

Appendix 2

Market traders – Q&A

1. Why the change and why are we being charged rates – we have never paid them before?

- **A.** This is not a Watford Borough Council initiative. It reflects a **national change** to working practices **by the Valuation Office Agency, a Government agency** who value and provide 'rating assessments' for properties where business rates apply. Under these national changes occupiers – which for the market of course are the stallholders – are liable to pay rates individually. Each of you will receive a bill outlining the details of these rates due from you. This will be sent to your home address.
- Previously the Council has paid rates for the whole market as a single bill and it has been effectively included in the licence fees we charge for stalls and storage.

2. So why is the Council involved?

- **A** - The Council's Revenues and Benefits team acts as a collection agency on behalf of the government. The Council does not 'keep the money' ourselves, it is pooled nationally by the Government who redistribute it.

3. Why is this happening now?

- **A** – The timing is determined by the Valuation Office Agency, not the Council, who have no control over it.

4. Why can't the Council continue to pay it for us and include it in our stall and storage bills like they always have done?

- **A** - We now need to separate our licence fee from the business rates that are due. Doing this will ensure that under the national regulations stallholders who are entitled to will be able to claim Small Business Relief (which can mean that no rates are payable at all).

5. So is the Council amending the weekly licence fee following the change to market traders paying their individual business rates?

- **A** - The Council is currently looking at the weekly licence fees in combination with the changes in how business rates are paid. We are also considering how this change may be an opportunity to simplify the current pricing structure to make costs much easier and clearer to understand and for stallholders to budget for. This will also help simplify direct debits. We will be discussing this with the Market Traders Group representatives as soon as possible.

6. Will I qualify for Small Business Relief?

- **A** - We believe that a majority of traders will qualify for Small Business Relief on their main stall. This depends on a variety of factors based on national regulations. These national regulations will be changing in April but at the moment each stallholder will need to fill in a form to qualify for Small Business Relief.
- To help stallholders, the Council's Market team have been working with the Revenues and Benefits Rates team and will be producing Small Business Relief application forms with much of the information already filled in for stallholders to sign. This will make the process much easier for you. **If you do not apply for this relief the Council will have to seek recovery of the business rates due.**

- **The Rates team can also assist with any further queries you may have at nndr@watford.gov.uk or 01923 278466.**

7. Q. Are these changes linked to the proposed redevelopment of Charter Place?

A. No – The Council is only making the changes because it needs to under the national regulations.