

1. Council Tax Energy Rebate - Discretionary Scheme Extension Policy (pages 2-11)

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 Council Tax Energy Rebate - Discretionary Scheme Extension for 2022/2023, as per the attached policy.

This scheme extends the original Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Policy (April 2022) and should be read in conjunction with that policy. Both policies apply until 30 November 2022 when the schemes close.

The government has provided funding of £319,800 to allow us to design our own discretionary Energy Rebate scheme for households who are not eligible for the main scheme but who are vulnerable or most in need. We have already used this money to provide a £150 rebate to vulnerable households in higher council tax bands who are not eligible for the main scheme, and to provide a £25 top up payment to all households receiving council tax support so they receive a rebate of £175.

At 31 October 2022 there is still £44,000 of this funding left available to spend, as the contingency fund for one off cases has not been needed, and the estimates of qualifying households were slightly higher than the numbers who were actually eligible.

This scheme uses this funding to extend the £25 top up payment to an additional 1,200 households which fall into vulnerable or in need groups and have already received a £150 rebate.

Reasons for the Decision

To agree the policy for extending the discretionary Energy Rebate policy to utilise the remaining discretionary funding from central government.

Options considered

Various options for awarding further payments have been reviewed. The options are limited as most of our households are eligible for the government's main energy rebate payment. Therefore our extended discretionary policy uses the remaining funding to provide a further £25 payment to 1,200 households who could be considered to be vulnerable or in need as they are receiving certain reductions on their council tax bills.

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: 8 November 2022

Authorisation

Signature



Michelle Drewery, s151 Officer

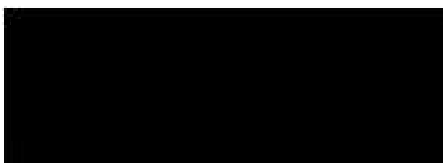
Date 11 November 2022

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 23 November 2022

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment



Name of policy/service/function	Council Tax Energy Rebate – Discretionary Scheme Extension				
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 expands the discretionary scheme £25 top up to include more households who are considered vulnerable or most in need				
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 protected 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 8 November 2022

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK
COUNCIL TAX ENERGY REBATE – DISCRETIONARY SCHEME

April 2022

1. THE DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX ENERGY REBATE SCHEME

On 3 February 2022 government announced a package of measures to assist people with rising energy costs. Part of this package was a £150 council tax energy rebate for all households in council tax bands A to D, to be administered by local authorities. [Full guidance](#) for the scheme was issued on 23 February 2022 and [FAQs](#) were published on 16 March 2022.

The guidance confirms the following for the main Energy Rebate scheme:

- The £150 is a payment, not a discount on the council tax bill
- It is a payment, not a loan, and does not need to be repaid
- It is non-taxable and will not affect welfare benefits
- It is payable to households in bands A-D and those in band E who have a Disabled Band Reduction
- It is for properties which are someone's home – second homes and empty properties are not eligible
- Householders who pay by Direct Debit (DD) will have the payment automatically credited to their bank account. There will be an alternative process for non DD payers

Government has provided funding of £9,015,150 for the main Energy Rebate. It has also provided funding of £319,800 to allow us to design our own discretionary Energy Rebate scheme for those who are not eligible for the main scheme but who are vulnerable or most in need.

This scheme details the categories of households eligible for the discretionary Energy Rebate, and the rebate amounts. The vast majority (88%) of our households are in bands A-D and are eligible for the main Energy Rebate, so this scheme identifies those households in other bands who are on low incomes or who may be vulnerable, based on data already held in the council tax records. We also have sufficient funding to top up the main Energy Rebate for households receiving Council Tax Support.

2. ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS

Eligibility is based on the qualifying date of 1 April 2022.

The following categories of household are eligible for the discretionary scheme:

- Those in bands A-D receiving Council Tax Support on 1 April 2022, who will receive a top up to the main Energy Rebate payment
- Those in bands E-H:
 - receiving Council Tax Support on 1 April 2022,
 - eligible for an exemption as all members of the household are under 18, Severely Mentally Impaired, Students or dependent relatives living in an annexe,

- have a person in the household who is disregarded for council tax purposes in one of the following categories:
 - Severely Mentally Impaired
 - Live In Carers (Class 1)
- Those in bands F-H receiving Disabled Band Reduction
- Households in the following categories:
 - Where the council tax band is reduced to an eligible band as a result of an appeal made to the Valuation Office before 3 February 2022, and the new band is effective on 1 April 2022,
 - Households living in Houses of Multiple Occupation, where the householder is directly liable for paying their own energy from a recognised energy provider, and is named on the energy bill,
 - Those with refugee status who are an eligible household but who fall outside the main scheme criteria as they are not liable for council tax on 1 April 2022

Exclusions:

Any household who is eligible for the main payment, unless the discretionary payment is being paid as a top up amount (see section 3).

