

14TH December 2021

**KEY DECISION?
YES/NO**

**BUSINESS RATES – DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF
APPLICATION**

SUMMARY

This report sets out one new application for Discretionary Rate Relief under the council's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

The policy was introduced under the Localism Act 2011 to provide the Council with the ability to discount business rates to all organisations in the borough, where they provide a benefit to the community and not limited to Charities and Not-for-Profit Organisations.

The main aims of the policy are to: -

- Provide facilities to certain priority groups such as the elderly, disabled, minority groups and childcare; or
- Create new employment opportunities; or
- Bring social environmental, or economic benefit to the community; or
- Contribute towards the sustainable development of the borough.

The application is from Blucando Limited, occupying Unit 11, Farnborough Business Centre, who are taking on additional space, extending into Unit 10.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are recommended to approve the award of 75% Discretionary Rate Relief to Blucando Limited for the period of one year.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Outline the background and financial implications of Discretionary Rate Relief; and
- Consider a new application for Discretionary Rate Relief.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended provides local authorities with discretionary powers to grant relief from non-domestic rates on properties occupied by charities and other non-profit organisations.
- 2.2 A local authority has discretion to grant “top up” relief of 20% to charities that had received 80% mandatory relief.
- 2.3 In addition, an authority can grant relief of up to 100% to non-profit making organisations.
- 2.4 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new power for local authorities to award a local Discretionary Relief, in any circumstances, where it is in the council taxpayers’ interest to do so.
- 2.5 In April 2017, cabinet agreed an amendment to our existing Discretionary Rate Relief Policy to enable the council to award relief to all organisations in the borough and not limited to charities and not-for-profit organisations.
- 2.6 The amended policy is known as “Discretionary Rate Relief – For charities, not-for-profit organisations and other specified organisations under the Localism Act 2011”. Full details of this policy can be found in Appendix 1.
- 2.7 The main aims of the amended policy are to: -
 - Provide facilities to certain priority groups such as the elderly, disabled, minority groups and early years childcare; or
 - Create new employment opportunities; or
 - Bring social, environmental, or economic benefit to the community; or
 - Contribute towards the sustainable development of the borough.
- 2.8 With the amendment to the policy the council can encourage businesses to the borough thus providing economic development.

3. APPLICATION FOR RELIEF

- 3.1 This application is from Blucando Limited.
- 3.2 Full details of Blucando Limited application can be seen in Appendix 2 of this report. However, a summary of Blucando Limited and their application is detailed in points 3.3 to 3.11 below.
- 3.3 Blucando Limited currently occupy Unit 11 Farnborough Business Centre, but they are extending their business and knocking through to Unit 10, which will double their capacity, but will also increase their Business Rates Liability.
- 3.4 The nature of Blucando Limited’s business is comprised of two brands: -

- Blucando Ltd – provide IT support services to businesses UK-wide and residential customers in Rushmoor and the surrounding towns.
- Untold Gaming – a specialist in designing and building customer gaming PC's for all levels; beginners to professional gamers.

For both brands, Blucando Limited use the premises they occupy for: -

- Office space for their admin and technical support teams;
- Storage space for parts and equipment; and
- Workshop space for repairing, building and deploying new computers.

3.5 Recruitment

Blucando Limited moved the business to the borough four years ago to be closer to the two colleges in Farnborough. Since then, they have increased their headcount by 400%, with revenue growing to match.

Blucando Ltd are involved with a number of initiatives with the Farnborough College of Technology, Rushmoor Borough Council, DWP and Enterprise M3 to create opportunities for people starting or developing a career in IT.

- Blucando Limited plan to take placement students from the new T-Level and traditional work experience.
- Blucando Limited currently have three Kickstart vacancies filled but are having to hold off on the last position due to limited space in their building.
- Blucando Limited are poised to engage local secondary schools to offer work experience.
- Blucando Limited have three planned full-time vacancies to advertise before the end of the year.
- In addition, to the above, Blucando Limited are also considering launching an apprenticeship scheme in the next academic year.

