

Employment law update

...Time to train ...Time to learn new skills

From 6 April 2010, if your organisation has 250 or more employees, employees will have the statutory right to request time for study or training. This right will be known as "time to train".

From 6 April 2011, the right will apply to all employees working in organizations of all sizes, regardless of how many employees there are.

To make a statutory request for "time to train", the employee must have worked for



the employed continuously for at least 26 weeks, before they can apply.

Further details can be found on www.direct.gov.uk/Employment

Free training workshops

FREE workshops are being offered by Business Link East Midlands.

- Workshops include:**
- Deciding to Start Business Planning
 - Sales & Marketing
 - Financial Planning
 - Managing Money & Risk
 - ICT for your Business

For further details contact Business Link East Midlands on 01476 531027 or www.businesslink.fgov.uk/eastmidlands



Business Matters

in Melton

Melton Borough Council's BUSINESS NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2009/2010

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Facebook and Twitter

...A powerful business tool or barrier?

Facebook, Twitter and other social media websites can be great fun and, in some cases, powerful business tools. However, they can serve as a barrier to work performance and may be used by some employees to air their views about their employer in public. Peter Etherington, an HR and employment law professional based in Melton, comments on the measures that employers should consider taking.

Many of your employees will be avid users of Facebook and other social media websites. When they get home from work they may well

log on and share news from their day with their on-line network. It is quite possible that they may do this at work as well, when they should be focusing on work!

Even if you have no interest in these sorts of websites, it is worth you finding out a bit more in order to ensure that no harm is being done to your organisation.

Disgruntled employees often share their complaints with their on-line "friends" or "followers". If they name you as their employer you can very quickly find that your organisation acquires a poor on-line profile. Employers should have clear IT procedures in place to ensure that employees focus on business whilst at work.

Welland offers support

The Welland Enterprise Agency offers a range of high quality businesses and skills support, in the Welland, South Lincs and South Leics areas. The support is aimed at people returning to the labour market, pre-start and start up businesses (up to 12 months). If you would like to start up a business, or just like business advice, please contact:

biz@wellent.co.uk
or businesslink@wellent.co.uk
Tel: 0845 050 1050 / 01476 531027
www.wellent.co.uk

For businesses which have been established for 12 months or more, contact Business Link
Tel: 0845 0858 6644
E-mail: info@businesslinkem.co.uk
www.businesslinkeastmidlands.co.uk

Next edition: Spring 2010

For further information about any of the issues in this newsletter, please contact the **Economic Regeneration Team at Melton Borough Council, Social & Economic Development Department, Council Offices, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0UL. Telephone: 01664 502502.**

Website: www.melton.gov.uk



Welcome to the latest issue of 'Business Matters in Melton', Melton Borough Council's business newsletter. This issue highlights changes within the business rate schemes, and also useful information and sources of support to businesses, during this uncertain economic time, as well as highlighting details of other locally available business support services.

As always, articles for the newsletter are welcome, as are suggestions for future topics or issues you would like to see covered. To submit further details please contact the **Economic Regeneration team on 01664 502502**; or email jhollings@melton.gov.uk or mshields@melton.gov.uk

Business rate referral scheme

Earlier this year the government announced a new scheme to help businesses. The Business Rate Deferral Scheme allows businesses to defer part of their business rates over the next 2 years. Businesses affected by the end of the transitional relief can defer 60% of their increase.

So far more than 100 businesses have successfully applied and deferred 3% of their liability over the next 2 years. The combined amount deferred so far is £47,949.29. The scheme will run until 31st March 2010.

For an application form tel: Melton Borough Council 01664 502 502 or for more details log on to www.melton.gov.uk/business.aspx

Rural Rate Relief is changing...

The criteria for businesses eligible for 50% mandatory rural rate relief are changing:

- Currently the rateable value of the sole General Store; sole Post Office; or Village Shop can be up to £7,000. **From 1st April 2010, the rateable value can be up to £8,500.**
- Currently the rateable of value of the sole Public House; or sole Petrol Station can be up to £10,500. **From 1st April 2010, the rateable value can be up to £12,500.**

The 2010 re valuation requires the Council to write to those businesses who currently claim Mandatory and or Discretionary relief. You will need to re-apply using our new application form.

