comments from Businesses 4
<p>Good afternoon SBC, I've ticked "business" but we are a not for profit VOLENTEER sports club. Nobody is getting paid. Infact, it costs us all money in fuel to get to and from the ground, time (I'm personally up the ground 30 hours a week on top of my full time job) and donations from everyone (I have personally just last week paid £955 for a new line marker for the football pitch as the club didn't have the funds to replace our broken one) to keep the doors open and the lights on. It's a good thing we are not for profit, as we do not make a profit. Last year we lost £364.</p>

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Total Comments from Businesses 4

Would have been more but our annual insurance was delayed so has fallen into the following year, so the true loss is £1,155 for FY24. We also haven't carried out end of season renovations on our cricket pitch as we couldn't afford to pay the £1,200 needed to complete them. FY23 we lost £3,363 as the club was flooded due to a leak and repairs were astronomical. We are on to make a small loss in 2025... well a larger one now thanks for SBC. This weekend I will be mowing the football pitch with a mower you would use for an average sized garden as we cannot afford to spend the £'000s on a ride on or pay a contractor to mow it for us. That will take me around 6 hours. I will then mark the pitch. Sunday I'm up the ground for the football from 8am-6pm. BOTH of these days are unpaid. All voluntary. It is frankly a smack in the face that my reward for trying to provide facilities for use is to be told that I need to pay SBC over £400 a year going forward. I'm honestly disgusted. As a club, we try and keep the costs for everyone as low as possible. Find out how many cricket clubs have annual membership at £30 and charge £5 a game to play. There will be none. We rent the football pitch out to the Sheppey Sunday League for £60 a game. That is also cheaper than anywhere with changing facilities. Your actions will cause me to increase these costs significantly for everyone, lowering participation. Utterly shortsighted. We have a charity partner in Demelza who we have raised £2,500 for since we began our partnership in 2023. If we can't afford to operate, these funds aren't going to be raised. Norton Sports Club will be in contact with Julien Speed our local councillor about this as it is completely unacceptable.

We have received Discretionary Relief for many years without which we would struggle to operate, our overheads and head rent have recently increased dramatically (Rent by £5000 per year for the next 3 years) making it evermore important to receive the relief.

The Appleyard is the hub of the community providing assistance with Charities, Retired sections, Social and restaurant facilities, live entertainment and we are a non profit organisation.

The Appleyard Sportsground on Gore Court road provides sporting and leisure facilities for the surrounding areas. We provide sports for football tennis and Bowls. We are a non profit making organisation and help with lots of charities providing the outside facilities to enable fund raising We raise money for KSS helicopters. We also help the police and provide assistance for the council in both venues

Comments from Residents

Total Resident Comments 2

I applaud this policy and believe it to be fair.

Not for profit organisations which enhance the community should not have to pay rates because it would tak money that could be used for the community.