Due to lack of space, Blucando Limited are unable to proceed. Once the additional office space is live this month, they will be able to accommodate more people. Blucando Limited have signed a new combined lease on Units 10 and 11 for 5 years. For their permanent roles, they are working with both local colleges, the local Job Centre and direct with DWP to identify candidates out of work in the area.

Blucando Limited advise that “employment in one key area of the business that is expected to be attractive to the local community; Untold Gaming is only 8 months old and growing fast. Part of our new space is to accommodate budding engineers to help fulfil demand, with this being a fantastic entry into the IT industry for school and college leavers. The market

for dedicated gaming PCs and equipment grew 69.7% from 2019 to 2020 and similar growth is expected for the next five years, so we expect employment opportunities to increase in this sector in the South East, which has become the primary region for the UK gaming sector. <https://ukie.org.uk/news/uk-games-industry-valuation-2020>”

3.6 Local Economy

Blucando Limited are planning for 30% growth in new business over the next 18 months, supporting additional permanent roles. This potential rate relief allows them to accelerate their growth plans by bringing forward the required permanent vacancies to support their growth.

Over the last four years, Blucando Limited have been working hard to forge relationships with organisations focused on improving economic growth in Rushmoor.

The Managing Director is the technology industry representative working with Farnborough College of Technology on the development of T-Level qualifications, as well as providing regular talks to the students on careers in IT and supporting the career fairs. This supports their goal of “hiring local” by default. With over third of their team in the Rushmoor area, and all but one living in directly neighbouring towns.

To support the local economy, Blucando Limited use local suppliers wherever possible sourced through local business networking events. One prime example is iPrint Anything in North Camp, who have provided Blucando Ltd with all their branding and printing needs for four years. Even for social events Blucando Ltd favour businesses in the Rushmoor area, such as go-karting, evening drinks, meals, and the occasional team reward of lunchtime pizza.

Blucando Limited have recently expressed interest in providing well-needed work experience opportunities to secondary schools in the borough and exploring how we can provide additional support to on-site learning.

3.7 Benefit to the Local Community

With Blucando Limited commitment to creating employment and experience opportunities in the borough, they believe they are adding further value to local investment in education and the growth of opportunities in the technology industry.

Blucando Limited hope is that they can assist by being be a focused resource for the borough, creating new opportunities in line with and building on the hard work already being done

3.8 Other Businesses of a Similar Nature

Blucando Limited advise that they are aware of a small number of companies offering IT support services to businesses, but they do not

provide services to residential customers. Blucando Limited are also aware of a small number of micro-businesses providing services to residential customers but not businesses. In this respect, they believe they are unique in providing services to everyone in the borough.

We are not aware of any professional businesses offering professional custom gaming PC design-and-build services. There are some people offering these services as sole traders. There are also others selling off-the-shelf prebuilt units but, again, not a custom design-and-build service.

3.9 The Corporate Services Portfolio Holder and Principal Revenues and Benefits Officer met on 20th October 2021 to discuss the application in more detail.

3.10 Following this meeting, the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder has recommended an award of 75% Business Relief for a period of 12 months. This award effectively means that Blucando Limited's business rates would remain at the level that they are currently paying prior to the expansion for a period of 12 months, allowing the business to grow at a faster rate.

The reasons for this recommendation are as follows: -

- The significance of the business and potential of the company.
- Boosting the local economy as existing and new employees will bring spending power into the Borough.
- Creating employment opportunities.
- The support they provide to other local businesses.
- The work that they are doing with the local schools and colleges.
- The work that they have done with the Kickstart programme.
- The recommendation to award 75% rate relief will essentially cover the increase in the rates payable following the expansion of office space.
- The Corporate Services Portfolio Holder has reviewed Blucando Limited's account and their turnover is increasing year on year.

