

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 002759
Date 11 September 2018

Voids

Request:

1. What is the current level of retail voids in your council area?

Our business rates records, which include details of whether a property is occupied or empty, allow us to identify premises according to their valuation classification.

At July 2018 we had 208 empty properties which broadly fall into the category of retail. The response to question 2 provides details of the properties which have been included.

2. What percentage of these voids have been in the following categories:

- A1. Shops (inc. retail sale of goods other than hot food)
- A2. Financial and professional services
- A3. Food and drink
- B1. Business (inc. offices)
- C1. Hotels and hostels
- D2. Assembly and leisure (inc. cinemas, bingo halls)
- Other, please specify

In respect of question 2, it has been established after careful consideration that the Business Rates section within City of Wolverhampton Council does not hold all of the above information as we do not hold all of the classifications you have listed above.

Consequently, we are unable to provide all of the requested information relating to the above, and are informing you as required by Section 1(1) (a) of the Act, that states:

"Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request".

However, we can provide you with data based on the classifications which are available which we hope we be of use shown on page 2:

Property Description	Empty in 2018	Percentage
CAFE AND PREMISES	6	3%
HAIRDRESSING SALON AND PREMISES	9	4%
HOSTEL AND PREMISES	1	0%
HOTEL AND PREMISES	1	0%
KIOSK AND PREMISES	2	1%
MARKET	0	0%
PUBLIC HOUSE AND PREMISES	13	6%
RESTAURANT AND PREMISES	9	4%
RETAIL WAREHOUSE AND PREMISES	4	2%
SALON AND PREMISES	1	0%
SHOP	9	4%
SHOP AND PREMISES	150	72%
WINE BAR AND PREMISES	3	1%
Grand Total	208	

3. Has the level of retail voids increased or decreased over the past 12 months and by how much?

In answer to question 3, the information is based on the property classifications used in question 2.

Total empty July 2017	232
Total empty July 2018	208
% increase (positive)/decrease (negative)	-10.34%

4. Have you increased or decreased the business rates in FY17/18 and by how much?

In respect of question 4, it has been established after careful consideration that the Council does not hold the above information as the level of business rates is set by the Government and Local Authorities are unable to vary this.

Consequently, we are unable to provide the requested information relating to the above, and are informing you as required by Section 1(1) (a) of the Act, that states:

"Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request".

However, we can provide you with a link where the charges for 2017-2018 can be found which we hope will of help:

[3/2017: confirmation of 2017 to 2018 multipliers - GOV.UK](#)

5. Have you requested funds from the discretionary relief fund to provide business rate discounts to those businesses most in need in your area?
- If no, do you plan to request funds from the discretionary relief fund and where do you plan on allocating these?
 - If yes, where have/will these funds be allocated?

The local authority does not have to request funding. This was provided by the government to each council. A number of new discretionary reliefs were introduced for 2017/18 and City of Wolverhampton's policies on these can be found on the following links

[New Reliefs 2017 - City of Wolverhampton Council](#)

6. Is your council a business landlord?

Yes