Once we have received your completed application form and where you receive mandatory relief, you will not need to re-apply for mandatory relief again until 2015. For those in receipt of any discretionary relief you will need to re-apply each year for this relief and the Council will write to you.

Changes to empty property relief

In the Chancellor's 2009 Pre-Budget Report the Government announced that, from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, no rates will have to be paid on an empty business property with a rateable value of up to £18,000. The previous limit for the year ending 31 March 2010 was up to £15,000.

However, from 1 April 2011 the rateable threshold below which empty properties are exempt from rates will revert to its normal level. This was previously up to £2,200 to 31 March 2009, but will be uprated in line with the general movement of property values at revaluation to under £2,600.

GOLDEN TICKET

Melton Town Centre Partnership and Melton Borough Council, are working in partnership with Business Link, to offer every business a Golden Ticket. This ticket provides every business with the opportunity to undertake a **FREE** business review. This review will be provided to you on a one to one basis by a Business Link Adviser.

The business review will provide you with the opportunity to discuss your issues with an experienced impartial and independent business adviser with no other agenda but to support your business development. As a result of the review, your Adviser will work with you to develop an action plan and agree the next steps, providing insight into potential solution providers and access to funding that may be available to support the implementation of the action plan.

The review will include:

- Finance ■ Customers
- Staff ■ Business Processes

To arrange a meeting with a Business Adviser or to contact the Client Contact Centre, please call 0845 058 6644, or visit the website www.businesslink.gov.uk

FSB aims to help

The Federation of Small Businesses is there to protect and promote your business. Today's business faces a plethora of red tape and bureaucracy, exacerbated by the increasingly litigious society within which we live and trade - from employment tribunal actions from disgruntled ex employees to investigations from HMRC. As a right of membership every business will benefit from with the FSB Legal Benefits Package - 24hr Legal Advice from qualified lawyers, access to online documentation and legal insurance protection (all included in your membership fee), FREE business banking (no time limitation), great merchant services package (mobile and static), insurance service and much, much more.

As the leading business support organisation in the UK, we are in constant touch with our members listening to what they report to us from grass root level. Good news stories are coming through from businesses that are preparing themselves for small growth once the economy does really start to move forward and even better news that some have grown/are growing through the tough economic climate we have all been experiencing.

Unfortunately we are not yet out of the turmoil. From our recent survey the single biggest issue facing our members at the moment is late payment by customers and



clients. It appears that whilst the public sector is paying more quickly than it used to, large private sector companies are not. Rising costs of transport and energy are another big concern. Although levels of trade are beginning to increase for a lot of our members, the Government's decision to go ahead with the increase on fuel duty has been incredibly unhelpful. Energy bills have also not reduced during the recession, despite a decrease in the price of oil, and this has added to the pressure on businesses when utility companies could have provided some relief.



For more information please contact: Maxine Aldred, Regional Organiser Tel: 0116 2597 707 maxine.aldred@fsb.org.uk

www.fsb.org.uk/leics-northants-rutland



IMPACT OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

November's report by Business Link, on the impact of the economic downturn, shows that overall, business conditions continue to improve throughout the region.

The report shows that businesses from a range of sectors reported, in November, some growth in turnover along with greater stability in their markets. Several firms have expansion plans for the future and seek support to make this happen. In general, mortgage providers have reported a sustained rise in house prices and a higher volume of enquiries from potential buyers. In turn, this has resulted in increased activity amongst smaller

construction sector businesses.

Nevertheless, low consumer confidence continues to impact on those providing luxury services and the independent retail sector. Access to finance remains a challenge for some businesses, highlighting the importance of a robust business plan. Competition is intense across all sectors, and businesses are keen to develop their competitive advantage through innovative marketing and making efficiency savings. Some businesses report reduced demand for their products and services and that cash flow is very tight.