3.11 The Economy Team and Councillor Marino Munro, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder are also supportive of this application.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

4.1 Since 1 April 2013, the Business Rates Retention scheme has introduced a fundamentally new set of arrangements for dealing with the cost of business rates. The cost to the Council of granting any Discretionary Rate Relief is

most reliably estimated at being 40% of the value of the relief granted, although the cost is ultimately determined by a range of factors, such as the councils total rate receipts measured against its estimated threshold for growth and taking into account whether any payment levies or safety net contributions are payable or receivable.

- 4.2 The remaining 60% of the costs will be met by Central Government (50%), Hampshire County Council (9%) and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (1%), under the Business Rates Retention Scheme.
- 4.3 Any award of Discretionary Rate Relief is subject to state aid limits. From 31 Dec 2020 we are governed by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement which allows a threshold of €380,000 over a 3-year period.

Business Rates Position

- 4.4 The current rateable value for Unit 11, Farnborough Business Centre is £13,500. Blucando Limited are entitled to partial Small Business Rates Relief with the business rates currently payable amounting to £3,368 per annum.
- 4.5 The revised rateable value based on the extra space will be £27,000. Not only will the increased Rateable Value mean more Business Rates is payable, Blucando Ltd will lose their entitlement to Small Business Rate Relief, further increasing the business rates payable.

The revised business rates payable will be £13,473 per annum, an increase of 75%.

- 4.6 Therefore, if Discretionary Rate Relief is to be awarded based on the full revised rateable value, the financial effect on the council is illustrated in the table below: -

Percentage Relief	Value to the Business (£)	Cost to RBC (£)
25%	3,368	1,347
50%	6,736	2,694
75%	10,105	4,042
100%	13,473	5,389

Legal Implications

- 4.7 Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended, enables Councils to grant Discretionary Rate Relief.
- 4.8 The amended policy to award Discretionary Rate Relief enables the Council to award relief to any ratepayer and not limited to charities and not-for-profit organisations. This follows guidance and advice provided by the former

Department of Communities and Local Government following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011.

- 4.9 Full details of this guidance can be found at the following web link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/localism-act-2011-overview>

To summarise, page 6 reads: -

“Greater local control over business rates

One of the most important things that councils can do to improve local life is to support the local economy. The Localism Act gives councils more freedom to offer business rate discounts - to help attract firms, investment and jobs. Whilst councils would need to meet the cost of any discount from local resources, they may decide that the immediate cost of the discount is outweighed by the long-term benefit of attracting growth and jobs to their area”.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In conclusion, the Cabinet is asked to approve the award of 75% Discretionary Rate Relief to Blucando Limited for a period of one year.
- 5.2 The Corporate Services Portfolio Holder is supportive of the applications to the level set out in this report.
- 5.3 The economy team and Councillor Marino Munro, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder are also supportive of this application.
- 5.3 This case was reviewed on its own merit and the decision was made using the Councils Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, which was approved by cabinet following guidance provided by the Department of Communities and Government.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

S47 Local Government Act 1988, as amended
Localism Act 2011
Full applicant case files in respect of the applicants
Rushmoor Policy on Discretionary Rate Relief

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Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

For charities, not-for-profit organisations and other specified organisations under the Localism Act 2011

1 Purpose of the policy

- 1.1 To determine the level of Discretionary Business Rates Relief to be granted to certain defined ratepayers within the Rushmoor Borough Council area.
- 1.2 While we are obliged to grant relief to premises that fall within the mandatory category, we also have powers to grant discretionary relief and reductions to ratepayers, subject to certain criteria being met.
- 1.3 The Local Government Finance Act 1988 and subsequent legislation allows us to grant discretionary relief for premises occupied by charities and not-for-profit organisations that own or occupy them wholly or mainly for charitable purposes.
- 1.4 Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow for the granting of Discretionary Rate Relief to any premises where we feel it would be of benefit to the local community.

This document outlines the following areas:

- Details of receiving an award under the Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme
- Our general policy for granting discretionary relief
- Guidance on granting and administering relief
- European Union requirements including provisions of state aid.

