

**Application for Hardship Relief**

<b>Name of applicant</b>	Erotica Belle Ltd
<b>Address of property concerned</b>	1 Ranelagh Road, Weymouth
<b>Number of people employed by the business</b>	The business has a shop in the Andover area in addition to the above. The business employs 7 staff in total. Two staff live in Weymouth and one member of staff in Upwey.
<b>Reasons for claiming relief</b>	<p>The business has traded from the above property since May 2011. The business was initially entitled to receive 100% Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR). However, the business expanded in 2012 and started to trade in the Andover area. This affected entitlement to SBRR from 1 September 2012 and the business did not qualify from that date.</p> <p>The information which we send with the annual rate bills reminds ratepayers that they are unlikely to qualify for SBRR if they occupy more than one property and to let us know promptly if this is the case. However, the business failed to advise us accordingly and we did not become aware of the presence of the second shop until June 2016, when the Council covering the Andover area contacted us to advise that the business was trading in their area. On receipt of this information the SBRR was cancelled and backdated to 1 September 2012.</p> <p>The business has stated that prior to expanding in Andover it contacted the local Council for that area and was given incorrect information about entitlement to SBRR. It also states that, on receipt of that information, it was under the impression that it would qualify for full SBRR on both properties and did not become aware of the correct position until 2016.</p> <p>The business has indicated that it has been in contact with the local Council covering the Andover area who have admitted the error and have awarded 100% Hardship Relief up to 1</p>

	<p>August 2016. However, discussions with the Council have confirmed that partial Hardship Relief was awarded up to 1 April 2014 only.</p> <p>The business is struggling to meet the backdated charge to 1 September 2012 and have requested that 100% Hardship Relief be awarded from that date to 1 August 2016. The business has indicated that if relief is not awarded it will seriously have to consider closing the shop.</p> <p>In considering this case, Committee should be aware that making an award could create a precedent which results in us having to award relief where this Council has got something right but another authority hasn't.</p>
<p><b>Financial information</b></p>	<p>The latest accounts submitted are for the year ended 30 April 2015. These show a gross profit of £96,681 after cost of sales (£57,306) are deducted from turnover (£153,987). Administrative expenses and tax total £91,131 leaving a net profit of £5,550. Capital and reserves as at 30 April 2016 total £16,645.</p> <p>Items of expenditure include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent and rates £15,141</li> <li>• Wages and salaries £44,626</li> <li>• Advertising and promotion £11,452</li> <li>• General expenditure £5,807</li> <li>• Repairs and renewals £3,122.</li> </ul> <p>Further investigations have identified that the owners of the business are also Directors in another company which trades from a shop in Salisbury. No financial information has been presented in respect of that business.</p>
<p><b>Does the business provide a unique service to the community?</b></p>	<p>The applicant is of the view that the business provides products, services and advice that are not found anywhere else in the area. It states that people travel from miles around to visit the store and will visit other shops in the Town at the time.</p>

<b>What would be the cost to the Council if relief was awarded?</b>	The business has requested that Hardship Relief be awarded for the period 01/09/12 to 01/08/16. The charge for that period totals £5,593.44. If Committee agreed to the request the cost to the General Fund would be £2,237.38 (i.e. 40% of £5,593.44).
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