Any household living in a House of Multiple Occupation where the landlord is responsible for the energy bill.

3. PAYMENT AMOUNT

There are three levels of PAYMENT:

Households living in a House of Multiple Occupation	£100
Households not eligible for Council Tax Support on 1 April 2022	£150
Households eligible for Council Tax Support on 1 April 2022	£175*

The higher amount for households receiving Council Tax Support reflects the fact that these households are on the lowest incomes and are likely to be spending a higher proportion of their income on energy costs.

**This will be paid as £150 under the main scheme, and a top up of £25 under the discretionary scheme*

4. MEMBER DISCRETION

This scheme allows individual applications to be considered on an exceptional basis.

Awards will be made on a recommendation basis by the s151 Officer or Revenues and Benefits Manager, in consultation with the Council Leader or the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities and are wholly at the discretion of the Council.

5. APPLICATIONS

Where a household pays their council tax by Direct Debit, the Energy Rebate will be paid as a credit directly to this bank account, subject to validation checks. No application is required.

Where there is no Direct Debit in place, or where the validation checks are insufficient, households will be required to complete an online application form. Council staff will be able to assist with application forms if needed.

6. FRAUD AND MISREPRESENTATION

We will not accept fraudulent applications for the Energy Rebate and will carry out checks to ensure all applications for payments are accurate. We may refuse to pay the Energy Rebate if we suspect an application is fraudulent for any reason. We will check information at the time of application and may also carry out spot checks at a later date, including asking for further evidence. We will recover any payments found to have been claimed fraudulently.

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK
COUNCIL TAX ENERGY REBATE – DISCRETIONARY SCHEME EXTENSION

November 2022

1. THE DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX ENERGY REBATE SCHEME

This scheme extends the original Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Policy (April 2022) and should be read in conjunction with that policy. Both policies apply until 30 November 2022 when the scheme closes.

The government has provided funding of £319,800 to allow us to design our own discretionary Energy Rebate scheme for households who are not eligible for the main scheme but who are vulnerable or most in need. We have used this money to provide a £150 rebate to vulnerable households in higher council tax bands who are not eligible for the main scheme, and to provide a £25 top up payment to all households receiving council tax support so they receive a rebate of £175.

At 31 October 2022 there is still £44,000 of this funding left available to spend as the contingency fund for one off cases has not been needed, and the estimates of qualifying households were slightly higher than the numbers who were actually eligible.

This scheme uses this funding to extend the £25 top up payment to an additional 1,200 households which fall into vulnerable groups and have already received a £150 rebate.

2. ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS

Eligibility is based on the qualifying date of 1 April 2022.

The following categories of household are eligible for the £25 top up payment under the extended discretionary scheme:

- Those in any council tax band which have already received the £150 Energy Rebate payment and which, on 1 April 2022, either:
 - Received a Disabled Band Reduction,
 - Received a council tax exemption as all members of the household are:
 - under 18,
 - Severely Mentally Impaired,
 - Students, or
 - dependent relatives living in an annexe
 - Had a person in the household who is disregarded for council tax purposes in one of the following categories:
 - Severely Mentally Impaired
 - Live In Carers (Class 1)

Exclusions:

Any household who has already received the £25 top up payment is not eligible under this policy. Only one top up payment is payable per household, even if they qualify under more than one category.

Any household living in a House of Multiple Occupation where the landlord is responsible for the energy bill is excluded.

3. PAYMENT AMOUNT

The top up is paid as a one-off £25 payment.

4. MEMBER DISCRETION

This scheme allows individual applications to be considered on an exceptional basis.

Awards will be made on a recommendation basis by the s151 Officer or Revenues and Benefits Manager, in consultation with the Council Leader or the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities and are wholly at the discretion of the Council.

5. APPLICATIONS

No application is required as the top up will be paid to households which have already received a £150 Energy Rebate payment.

All Energy Rebate Schemes close on 30 November 2022.

6. FRAUD AND MISREPRESENTATION

We will not accept fraudulent applications for the Energy Rebate and will carry out checks to ensure all applications for payments are accurate. We may refuse to pay the Energy Rebate if we suspect an application is fraudulent for any reason. We will check information at the time of application and may also carry out spot checks at a later date, including asking for further evidence. We will recover any payments found to have been claimed fraudulently.
