

Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

Occupation of Vacant Commercial Premises Incentive Scheme

2016

Introduction

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') is providing a Business Incentive Scheme to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises. The Council is aware of the challenges for businesses trading on the main streets of the commercial centres in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (hereinafter referred to as 'the County') and the difficulties for new businesses to gain a foothold during recessionary periods. The purpose of the scheme is to give an incentive to both landlords and new aspiring business owners to occupy vacant premises by lowering entry costs through a grant related to the level of rates payable on the property.

By encouraging the occupation of vacant premises the Council will also support the improvement in the appearance and attraction of the commercial centres and thereby will contribute indirectly to increased footfall for existing businesses. Through the scheme, the Council will also encourage increased diversity of business activities and its positive affects on existing businesses.

This scheme sets out the mechanism, eligibility and conditions for new businesses to receive financial assistance from the Council for the purpose to locate in premises that have been vacant for a period exceeding 6 months.

Aims of the Scheme

- To encourage **new businesses** to occupy commercial premises, preferably street level retail units that have been vacant over an extended period of time.
- To facilitate the development of new retail, office and related commercial services that will revitalise commercial centres in the County.
- To facilitate opportunities for new businesses that have been established and grown in the enterprise incubation centres in the County including centres managed by the DLR County Enterprise Board¹, UCD² and the IADT³.
- To facilitate opportunities for new businesses that have utilised supports such as the pop-up shops, coco markets, community-based spaces and private sector shared facilities.

¹ In 2014 the DLR County Enterprise Board will become a part of the DLR Local Enterprise Office of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

² NovaUCD, the innovation centre of UCD.

³ The MediaCube at IADT.

- To contribute to the continuing vitality and vibrancy of our Town, Village and Neighbourhood Centres/employment zoned premises
- To support the continued role of a 'main street' in the urban fabric of the County and its prominence as a business destination.
- To demonstrate the serious commitment of the Council to contribute to economic development, regeneration and recovery in the County.

Eligibility

The Scheme will be available to new businesses as per the above aims of the Scheme that have not traded in the commercial areas of the County during the last 2 years.

The Scheme is applicable to the use of existing rated commercial properties vacant for a minimum of 6 months at date of application and that has been advertised for sale or lease for a minimum period of **6** months immediately prior to the date of application.

The following prerequisites apply to the subject premises:

- There are no outstanding or current commercial rates, water charges or any other local authority charges owing on the subject premises for which grant aid is sought.
- No unauthorised development has taken place on the subject premises or developments and dereliction which are subject to enforcement proceedings.
- The Scheme is applicable to subject premises which have a rates valuation of no more than €60,000

Qualifying Uses

The qualifying uses under this scheme are shops and commercial businesses.

Conditions to the above include the following:

- The proposed use is in accordance with existing planning permission on the premises.
- The proposed use must not include any of the uses or types of businesses in attached Schedule A.

Qualifying Applicants

The following requirements apply to all applicants:

- The applicant must be the owner or lessee of the subject premises.
- The applicant must have a current Tax Clearance Certificate.
- The applicant must sign up for Direct-Debit payments of any charges due to the Council.
- The application must be accompanied by a lease agreement whereby the parties agree to a rolling three year lease period, renewed each year, with rents fixed for the entire period at not more than the average market price⁴ in the commercial area of the subject premises over the previous three months before the date of application.

The following conditions will lead to immediate disqualification and/or cessation of grant aid under the rules of this Scheme:

- Failure to remain current on any charges will result in the immediate cessation of the Scheme and the removal of supports.
- Changes to the uses or any of the requirements for the applicant stated above that materially alter the original application for grant aid.

Incentive Details

Grants may be paid by the Council to qualifying applicants in respect of the rates struck for the subject premises as follows:

End of Year 1	Grant payable equivalent to 75% of rate paid for subject year (i.e. 12 month period of trading)
End of Year 2	Grant payable equivalent to 50% of rate paid for subject year
End of Year 3	Grant payable equivalent to 25% of rate paid for subject year

Any payment made to applicants which is extra or not consistent with the application can be claimed back by the Council.

This scheme only makes provision for payment of a grant towards the costs associated with the occupation of qualifying vacant properties and does not mitigate in any way the obligation of qualifying applicants to discharge all fees associated with other approvals which may be required to be obtained from Council i.e. planning fees, s.254 licences, commercial water and development contributions.

⁴ The Council may independently verify the average market price for the commercial area. A substantial variation from the stated average in the application could affect the assessment of the application. The applicant will be advised in this regard with a view to amend if needed.

Application

The initial application must be accompanied by the following:

- Completed application form
- Evidence of unit vacancy
- Evidence of ownership and occupation of unit (e.g. Land Registry Certificate) or 3 year lease agreement
- Evidence of permissions/consents for proposed use
- Evidence of payment of contributions (if applicable), rates and local authority charges
- Copy of Current Tax Clearance Certificate

Effective period for operation of Scheme

This scheme will operate on a first come, first serve basis. This scheme will be available up to and including 31st December 2016.

The Scheme may be the subject of review and amendment at any time by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

Assessment of Applications

Each application will be assessed in accordance with this Scheme. The Council will interpret each application on face value according to its own discretion. The Council may request further information before or after the evaluation of an application. The Council may communicate to the applicant those aspects of the application that could lead to disqualification or declination of a grant. The Council may accept an amended application following a request for more information or amendments to the original application.

Any grant aid awarded on foot of a successful application will be further subject to the availability of the necessary funds to implement this Scheme.

The decision of the Council is final.

Support

Details of the Scheme together with application form will be available to view and download online at www.localenterprise.ie/dlr or can be obtained from County Hall offices.

Completed application forms with attached documentation to be submitted to Raymond Carroll, Enterprise Unit, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council: rcarroll@leo.dlrcoco.ie / 01 2054869

Schedule A

Uses and types of businesses not covered by the Scheme

Takeaways

Amusement arcades or premises with gaming machines

Head shops

Betting offices

Nightclubs/Private members clubs

Moneylenders