

# Business Rates Information Letter

## **(1/2009): Business Information Letter**

This is the first Business Rate Information Letter to be issued by the Department this year. Previous letters are available on the internet at:

<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/busrats1.htm>

### **This letter covers:**

- ♣ **2009/10 Rate Bills**
- ♣ **Updates to the Demand Notice explanatory notes**

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## **Chief Finance Officers of English Billing Authorities**

### **FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE BUSINESS RATES SECTION**

Dear Chief Finance Officer

### **Business Rates Information Letter (1/2009):**

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### **This letter covers:**

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### **Rate Bills for 2009/10**

1. In this BRIL we cover arrangements for including a single-page flyer on the 2010 business rates revaluation in 2009/10 rate bills.
2. The 2010 rating revaluation takes effect from 1 April 2010 based on rental values at 1 April 2008. Draft rateable values will be published by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and sent to all ratepayers in October 2009 but we would like to raise awareness of the 2010 revaluation amongst ratepayers as early as possible. Therefore, we would like to include a single-page flyer in the 2009/10 bills giving basic information, including key dates, about the 2010 revaluation.

### Content

3. The flyer will cover areas such as the reason for revaluation, the key dates and how ratepayers will be informed and involved throughout. It will provide contact details for the VOA if ratepayers want to find out more about the revaluation.

4. We apologise that this request has come so late in the day but we believe that by alerting ratepayer to the revaluation early we will improve the revaluation process by pre-empting some enquiries, and ensuring that there is factual, official information

available to counter the more speculative and often inaccurate pieces conveyed in the media.

5. We are aware that billing authorities are starting to receive enquiries about revaluation and it is becoming a common subject when you engage with ratepayers. We hope that a flyer, with helpful links and contact information, will help to answer ratepayers' questions.

6. Of course, we still expect ratepayers to contact local authorities about the 2010 revaluation, so we will be providing you with access to communication material to assist with enquiries.

#### Format and delivery

7. We have taken some early soundings with the Local Government Association on the best format for the flyer and settled upon a single sheet of A4 using paper which we expect to weigh about 5 grams. However, we would like, where ever possible, to cater to the production and finishing preferences of each billing authority to make it as easy as possible for you. The local Group Customer Service Managers (GCSMs) in the VOA, with whom your department already have regular contact, will be in touch with you shortly to establish your preferences.

8. The VOA will be sending the flyers directly to each billing authority. The GCSMs will also establish for each billing authority the number you require, where you would like them sent, how you would like them finished and the date by which you need them.

9. Alternatively, the VOA will also be making available an electronic version of the flyer, in a format of your preference, if you prefer to feed that into your batch printing system.

#### Costs in billing authorities

10. We are aware that some small additional costs may be incurred by billing authorities in respect of including the flyer with the 2009 bill. We are in discussion with the Local Government Association regarding these costs, with a view to making a payment to billing authorities under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. This payment would be based on a per leaflet sum common to all billing authorities and would represent an additional contribution to the overall cost of billing for non-domestic rates.

#### **Updates to the Demand Notice explanatory notes**

11. The BRIL 06/08 gave details of the Pre Budget Report announcement. This included changes to the legislation for 2009/10 regarding empty property rates, small business rate relief and to allow for a schedule of payments for certain backdated liabilities. I am sorry that the final, Parliament-approved, regulations are not yet available – but they will be laid in

Parliament in order for the changes to be in force in time and this will be notified to authorities as soon as they are.

12. We will also be making amendments to the Demand Notice explanatory notes alongside these regulation changes shortly. However, we are conscious that many authorities are in the process of finalising their billing processes for non-domestic properties, and are making final arrangements for printing etc and are eager to know what account they will need to make of any changes that might apply from the new Demand Notice Regulations.

13. I am sorry that the final, Parliament-approved, regulations are not yet available - this will be notified to authorities as soon as they are. However, we are intending to inform local authorities of the likely draft changes to the explanatory notes by the end of the month so you can plan your billing.