LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

We note the move from 5 to 3 year revaluations and recognise the benefits that will arise from the change including the potential for there to be a reduction in the amount of NDR appeals. However the move will also cause significant additional work for the Assessor and potentially increased workload for councils.

The Financial Memorandum for the Bill should take account of the additional costs arising from this and for the supplementary charge to out of town or online businesses given that councils will have additional collection and debt recovery costs.

Clarity around which organisation will administer the penalty and appeals processes would be helpful and a recognition of the additional costs that will be incurred in these processes.

The matter of commercial properties in parks could become an issue and whilst we see the rationale for the change, there may be a risk that councils become unduly penalised. This will arise if the council operates the commercial activity, for example a café. If this was operated by a private business then, under the new rules it would be liable to pay NDR but the business could also apply for SBBS. This position may not be the same for the council activity.

There are issues around additional billing and associated costs and while these cannot be quantified they should be a matter that is also considered as part of the Financial Memorandum.

We welcome the changes proposed at Section 12 around increasing tax avoidance measures and bringing clarity and rigour to this and to the use of unoccupied and empty properties.