

2024/25 Explanatory Notes

Non-Domestic Rates

Non-Domestic Rates, or business rates, collected by local authorities are the way that those who occupy non-domestic property contribute towards the cost of local services. Under the business rates retention arrangements introduced from 1st April 2013, authorities keep a proportion of the business rates paid locally. The money, together with revenue from council tax payers, locally generated income and grants from central government, is used to pay for the services provided by local authorities in your area. Further information about the business rates system may be obtained at: www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates and on our website at: www.wokingham.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business-and-growth/business-rates

Rateable Value

Apart from properties that are exempt from business rates, each non-domestic property has a rateable value which is set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), an agency of His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. They compile and maintain a full list of all rateable values, available at www.gov.uk/voa. The rateable value of your property is shown on the front of your bill. This broadly represents the yearly rent the property could have been let for on the open market on a particular date specified in legislation. For the current rating list, this date was set as 1st April 2021. The VOA may alter the valuation if circumstances change. The ratepayer (and certain others who have an interest in the property) can also check and challenge the valuation shown in the list if they believe it is wrong. Further information about the grounds on which challenges may be made and the process for doing so can be obtained by contacting the VOA, or by consulting the VOA website: www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-check-your-rateable-value-is-correct.

National Non-Domestic Rating Multiplier

The local authority works out the business rates bill for a property by multiplying the rateable value of the property by the appropriate non-domestic multiplier. There are two multipliers: the standard non-domestic rating multiplier and the small business non-domestic rating multiplier. The Government sets the multipliers for each financial year, except in the City of London where special arrangements apply.

From 1 April 2024, the small business multiplier will by default apply to all hereditaments with a rateable value below the multiplier threshold (currently £51,000). This includes properties occupied by charities and unoccupied properties, which currently do not qualify for the small business multiplier.

Both multipliers for a financial year are based on the previous year's multiplier adjusted to reflect the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation figure for the September prior to the billing year, unless a lower multiplier is set by the government. The current multipliers are shown on the front of your bill.

Business Rates Instalments

Payment of business rates bills is automatically set on a 10-monthly cycle. However, the Government has put in place regulations that allow ratepayers to request with their local authority to enable payments to be made through 12 monthly instalments. If you wish to take up this offer, you should contact us as soon as possible by emailing us at Brates@wokingham.gov.uk.

Direct Debit Payment

Payment by Direct Debit can be made on the 1st, 10th or 20th of each month. You can set up a direct debit by following this link <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business-and-growth/business-rates/>

Revaluations

All non-domestic property rateable values are reassessed at revaluations. The most recent revaluation took effect from 1st April 2023. Revaluations ensure that business rates bills are up-to-date and more accurately reflect current rental values and relative changes in rents.

Frequent revaluations ensure the system continues to be responsive to changing economic conditions.

Transitional Rate Relief

At a revaluation, some ratepayers will see reductions or no change in their bill whereas some ratepayers will see increases. Transitional relief schemes are introduced at each revaluation to help those facing increases. Transitional relief is applied automatically to bills. Further information about transitional arrangements may be found at: www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief/transitional-relief

Business Rate Reliefs

Depending on individual circumstances, a ratepayer may be eligible for a rate relief (i.e. a reduction in their business rates bill). There are a range of reliefs available. Further details are provided below and at www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates or on our website www.wokingham.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business-and-growth/business-rate-relief-and-reductions/

Small Business Rates Relief

If a ratepayer's sole or main property has a rateable value which does not exceed a set threshold, the ratepayer may receive a percentage reduction in their rates bill for the property of up to a maximum of 100%. The level of reduction will depend on the rateable value of the property. For example, eligible properties with a rateable value below a specified lower threshold will receive 100% relief while eligible properties above the lower threshold and below a specified upper threshold may receive partial relief. The relevant thresholds for relief are set by the Government by order and can be obtained from your local authority or at www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates

Generally, these percentage reductions (reliefs) are only available to ratepayers who occupy either—

- (a) one property, or
- (b) one main property and other additional properties providing those additional properties each have a rateable value which does not exceed the limit set by order.

The aggregate rateable value of all the properties mentioned in (b), must also not exceed an amount set by order. For those businesses that take on an additional property which would normally have meant the loss of small business rate relief, they will be allowed to keep that relief for a fixed additional period. Full details on the relevant limits in relation to second properties and the current period for which a ratepayer may continue to receive relief after taking on an additional property can be obtained from your local authority or at www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates.