2

Introduction

- 2.1 The original purpose of Discretionary Rate Relief was to provide assistance where the property does not qualify for mandatory relief or to “top up” cases where ratepayers already receive mandatory relief.
- 2.2 Over recent years, and particularly since 2011, the discretionary relief provisions have been amended to allow the flexibility to provide more assistance to businesses and organisations.
- 2.3 Ratepayers are obliged to make a written application to us. We will expect all businesses to complete our application form and for the businesses to provide information, evidence, and audited accounts for us to determine whether relief should be awarded.
- 2.4 We are obliged to consider carefully every application on its own merits, taking into account the contribution that the organisation make to the amenities within Rushmoor.
- 2.5 The granting of relief falls broadly into the following categories:
 - Discretionary relief – Charities who already receive mandatory relief
 - Discretionary relief – Premises occupied by not-for-profit organisations whose main objectives are charitable.
 - Discretionary relief – Granted under the Localism Act 2011 provisions

Other reliefs available and are announced by government and for a temporary period. As at the financial year 2018/ 19 they are currently:

- Local Newspaper Relief (from 1 April 2017 for a period of two years)
 - Local Public House Relief (from 1 April 2017 for a period of two year)
 - Supporting Small Business Relief (from 1 April 2017, for a period of five years or until businesses pay their full rate charge)
 - Discretionary Rate Relief (revaluation) (from 1 April 2017 for a period of up to four years)
- 2.6 This policy concentrates on the granting of discretionary relief for charities which are already receiving mandatory relief, not-for-profit organisations whose main objectives are charitable and discretionary relief awarded under the Localism Act 2011.

3

Our general approach to granting Discretionary Rate Relief

- 3.1 In deciding which organisations should receive discretionary rate relief, we will consider the following factors and priorities:
 - That any award should support businesses, organisations and groups that help retain services in Rushmoor and not compete directly with existing businesses in an unfair manner.
 - It should help and encourage businesses, organisations, groups and communities to become self-reliant.
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- To enable appropriate organisations to start, develop or continue their activities, which deliver outcomes to the community, and that also relate to our priorities which, without granting relief, they would be unable to do so.
- To assist us in delivering services which could not be provided otherwise.
- To assist us to meet our priorities including:
 - Sustaining a thriving economy
 - Supporting and empowering our communities and meeting local needs
 - A cleaner, greener and more cultural Rushmoor; and
 - Financially sound with services fit for the future

4 Administration of discretionary relief – general approach

4.1 The following section outlines the procedures followed by officers in granting, amending or cancelling discretionary relief.

Applications and evidence

- 4.2 All reliefs under this policy must be applied for. Applications forms are available both electronically and in hard copy format.
- 4.3 Applications should initially be made to the Revenues and Benefits Section and will be determined in accordance with this policy.
- 4.4 Completed application forms should be returned with the following information:
- Evidence of being a registered charity or a copy of a letter from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) confirming that the organisation is treated as a charity for tax purposes (if appropriate).
 - A copy of the organisation's equal opportunities policy (if the organisation has one).
 - A copy of the organisation's constitution, rulebook or Memorandum and Articles of Association.
 - Audited or certified accounts for the last two years.
 - An up-to-date trading statement showing the current financial situation of the organisation.
 - Any other document the ratepayer wishes to be taken into account in support of their application.
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- 4.5 Discretionary relief is granted from the beginning of the financial year in which the decision is made.
- 4.6 Applications can be made up to six months after the end of the relevant financial year.

Granting of relief

- 4.7 Members of our Cabinet will determine all applications, with recommendations made by the Cabinet member for Corporate and Democratic Services.
- 4.8 In all cases, we will notify the ratepayers of decisions made.
- 4.9 Where an application is successful, then the following will be notified to the ratepayer in writing.
- The amount of relief granted and the date from which it has been granted
 - If relief has been awarded for a specified period, the date on which it will end
 - The new chargeable amount
 - The details of any planned review dates and the notice that will be given in advance of a change to the level of relief granted; and
 - A requirement that the applicant should notify us of any change in circumstances that may affect entitlement to relief.
- 4.10 Where relief is not granted, then an explanation of the decision will be provided in writing.

