



**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**2026 SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS  
RELIEF SCHEME**

## **NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES 2026 SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At the 2025 Autumn Budget the Chancellor announced that the 2026 Supporting Small Business Relief (SSBR) scheme to support businesses for the years 2026/27 to 2028/29. This support will cap bill increases at £800 per year or the relevant caps within transitional relief (whichever is the greatest) for any business losing eligibility for certain reliefs, including Small Business Rate Relief and Rural Rate Relief, at the 2026 revaluation
- 1.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have issued guidance to local authorities which sets out the criteria for the scheme, which is available at:  
  
[Business Rates Relief: 2026 Supporting Small Business Relief, local authority guidance - GOV.UK](#)
- 1.3 This document provides guidance about the operation and delivery of the scheme.

### **2. Legislation**

- 2.1 The Government is not changing the legislation. Instead the Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria for the relief, reimburse billing authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended, to grant the relief.
- 2.2 Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the discretionary relief Scheme (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003).
- 2.3 As expenditure will be reimbursed, the Government expects billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and grant the relief to all eligible ratepayers.

### **3. Who is eligible for the relief?**

- 3.1 The 2026 SSBR will help those ratepayers who at the April 2026 revaluation are seeing large increases in their bills as a result of losing some or all of their:
  - a. Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief,
  - b. 40% Retail Hospitality and Leisure Relief, and/or
  - c. 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief.

3.2 Charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs, who are already entitled to mandatory 80% relief, and properties that are unoccupied are not eligible for 2026 SSBR.

#### **4. How much relief will be available?**

4.1 The 2026 SSBR will ensure that the increase in the bills of these ratepayers is limited to £800 per year or the relevant caps within transitional relief whichever is the greater. The base liability for 2026/27 is the chargeable amount for 31 March 2026 multiplied by 365, and includes Small Business Rate Relief, Rural Rate Relief, and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief for 2025/26, but excludes any transitional relief.

4.2 For those ratepayers receiving 2023 SSB relief on 31/3/26 (including those also receiving SBRR, Rural Rate Relief and/or RHL Relief on 31/3/26), any eligibility for 2026 SSBR will end on 31 March 2027. All other eligible ratepayers remain in 2026 SSBR for either 3 years or until they reach the bill they would have paid without the scheme. A change of ratepayers will not affect eligibility for the Supporting Small Business scheme but eligibility will be lost if the property falls vacant or becomes occupied by a charity or Community Amateur Sports Club.

4.3 There is no second property test for eligibility for the 2026 SSBR scheme. However, those ratepayers who during 2025/26 lost entitlement to Small Business Rate Relief (because they failed the second property test) but have, under the rules for Small Business Rate Relief, been given a 12 month period of grace before their relief ended (or from 27/11/25 3 years) - can continue on the 2026 SSBR scheme for the remainder of their period of grace.

4.4 All other discretionary reliefs, including those funded by section 31 grants, should be considered after the application of 2026 Supporting Small Business relief.

#### **5. Award Period**

5.1 Supporting small business rate relief will be awarded for 12 months, to the end of the financial year in question.

5.2 At the end of each financial year, the account will be reviewed and if appropriate, rate relief will be awarded for a further 12 months.

5.3 Where there is a change of circumstances, such that the eligibility criteria are no longer met e.g. the ratepayer vacates the hereditament or there is a change to the rateable value of the hereditament, the decision to award rate relief will be reviewed and where necessary the amount of relief will be recalculated and amended.

- 5.4 Where a business ceases to be entitled to 2026 SSBR for a day, it cannot return to eligibility if their circumstances change from a later day. For example, if a property falls unoccupied it will not then be eligible for 2026 SSBR if it subsequently becomes occupied again.

## **6. Applications for 2026 Supporting Small Business Relief**

- 6.1 The Council will work with our software supplier, Northgate Public Services to identify potential recipients.
- 6.2 We will award the 2026 Supporting Small Business Rate Relief to those ratepayers who are eligible and notify them of the amount of the award and the period of the award.

## **7. Subsidy control**

- 7.1 The 2026 SSBR is likely to amount to a subsidy. Therefore, any relief provided under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations (See [Guidance on the UK's international subsidy control commitments - GOV.UK](#) which contains guidance and information for the new UK subsidy control regime.
- 7.2 To the extent that a the Council is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the Subsidy Control Act allows an economic actor (e.g. a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a three-year period (consisting of the 2026/27 year and the two previous financial years). MFA subsidies cumulate with each other and with other subsidies that fall within the category of 'Minimal or SPEI financial assistance'. Any other subsidies claimed under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement should be counted under the £315,000 allowance.
- 7.3 In those cases where it is clear to the Council that the ratepayer is likely to breach the MFA limit then the Council should automatically withhold the relief. Otherwise, the Council may include the relief in bills and ask the ratepayers, on a self-assessment basis, to inform the authority if they are in breach of the MFA limit.
- 7.4 MFA subsidies above £100,000 are subject to transparency requirements. This is not cumulated per beneficiary but applies per subsidy award. This means that for every individual subsidy provided of more than £100,000, the Council needs to include details of the subsidy on the subsidy control database.

## **8. Recalculations of relief**

- 8.1 The amount of Supporting Small Business relief awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change in circumstances. This may include a backdated change to a rateable value, which could arise during the year in question or a during a later year.

## **9. Decision Making**

- 9.1 Decisions will be made by the Business Rate team, in conjunction with the Revenues Manager, in accordance with the eligibility criteria, and notified to the ratepayer.
- 9.2 Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application and if unsuccessful, will be given the opportunity to request a review of the decision.

## **10. Review of decisions**

- 10.1 The Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for an appeal of its decision.
- 10.2 All such requests must be made in writing or by email to the Council within one month of the Council's decision and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal.
- 10.3 The application will be reconsidered by Service Manager – Revenue, Benefits and Customer Services, as soon as practicable and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision. This decision is final.

## **11. Recovery of amounts incorrectly awarded**

- 11.1 If it is established that **any** award has been made incorrectly due to error, misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the Council by an applicant or their representative(s), the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

## **12 Delegation**

- 12.1 The Service Manager, Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services will be authorised to make changes to this policy in line with updates in guidance as issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

### **13 Complaints**

- 13.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Councils website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.