

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you in your capacity as a Member of the Scrutiny Committee.

I refer to the e-mail relating to the above which was sent to you on 10 February 2017 and am writing to advise that Councillors Gardiner, Rowell, Murray, Catlin and Carter have written to request that the draft decision of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Smith, relating to utilising the Business Rates Discount Scheme to award 100% business rates relief to Bright-Tech Investments Ltd. for a period of 12 months, be called-in by the Scrutiny Committee for consideration for the following reasons:

Councillor Gardiner:

- 1 A more nuanced response on the form would have shown why a 100% as opposed to say a 50% relief was suggested.
- 2 If the company is investing £6m one can see why assistance might be of value, but I do not see a specific reason anywhere.
- 3 I had thought that rate *relief* was designed to help needy (for want of a better word) business ratepayers so I am surprised we have devoted what I think is almost half the allocation to this one company. Does this type of relief fit the original brief for the rate relief proposal as documented?
- 4 Is there an urgency for this decision? I didn't pick that up in the paperwork. Does the allocation have to be made in this budget year?;

Councillor Rowell:

1. There is nothing to suggest that the discount is needed by the company. What is its financial position?
2. The criteria used to score the application don't reflect what has been put in the application, for example,
 - Local Employment has been scored at 100% and yet nowhere does it state in the application that any of the employees reside within a 10 mile radius and
 - The application doesn't state that jobs will go to local staff
 - I can't find anything in the application that answers the eco friendly criteria
 - I don't know whether the vision criteria have been met from the application but it has scored 100%

The criteria don't appear to be applicable to the application form so it difficult to know whether these have been met;

Councillor Murray:

As far as I can see there are plenty of businesses struggling in the current climate which could really benefit from some rate relief. I don't see why such a large chunk of the available pot of money should go to just one firm when it might make more sense to look more widely at how the money would best be spent to bring the widest possible benefit across Lewes District.

Councillor Catlin:

We are told nothing about Bright-Tech Investments. Is it a non-profit distributing company?

I support the points raised by Cllr Gardiner and others and echo their comments.

I would suggest that at some point in the future, Scrutiny also review the delegated powers under which this decision was made; and

Councillor Carter:

I am particularly puzzled by this decision having read through the criteria for rate relief - this business doesn't seem to fulfil all the criteria, for example there is no real reference to how the business is environmentally sustainable. I agree with Cllr Murray that many businesses are struggling, so I can't see from the details given why this one merits more assistance than other businesses. I know of examples locally where Community Interest Companies, which are not-for-profit and are fulfilling many of the criteria for rate relief, contributing to social needs and training young people, have been struggling to pay business rates and haven't been offered any help.

Would you please let me know, by 5.00pm on Monday, 20 February 2017, whether you support the requests for the decision to be reviewed – **there is no need to respond if you do not support the requests**. A meeting of a Panel of the Committee would be held if at least six members of the Committee were in favour of calling-in the decision **(NB Councillors Gardiner and Carter (who are members of the Scrutiny Committee) are not required to reply to this email as they have already expressed their desire to have the decision reviewed).**