Variation of decision

- 4.11 Variations in any decision will be notified to ratepayers as soon as practicable and will take effect as follows:
- Where the amount is to be increased due to a change in rate charge or a change in our decision, which increases the award, this will apply from the date of the increase in rate charge or the date determined by us as appropriate.
 - Where the amount is to be reduced due to a reduction in the rate charge or liability, including any reduction in rateable value or awarding of another relief or exemption, then this will apply from the date of decrease in the rate charge; and
 - Where the amount is to be reduced for any other reason, it will take effect at the expiry of a financial year, so that at least one year's notice is given.
- 4.12 A decision may be revoked at any time. However, a one-year period of notice will be given and the change will take effect at the expiry of a financial year.
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- 4.13 This will be important where the change would result in the amount of the award being reduced or cancelled. For example, where the premises become unoccupied or is used for a purpose other than that determined by us as eligible for relief.
- 4.14 Where a change of circumstances is reported, the relief will, if appropriate be revised or cancelled.
- 4.15 Where a change in circumstances is not reported and it is subsequently identified that it would have reduced the relief awarded, we reserve the right to remove any award completely.

5 Our policy for granting discretionary relief

5.1 Discretionary Rate Relief - Charities who already received mandatory relief and organisations not established or conducted for profit whose main objectives are charitable

5.2 Section 47 of the LGFA 1988 provides for the granting of Discretionary Rate Relief for the following:

- An authority can award up to an additional 20% top up relief to charities and community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) that have received the 80% mandatory relief, or
- An authority can grant relief of up to 100% relief to certain non-profit making organisations that do not qualify for any mandatory relief due to not holding charitable status.

The Department of the Environment (DoE) issued a practice note in August 1990 to give guidance to authorities on the criteria they should take into consideration in the exercise of the discretion to grant rate relief. Rushmoor Borough Council's Financial Support Sub Committee formerly adopted these guidelines in October 1993.

The practice note has now been supplemented by guidance issued by the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) "Guidance on rate reliefs for charities and other non-profit making organisations" in December 2002, which in particular focuses on sports clubs.

The practice note recommends that:

- Authorities should have readily understood policies for deciding whether or not to grant relief, and for determining the amount of relief. They should not, however, adopt guidelines or rules which allows a case to be disposed of without any consideration as to its individual merits. Any criteria by which the individual case is judged should be made public to help interested individuals and bodies.

We have adopted the recommendations and guidelines in exercising our discretion in awarding discretionary rate relief to charities and not-for-profit organisations.

Where a ratepayer can demonstrate that the criteria is met, the period and value of relief granted will be solely at our discretion.

A formal application from the ratepayer will be required in each case and any relief will be granted in line with state aid requirements.

5.3 Discretionary relief – Localism Act 2011

Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 allows a local authority to grant discretionary relief in any circumstances where it feels fit, having regard to the effect on the council tax payers of its area.

The provision is designed to give authorities flexibility in granting relief where it is felt that to do so would be of benefit generally to the area and be reasonable given the financial effect to council tax payers.

The government has not issued guidance in respect of how this power might be used except advising that relief “may be granted in any circumstances where a local authority sees fit, having regard to the effect on council tax payers in the area”.

The English Guide to the Act addresses this as follows:

- “The Localism Act gives councils more freedom to offer business rates discounts – to help attract firms, investment and jobs. While the local authority would need to meet the cost of any discount, it may be decided that the immediate cost of the discount is outweighed by the long-term benefit of attracting growth and jobs to their area”.

