

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK

RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

This is a record of a decision taken by the officers under delegated powers and where necessary taken in consultation with members and officers.

Delegated Power

Cabinet: 17 November 2020

Para 13:

That authority be delegated to the Revenues and Benefits Manager, in consultation with the s151 Officer and Council Leader, to decide the discretionary criteria for government Covid-19 support schemes and discounts where they:

- Are part of a central government Covid-19 support initiative,
- Are funded by central government, and
- Will be administered by the Revenues and Benefits section

Decision Taken

Agreement of the CTS Hardship Scheme policy for 2022/2023

Reasons for the Decision

To agree the policy for continuing the CTS Hardship Scheme for 2022/2023.

On 18 March 2020, as part of its Covid-19 response, the government announced it would fund local authorities to award additional relief to working age people receiving Council Tax Support (CTS) during 2020/2021. The scheme provided a further £150 reduction to a person's council tax bill through a discretionary CTS award.

The funding was calculated based on our share of the national caseload of working age people, and we were awarded £1,035,961. This funding is not ringfenced and does not have to be returned to central government if it is unspent. We awarded just under £480,000 in CTS Hardships for 2020/2021 and we were able to continue the scheme into 2021/2022 using the unspent funding, with a maximum award of £100.

Due to caseload decreases during 2021/2022 there is still approximately £185,000 of the original funding remaining, and the CTS Hardship scheme is recommended for extension into 2022/2023 with a maximum award of £75. All other eligibility criteria remain the same. This means that over three years we will have given in excess of £1m of support under this scheme to working age residents in our area on the lowest incomes.

The original funding was designed to help with the impact of Covid-19 and this scheme is designed to assist with any longer term impacts from the pandemic on working age people's income and earnings which may now be exacerbated by the impact of rising energy costs. 5,400 working age people currently claim CTS, of which 2,400 receive less than 100% support and contribute towards their council tax bill. This includes people who are not in a protected group, so are subject to the 84% maximum award, as well as those in a protected group who do not receive 100% CTS for other reasons, such as earnings.

Over 90% of working age households receiving CTS live in properties in council tax bands A or B. The borough council's share of the annual council tax bill, excluding the levy for the Internal Drainage Boards, is only £54.78 for a band A property, and £63.91 for a band B property – just 4% of the overall bill. A hardship award of £75 means we are able to fully

cover the cost of providing our local services to our residents in the lowest bands, and also contribute towards charges for the county, police and parish shares of the bill.

This award will reduce or remit the amount of council tax people have to pay and forms part of a wider package of targeted support for our local residents.

Options considered

Different levels of award over different timeframes and using different criteria have been considered. To get support out quickly to those who need it, stay within the available funding and allow for any future caseload increases the existing CTS Hardship scheme will be extended for 2022/2023 with a maximum award of £75.

The proposed policy is included with this report.

Any declarations of interest and details of any dispensations granted in respect of interests.

Not applicable

Recommended by

Signature



Jo Stanton, Revenues and Benefits Manager

Date 6 September 2022

Authorisation

Signature



Michelle Drewery, s151 Officer

Date 6 September 2022

Consultation with members/officers

If the decision is taken following consultation with the members/officers, please give details:

Consultation with the Council Leader, Councillor Stuart Dark

Signed by Member as consulted:



Councillor Stuart Dark

Date 6 September 2022

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment



Name of policy/service/function	Discretionary Policy for CTS Hardship Awards 2022/2023				
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function?	Continuation of an existing policy				
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service rigidly constrained by statutory obligations	The policy continues the CTS Hardship Award scheme for working age people already receiving CTS for 2022/2023. The scheme will to help reduce the council tax bill for working age people on low incomes. Pension age people are not included as they are paid CTS under a national, more generous scheme.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			√	
	Disability			√	
	Gender			√	
	Gender Re-assignment			√	
	Marriage/civil partnership			√	
	Pregnancy & maternity			√	
	Race			√	
	Religion or belief			√	
	Sexual orientation			√	
Other (eg low income)	√				
Question	Answer	Comments			
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No				
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No				
4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	No				
<p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>	N/A	<p>Actions: None required as the policy has an intended positive impact on low income groups</p>			
		<p>Actions agreed by EWG member:Jo Stanton.....</p>			
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p>					

Assessment completed by: Name Joanne Stanton	
Job title Revenues and Benefits Manager	Date 1 September 2022