

Consultation on Business Rates – did you have your say?

Tuesday 25 July, 2023

On the 7th of June, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) closed their consultation on business rates.

The VOA calculate the general eligibility criteria and the rateable value (RV) for individual commercial properties. In November of last year (2022), they published the [Business rates revaluation 2023](#). Outlining the expectations for the 2023 rating list, this document allowed business rates payers to understand how their business rates were changing.

Significant hikes, while expected, caused an outcry for the outdated UK business rates system to be reviewed. The government, surprisingly, agreed. A new bill aimed at modernising the business rates system was introduced. Perhaps even more surprisingly, the public were invited to have their say.

This online consultation was about what information the VOA should share about valuations.

The VOA had [three](#) main points they asked the public to consider:

- what extra information should be shared about business rates valuations
- what you need to judge if your valuation is fair
- what you consider sensitive data

This rare opportunity allowed members of the wider public – whether business rates payers or not – to register their thoughts on the business rates tax system. [RVA Surveyors](#) – the business rates reduction specialists, were happy to weigh in.

“The process needs to be simplified, and more transparent.” Clare Whitfield, Head of Surveying and Operations, said.

“Also, the lack of ability to communicate with a VOA caseworker directly from the outset means that no support and guidance from the VOA is given until they have begun their case.”

While the VOA is no doubt collating the information gathered, an initial release date on the findings has yet to be [announced](#). What impact these findings will have, is also less well known. A Business rates modernisation bill has already been introduced. While a separate consultation is ongoing for that, what contributions the VOA have, given their own public consultation, is unknown.

While the consultation did in fact open up a dialogue about what information should be shared, how can business rates payers know it will result in a fair and accurate valuation? Knowing what data is used to judge such a thing, does not equal an understanding as to why it has been judged in such a way. If the VOA chooses to tell someone at all.

“Until the VOA have inspected every commercial property with all the relevant evidence at hand, they cannot confirm that every property has a fair and accurate valuation.” Anthony Hughes, Managing Director at RVA Surveyors added.

“Realistically, on-site inspections of every commercial property are well within the VOA's ability.”

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