Our policy on awarding relief under The Localism Act 2011 is that any ratepayer applying for relief under these provisions which does not meet the criteria for existing relief (charities, community amateur sports clubs) and not-for-profit making organisations), must meet all of the following criteria and the amount of relief granted will be dependent on the following key factors:

- The ratepayer must not be entitled to mandatory rate relief;
- The ratepayer must not be an organisation that could receive relief as a non-profit making organisation or as a sports club or similar;
- The ratepayer must occupy the premises (no relief will be granted for unoccupied premises);
- The premises and organisation must be of significant benefit to the residents of the borough and/or relieve the council of providing similar facilities;

The ratepayer must also;

- Provide facilities to certain priority groups such as the elderly, disabled, minority groups and early years child care; or
 - Have premises where new employment opportunities will be created; or
 - Must bring social, environmental or economic benefit to the community; or
 - Contribute to the sustainable development of the borough.
-

- Provide residents of the borough with such services, opportunities or facilities that cannot be obtained locally or are not provided locally by another organisation; and
- Must demonstrate that assistance (provided by the discretionary rate relief) will be for a short time only and that any business/operation is financially in the medium and long term; and
- Must show that the activities of the organisation are consistent with the council's plan.

Where a ratepayer can demonstrate that all the criteria are met, the period and value of relief granted will be solely at our discretion.

A formal application from the ratepayer will be required in each case and any relief will be granted in line with state aid requirements.

6 Financial matters

Cost of awarding relief

- 6.1 The cost of relief awarded will be borne in accordance with the Business Rates Retention Scheme share - namely 50% borne by central government, 40% by the council, 9% by Hampshire County Council and 1% by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service.

State aid

- 6.2 The award of Discretionary Rate Relief will be state aid compliant
- 6.3 The issue of rate reliefs being considered as qualifying as state aid is now of some significance and is briefly explained in the "Rate Relief for Charities and other Non-Profit Making Organisations" guidance note issued by the ODPM in December 2002.
- 6.4 Broadly, any award of discretionary rate relief is subject to state aid de minimis limits. The regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of de minimis aid in a three-year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years).
-

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 Rushmoor Borough Council

July 2018

Application for Discretionary Rate Relief

Blucando Ltd

**Unit 11, Farnborough Business Centre, Eelmoor Road,
GU14 7XA**



Further information about Blucando Ltd can be found at <https://www.blucando.it>

In their application, Blucando Ltd advise the following: -

Premises that relief is being applied for.

We currently occupy office space Unit 11, Farnborough Business Centre.

We are taking on additional space in Farnborough Business Centre, extending into Unit 10, knocking through from our current space, Unit 11.

Please describe the nature of your business.

Blucando Ltd is comprised of two brands:

1. Blucando - We provide IT support services to businesses UK-wide and residential customers in Rushmoor and the surrounding towns.
2. Untold Gaming - A specialist in designing and building custom gaming PCs for all levels; beginners to professional gamers

For what purposes does the organisation use the premises?

For both brands, we have:

1. Office space for our admin and technical support teams
2. Storage space for parts and equipment
3. Workshop space for repairing, building, and deploying new computers

Please provide information about how new employment opportunities will be created.

We moved the business to the borough four years ago to be closer to the two great colleges in Farnborough. Since then, we have increased our headcount by 400%, with revenue growing to match. We have a loyal and positive following of businesses and residents throughout the borough and the surrounding area. We are involved with a number of initiatives with Farnborough College of Technology, Rushmoor Borough Council, DWP and Enterprise M3 to create opportunities for people starting or developing a career in IT. In addition to the below, we are considering launching an apprenticeship scheme in the next academic year.

- We plan to take placement students from the new T-Level and traditional work experience
- Three out of four current Kickstart vacancies are filled but we are having to hold off on the last position
- We are poised to engage local secondary schools to offer work experience
- We have three planned full-time vacancies to advertise before the end of the year

Due to lack of space, we are unable to proceed. Once the additional office space is live in November, we will be able to accommodate more people. We have signed a new combined lease on Units 10 and 11 for 5 years. For our permanent roles, we are working with both local colleges, the local Job Centre and direct with DWP to identify candidates out of work in the area.