Looking ahead to the 2010 business rates revaluation




Revaluation does not raise extra revenue overall.

Instead, the revaluation reflects changes in the property market across the country and therefore redistributes the same total tax liability for business rates. Some rates bills will rise and some will fall, but legislation means the average national bill will only change with inflation.

Transitional relief will be available for those ratepayers facing the largest increases in bills. More details on transitional relief will be available when the rateable values are published in October. Any other rate relief to which you may be entitled, such as small business rate relief, will still be available in 2010.

Every five years all non-domestic (business) properties are assessed and given new rateable values, based on rental values, for the purpose of calculating liability for business rates. This is called the revaluation and the next one takes effect from 1 April 2010.

HOW YOUR RATEABLE VALUE IS ASSESSED	WHEN WILL I KNOW MY RATES BILL FOR 2010/11?	HOW YOU CAN MAKE SURE YOUR RATEABLE VALUE IS CORRECT
<p>The Valuation Office Agency (VOA), a central government organisation employing professional chartered surveyors bound by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) code of professional conduct, is responsible for assessing your rateable value.</p> <p>The VOA surveyors use a wide range of property information and rental evidence - at national and local levels - and study the rental market in depth to ensure that the new valuations are accurate and consistent.</p>	<p>The new draft rateable values will be sent to ratepayers in October 2009. They will also be available on line at www.voa.gov.uk/2010</p> <p>Your local authority calculates your rates bill by multiplying the rateable value by the rate in the pound (or the multiplier), set by Government, and then applying any relief you are due. However, we will provide an online business rates indicator to help you forecast your 2010/11 rates bill using your new rateable value. This will be available from October 2009.</p>	<p>When you receive the details of your new rateable value, you have an opportunity to check them and, if you think any of the facts are incorrect, you just need to talk to the VOA. This is easy and straightforward.</p> <p>For more information on the 2010 revaluation, go to www.voa.gov.uk/2010</p> 

Melton business awards 2010



Editor Michael Cooke said: "The prestige of winning would be a real boost for any local business - just ask the winners of our inaugural business awards. They all proudly display their trophies and awards and use them to promote their business, gain new customers and retain and recruit the best staff.

TO ENTER:

Complete the coupon in the Melton Times and return it as soon as possible to Business Awards, Melton Times, 49 Nottingham Street, Melton, LE13 1NT., or visit the website, www.meltontimes.co.uk

Entries have opened for the second Melton Business Awards. They are being run by the Melton Times and Melton Town Centre Partnership and will culminate in a gala dinner and presentation evening in the Banqueting Suite at Melton Cattle Market on Thursday, March 25.

We are celebrating what makes Melton best - the best place to visit, shop, do business and to eat - but we need your help to do it. Whilst times are tough, businesses can still thrive and excel in Melton, a place where we are all proud to live and work.. So now is the time to let everyone know that Melton is Best.

OUR SPONSORS:

- Business of the Year** sponsored by Duncan and Toplis
- Best Rural Business** sponsored by Brown & Co
- Best New Business** sponsored by Melton Borough Council
- Best Green Business** sponsored by Midlands Co-Op
- Best Eating Experience** sponsored by Samworth Brothers
- Best Independent Retailer** sponsored by Federation of Small Businesses
- Best Customer Care** sponsored by Brooksby Melton College
- Best Shopfront** sponsored by Melton Town Centre Partnership
- Entrepreneur of the Year** sponsored by Pera Foundation
- Contribution to the Community Award** sponsored by Melton Chamber of Trade

Help with business rates

Are you struggling to pay your Business Rates? If the answer is YES, act now. If you have fallen into arrears on your Business Rates account, the first thing to do is contact us. We have a dedicated customer contact team who can offer you advice and assistance. It is important that if you feel that your business is struggling financially that you seek advice as early as possible. Frequent feedback that we receive from local business is that they wished they had taken positive action earlier.

To find out more, contact the Council's Customer Service Centre on 01664 502502 or at customerservices@melton.gov.uk