

# **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.

Urgent Item – Exempt from Call In

## **Delegated Power**

**Cabinet: 8 February 2023 (Council 23 February 2023)**

**Minute CAB131:**

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 support initiative,
- Are funded by central government, and
- Will be administered by the Revenues and Benefits section

## **Decision Taken**

Agreement of the Council Tax Support Fund Policy for 2023/2024

## **Reasons for the Decision**

To agree the policy for the new Council Tax Support Fund for 2023/2024.

In December 2022 the government announced £100 million of additional funding for local authorities to allow us to deliver additional support to households already receiving council tax support. Adult Social Care authorities are able to make higher council tax increases for 2023/2024 and the funding enables us to provide a council tax reduction of up to £25 to vulnerable households to offset these higher amounts. The funding also allows us the flexibility to determine a local approach and to provide support to other vulnerable households.

We have been awarded funding of £250,054 which must be spent during 2023/2024. This will be used to provide the government reduction of £25, plus an additional discretionary local reduction of £25, giving a maximum total reduction of £50. 3,479 claims are eligible to receive this support and it will cost £166,346. Any remaining funding will cover any one-off applications for exceptional circumstances, and a further reduction may be recommended during the year if sufficient funding is still available.

The Council Tax Support Fund is similar to the principles of the Council Tax Support Hardship Fund introduced in 2020, which we continued as a discretionary scheme in 2021 and 2022. The main changes are the inclusion of Pension Age claims, so the scheme now covers the whole Council Tax Support caseload, and the level of award which is set at £25 for the main scheme, which we will increase to £50 with a local discretionary award.

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 £55.06 for a band A property, and £64.24 for a band B property – just 4% of the overall bill. The reduction of £50 means we are able to cover the majority of the cost of providing our local services to our residents in the lowest bands.

**Options considered**

Government will provide funding for a scheme which meets the criteria set out in the guidance. They have specified that funding should be used to provide a reduction of up to £25 for eligible customers. Our funding allocation also allows us to award a further reduction of £25, giving a total reduction of up to £50. This still leaves some of the funding allocation remaining and this will be monitored during 2023/2024. If there is sufficient funding remaining a further reduction may be considered.

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 24 February 2023

**Authorisation**

Signature

Michelle Drewery, s151 Officer

Date 24 February 2023

**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 & Councillor Sam Sandell

Date 24 February 2023



**Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment**



Name of policy/service/function	Discretionary Policy for CTS Fund 2023/2024				
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function?	New 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 implements the government's Council Tax Support (CTS) Fund for all people receiving CTS for 2023/2024. The scheme will help reduce the council tax bill for working and pension age people on low incomes. The purpose of the scheme is to offset higher council tax increases allowed by government for 2023/2024 for people on low incomes who are receiving CTS.				
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>				
<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 <b>according to their different protected characteristic</b>, 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)	✓				
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Comments</b>			
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><b>Actions:</b> None required as the policy has an intended positive impact on low income groups</p>			
		<p><b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b> .....Jo Stanton.....</p>			
<p><b>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:</b></p>					

<b>Assessment completed by: Name Joanne Stanton</b>	
<b>Job title Revenues and Benefits Manager</b>	<b>Date 24 February 2023</b>