Employment in one key area of the business is expected to be attractive to the local community; Untold Gaming is only 8 months old and growing fast. Part of our new space is to accommodate budding engineers to help fulfil demand, with this being a fantastic entry into the IT industry for school and college leavers. The market for dedicated gaming PCs and equipment grew 69.7% from 2019 to 2020 and similar growth is expected for the next five years, so we expect employment opportunities to increase in this sector in the South East, which has become the primary region for the UK gaming sector. <https://ukie.org.uk/news/uk-games-industry-valuation-2020>

Please give the reason for your application, including how the business brings social environmental or economic benefit to the borough and contributes towards the sustainable development of the borough?

We are planning for 30% growth in new business over the next 18 months, supporting additional permanent roles. This potential rate relief allows us to accelerate our growth plans by bringing forward the required permanent vacancies

to support the growth. This earlier investment of people will allow us capacity to develop new innovative services and target new business earlier than planned. This will require focus across the business but are conscious not to let this detract from our commitment to providing the afore mentioned opportunities and supporting the employment schemes. So, once again, this potential rate relief allows us the additional permanent roles required to support these people.

Over the last four years, Blucando Ltd have been working hard to forge relationships with organisations focused on improving economic growth in Rushmoor.

Our Managing Director, Ben Fielding, is the technology industry representative working with Farnborough College of Technology on the development of T-Level qualifications, as well as providing regular talks to the students on careers in IT and supporting the career fairs. This supports our goal of “hiring local” by default. With over third of our team from Rushmoor, and all but one living in directly neighbouring towns, we are keen to minimise unnecessary travel and ensure a good work/life balance.

To support the local economy, we use local suppliers wherever possible sourced through local business networking events. One prime example is iPrint Anything in Northcamp, who have provided us with all our branding and printing needs for four years. Even for social events we favour businesses in the Rushmoor area, such as go-karting, evening drinks, meals and the occasional team reward of lunchtime pizza.

An early adopter of the Kickstart scheme, we have been providing valuable feedback to DWP and working closely with the local Job Centre on raising the profile of these opportunities.

We have a long-standing relationship with Enterprise M3, supporting a number of initiatives designed to support small businesses and start-ups. Our Managing Director is also working towards becoming a Growth Champion, and recently contributed to an advertising campaign for the Peer Support programme.

We are also involved in the new Rushmoor Business Networking programme, designed to support raising the profile of other local businesses. This led to us being in talks with the committee at Fleet Spurs Football Club to provide sponsorship from both our Blucando and Untold Gaming brands.

Finally, we have recently expressed interest in providing well-needed work experience opportunities to secondary schools in the borough and exploring how we can provide additional support to on-site learning.

Please explain why you consider your business benefits local taxpayers.

With our commitment to creating employment and experience opportunities in the borough, we believe that we are adding further value to local investment in education and the growth of opportunities in the technology industry.

Taxpayers money that Rushmoor currently invests in these opportunities is being put to great use and Blucando are supportive of the initiatives in place.

Our hope is we can assist by being be a focused resource for the borough, creating new opportunities in line with and building on the hard work already being done

How many people are employed in the business, and of these employees, how many live locally in Rushmoor?

At present there are 15 employees at Blucando Ltd of which 6 are resident locally.

Are there any other businesses of a similar nature in the borough?

Blucando - We are aware of a small number of companies offering IT support services to businesses, but they do not provide services to residential customers. We are also aware of a small number of micro-businesses providing services to residential customers but not businesses. In this respect, I believe we are unique in providing services to everyone in the borough.

Untold Gaming - We are not aware of any professional businesses offering professional custom gaming PC design-and-build services. There are some people offering these services as sole traders. There are also others selling off-the-shelf prebuilt units but, again, not a custom design-and-build service.

There is most definitely now a local business that provides all of the above services