

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Date: 24 November 2022

KEY DECISION: YES

Council Tax Energy Rebate Amendment to Implementing the Discretionary

1. Decision:

- 1.1 The Cabinet Member for Finance and Commissioning approved the amendment to the Discretionary Fund Policy as described in 3.5 in order to distribute all the discretionary funding (see Appendix A of the Cabinet Member report).

2. Statement of Reasons:

- 2.1 The Government has published guidance in relation to a new discretionary fund to support households who are in need but not eligible for Council Tax Rebate and to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living.
- 2.2 Lichfield has been allocated £140,700 funding and has the discretion to direct it to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living.
- 2.3 The discretionary scheme has been adopted based on Government guidance and following consultation with the wider Staffordshire Local Authorities, an industry expert, the Leadership Team and within the Revenues and Benefits service area, to ensure that the full allocation is spent by 30 November 2022.
- 2.4 The Council has the discretion to decide on the level of relief for individual households.
- 2.5 We have developed a discretionary policy, (Included as a separate secure PDF), and plan to issue the grant funding, following the Government guidance, by 30 November 2022.
- 2.6 **The qualifying criteria is:**
- The Council has decided that the payments will be made providing that:
- a) The household has their sole or main residence in the dwelling; and
 - b) The Council Tax liable person is not a Local Authority, a corporate body or other body such as a Housing Association, the Government or Governmental body.
- 2.7 Where a household meets the qualifying criteria, the following awards will be made:
- a) A one-off payment of £150 will be awarded to households with a Council Taxband E-H that are also in receipt of Local Council Tax Support.

- b) A one-off payment of £150 will be awarded to Households whose dwelling is valued in bands F to H subject to an alternative banding E to G, due to a Disabled Banding Relief.
- c) Households in Council Tax bands A-D that are in receipt of LCTS and are part of a 'Vulnerable Household', will be awarded £30 'top-up' funding. The Council may award a further 'top-up' towards the end of the scheme, if funds are available.
- d) Households where the energy bill payers are not liable for Council Tax. (E.g., Houses in multiple occupation) but can provide evidence that they have their own fuel bills will be awarded a one-off payment of £150. The £150 payment will be divided by the number of available bedrooms and no payment will be made for any rooms that are unoccupied.
- e) Households whose dwelling is valued in bands E to H on 1 April 2022 who manage to successfully appeal their band to D or lower, retrospectively to 1 April 2022 will be awarded a one-off payment of £150. (The appeal must have been submitted before 3 February 2022).
- f) E-H households that are not on Local Council Tax Support and are in 'fuel poverty'. The assessment of households that are in 'fuel poverty' will be provided by pre-validated referrals from the independent charity 'Beat the Cold'
<https://www.beatcold.org.uk/>

28 Allocating the funding

- a. In most cases, the maximum funding is expected to be a £150 'one-off' payment for households that meet the eligibility criteria. In certain prescribed circumstances (see 2.7 (c)) 'top-up' payment(s) may be awarded.
- b. The discretionary fund is cash and time limited and so payments will no longer be made if the Council utilises all its funding, or on the closing date of 30 November, whichever is sooner.

29 How the payment will be made

- a. Payments can only be made to the liable Council Tax payer (or a person who would otherwise, be liable where the property is exempt), regardless of the number of occupants or liable Council Tax payers. In certain prescribed circumstances (see 3.0(c)) a 'top-up' payment may be awarded.
- b. Payments will be made directly to the Council Tax payer using the live direct debit information held of an eligible household.
- c. Where the Council does not hold live direct debit instructions for an eligible household, efforts will be made to contact the household as early as possible to make them aware of the scheme and invite them to make a claim.

- d. Should an eligible household not have a live direct debit instruction set up, the council will then look to make a credit of up to £150 against the household's current liability.
- e. Where an eligible household does not have a live direct debit or a Council Tax liability to credit, the Council will make the payment following an application process.

3. Any Alternative Options:

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member could decide not to approve the amendment to the Discretionary Fund Policy.

Cabinet Member for Finance and Commissioning