

PRESS RELEASE COUNCILS STRIKE DISTRICT RATES FOR 2011/2012

Environment Minister, Edwin Poots, has announced that all district councils have struck their rates for the 2011/2012 financial year.

The Minister said: "The district rates are struck by 15th February each year by individual district councils, to meet the costs of local services, including leisure and recreational services; economic development; and environmental services.

"One of the features of local government in Northern Ireland is the fact that most of its income comes from locally set taxes. This preserves local accountability and the independence of our councils."

District rates vary from district to district, reflecting the rateable resources and spending policies of individual councils. This year, the district rates show percentage increases of between -1.80% and 3.59%, when compared with the 2010/2011 figures. This is a vast improvement on last year when increases were as high as 8.4%. It is essential for householders and businesses that rate rises remain close to inflation in order that those recipients of the service do not receive a nasty shock which they are unprepared for.

The Minister added: "The Northern Ireland Executive is responsible for deciding on the level of the regional rate, which accounts for just over half a typical rates bill. The draft budget sets out that the regional rate will increase by the level of inflation over the next four years. As a result that part of rate bills will remain constant in real terms over the four year period (2011/12 – 2014/15), and will apply to both households and commercial ratepayers. This financial restraint by the Executive recognises the commitment to protecting household budgets while not adversely affecting regional rates revenue.

"The Finance Minister and I commend those councils that have kept their rate increases to less than, or on a par with the regional rate, at the level of inflation."

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. District councils are required by law to strike their domestic and non-domestic rates by 15 February each year.
2. **District rates** are struck by individual district councils to meet the costs of local services, including leisure and recreational services; economic development; and environmental services. A link to the table showing the district rates struck for 2011/2012 is available at:

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/local_government/local_government_funding.htm
3. From 2007/2008 domestic rates have been determined on the basis of capital valuations of property as assessed by the Land and Property Services. The valuation date is fixed as at 1 January 2005. Details of the assessed values can be found at www.mycapitalvalueni.gov.uk. Full details about rating reform can be found on the Department of Finance and Personnel website, <http://www.ratingreviewni.gov.uk>.
4. Domestic and non-domestic **regional rates** are struck each year, by the Department of Finance and Personnel, to help pay for central services such as health, education, roads and transport.
5. The combination of district and regional rates is used to calculate the rates bills for ratepayers.
6. For media enquiries please contact DOE Communications tel 028 9054 0014 or out of office hours, contact EIS Duty Press Officer on pager 07699 715 440 and your call will be returned.