

## **London Borough of Waltham Forest**

### **Relief for Local Newspapers 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2019**

#### **1. Background**

In its manifesto the Government committed to support local newspapers as they adapt to new technology and changing circumstances. As part of this, the government consulted in July 2015 on the introduction of a business rates relief for local newspapers in England. This was in order to understand better the challenges currently faced by local newspapers occupying property in their local areas and whether a relief on their business rates bills could help support them.

On 16 March 2016 the Chancellor announced at the Budget that the Government will introduce a £1,500 business rates discount for office space occupied by local newspapers, up to a maximum of one discount per local newspaper title and per hereditament, and up to state aid limits, for 2 years from 1 April 2017.

This is a temporary measure to support local newspapers adapt to technological changes within the industry. The relief is intended to be specifically for local newspapers and will be delivered through local authority discretionary discount powers (under section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act. The relief will be limited by state aid rules.

The cost of awarding this relief will be fully reimbursed by central government to Local Authorities who use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act to award relief in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this policy.

This relief cannot be applied in an identical way to the Councils Discretionary Rate Relief Policy as this would be contrary to the purpose of the grant. Therefore the council has detailed in this policy the qualifying criteria having regard to the guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

#### **2. Qualifying Criteria**

The relief will provide:

A £1,500 relief for office space occupied by local newspapers up to a maximum of one discount per local newspaper title and per hereditament, for two years from 1 April 2017.

##### Local Newspapers

The relief is to be specifically for local newspapers and by that we mean what would be considered to be a “traditional local newspaper.” The relief will not be available to magazines.

##### Office Space

Relief For Local Newspapers Policy – March 2017

The hereditament must be occupied by a local newspaper and wholly or mainly used as office premises for journalists and reporters.

### **3. Award Limit**

#### **Amount of Relief**

The amount of relief is limited to a maximum of one discount:

- per newspaper title (e.g. per newspaper name)

AND

- per hereditament

Awards of up to a maximum of £1500 will be granted to properties meeting the criteria set out in section 2.

Relief for Local Newspapers will be calculated on a daily basis according to the number of days the hereditament is eligible under the qualifying criteria in section 2.

The relief will be applied against the net bill after all other reliefs.

Relief for Local Newspapers will be funded by the government and therefore has no budget implications on London Borough of Waltham Forest

### **4. State Aid**

The award of the relief is classed as State Aid and the Council must therefore comply with the European Commission State Aid legislation. The application form requires each organisation's confirmation that the granting of Relief for Local Newspapers will not result in their organisation exceeding the State Aid threshold of €200,000 over the last 3 years (De Minimis Regulations EC 1407/2013).

### **5. Applications**

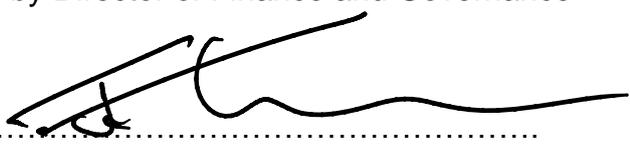
Awards will only be made to properties that qualify on receipt of a fully completed application form. In some circumstances the local authority may decide that it is necessary for one or more officers to visit the rated property to establish further facts. The local authority will not consider applications where the ratepayer has failed to provide information that has been requested, or where the ratepayer does not cooperate with a request to visit the property.

### **6. Appeals**

As Relief for Local Newspapers is awarded entirely at the discretion of the local authority, there is no formal right of appeal. However any unsuccessful applicant can

request that their application be reviewed. Any request for a review should be made in writing within 4 weeks of the decision notification. Reviews will be considered by the Head of Revenues and their decision will be final.

Approval by Director of Finance and Governance

Signed ..... 

J Turnbull

Date ..... 