Certain changes in circumstances will need to be notified to the local authority by the ratepayer who is in receipt of relief (other changes will be picked up by the local authority). The changes which should be notified are—

- (a) the property falling vacant,
- (b) the ratepayer taking up occupation of an additional property
- or (c) an increase in the rateable value of a property occupied by the ratepayer in an area other than the area of the local authority which granted the relief.

Charity and Community Amateur Sports Club Relief

Charities and registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs are entitled to 80% relief where the property is occupied by the charity or the club and is wholly or mainly used for the charitable purposes of the charity (or of that and other charities), or for the purposes of the club (or of that and other clubs). Wokingham Borough Council has discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill. Full details can be found at www.wokingham.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business-and-growth/business-rate-relief-and-reductions/.

Local Discounts and Hardship Relief

Local authorities have a general power to grant discretionary local discounts and to give hardship relief in specific circumstances. Full details can be obtained from the local authority or by visiting our website

Rate Relief for Businesses in Rural Areas

Certain types of properties in a rural settlement with a population below 3,000 may be entitled to a discount. The property must be the only general store, the only post office or a food shop and have a rateable value of less than £8,500, or the only public house or the only petrol station and have a rateable value of less than £12,500. The property must be occupied. An eligible ratepayer is entitled to relief at 50% of the full charge whilst local authorities are expected to use their local discount powers to grant 100% rural rate relief to eligible ratepayer

For full details email brates@wokingham.gov.uk

Supporting Small Business

At the 2023 Autumn Statement on 18 November, the Chancellor announced that the 2024 Supporting Small Business scheme, will provide over £500 million in support over the next 3 years to cap bill increases at £50 per month (£600 per year) for businesses losing eligibility for some or all Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief at the 2023 revaluation. This figure does not include any eligibility for Retail Relief.

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief

At the November 2023 Budget the government announced that eligible ratepayers will receive 75% relief on their business rates bills for the year 2024/25 up to a maximum cash cap of £110,000.

Relief will be provided to eligible occupied Retail, Hospitality and Leisure properties in 2024/25. Further information regarding the criteria for this relief can be found at www.wokingham.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business-and-growth/business-rate-relief-and-reductions/

This Relief has been applied automatically however should you feel you should be entitled to this please email brates@wokingham.gov.uk

Charity and Community Amateur Sports Club Relief

Charities and registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs are entitled to 80% relief where the property is occupied by the charity or the club and is wholly or mainly used for the charitable purposes of the charity (or of that and other charities), or for the purposes of the

club (or of that and other clubs). The local authority has discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill. Full details can be obtained by emailing Brates@wokingham.gov.uk.

Temporary Reliefs

Some of the permanent reliefs are set out below but other temporary reliefs may be introduced by the Government at a fiscal event. Further detail on current temporary reliefs is available at www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief. For full details email brates@wokingham.gov.uk

Unoccupied Property Rating

Business rates are generally payable in respect of unoccupied non-domestic property. However, they are generally not payable for the first three months that a property is empty. This is extended to six months in the case of certain industrial premises, whilst certain other properties such as vacant listed buildings are not liable for business rates until they are reoccupied. Full details can be found by visiting our website www.wokingham.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business-and-growth/business-rate-relief-and-reductions/.

Partly Occupied Property Relief

A ratepayer is liable for the full non-domestic rate whether a property is wholly occupied or only partly occupied. Where a property is partly occupied for a short time, the local authority has discretion in certain cases to award relief in respect of the unoccupied part. Full details can be obtained by emailing Brates@wokingham.gov.uk

Subsidy Control

The new UK subsidy control regime commenced from 4 January 2023. The new regime enables public authorities, including devolved administrations and local authorities, to deliver subsidies that are tailored for local needs. Public authorities giving subsidies must comply with the UK's international subsidy control commitments. The subsidy control legislation provides the framework for a new, UK-wide subsidy control regime. Further information about subsidy control can be found on the gov.uk website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/subsidy-control-regime>

Rating Advisers

Ratepayers do not have to be represented in discussions about the rateable value of their property or their rates bill. However, ratepayers who do wish to be represented should be aware that members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS—website www.rics.org) and the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV—website www.irrv.org.uk) are qualified and are regulated by rules of professional conduct designed to protect the public from misconduct.

Information Supplied with Demand Notices

Information relating to the relevant and previous financial years in regard to the gross expenditure of the local authority is available at www.wokingham.gov.uk. A hard copy is available on request by writing to Brates@wokingham.gov.uk.