

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL1004**CONSULTATION WITH APPROPRIATE CHAIRMAN AND VICE- CHAIRMAN FOR URGENT ACTION TO BE TAKEN UNDER STANDING ORDER 42**TO: Councillors
Chairman and Vice- Chairman of the

Corporate Management Committee

FROM: Linda Norman

OFFICER REFERENCE: Discretionary Energy
Rebate Policy

DATE: 20 July 2022

1. Synopsis of report:

To create and implement a Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate policy to support the Borough's most vulnerable residents during the current cost of living crisis within the guidance laid down by central government.

2. Reasons why this matter cannot wait for a Committee Decision.
(Please state if agreement of Chairman and Vice-Chairman required within 24 hours, and why)

The scheme was launched in March 2022 and funding was allocated to billing authorities. The scheme is intended to run from April 22 through to November 22 to distribute the monies as quickly as possible to those most in need. The Council has prioritised payment of the mandatory Council Tax rebate scheme with 16, 512 taxpayers being paid as at 7 Jul 2022. With the majority of the mandatory scheme being paid, it is now important to create a local policy to support other vulnerable residents and ensure they are not adversely affected whilst the Council goes through the democratic process of approving this policy. With such a limited time frame to deliver this scheme and the first government return due in July on monies paid, the Government are expecting Local Authorities to act quickly on this matter.

3. Recommendation(s)

To approve Runnymede's Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate policy and for officers to start administering the scheme as quickly as possible, working with partner organisations to facilitate an efficient and effective process.

4. Context of report

On the 23 February 2022, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH) issued guidance to support authorities in administering the Council Tax Rebate and associated Discretionary Funds for Households as part of the Governments package of support for rising energy costs announced on 3 February 2022.

The package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate will help households with rising energy bills, worth £9.1 billion nationally. This package of support includes:

- A £400 discount on energy bills this autumn for domestic electricity customers.
- A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in Council Tax Bands A to D, known as the Council Tax Rebate
- £144m of discretionary funding for billing authorities to support households who are in need but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate. This will be known as the Discretionary Fund

Funding has been paid to billing authorities in March 2022 and is based on the number of eligible properties recorded in the October 2021 Council Tax base statistics. The Discretionary Fund has been calculated based on 60% of the deprivation share index and 40% based on estimated number of Council Tax Support claimants in Bands E to H.

Runnymede has been allocated £3,362,850 in total to be split:

- £3,193,050 for Council Tax Rebate
- £169,800 for Discretionary Fund

To date 16,512 amounting to £2,476,800 been paid

5. Report and, where applicable, options considered

The government recognises that billing authorities may wish to provide support to other energy bill payers who are not eligible under the terms of the core scheme, or to provide carefully targeted 'top-up' payments to the most vulnerable households in bands A to D. The Government expect Councils to create local policies so that support for vulnerable households can be provided as soon as is practically possible. Councils should work collaboratively with other organisations in their area who may encounter those households who are eligible and would benefit from this grant.

Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow Runnymede to set up a local scheme for the granting of discretionary relief where such relief would be of benefit to the local community.

The scheme is funded by the government and is designed to use all, but not exceed the available funding. This policy aims to support households in Bands E to H where the residents are in receipt of council tax support. The policy also provides at the same time a top up to households in receipt of council tax support in Bands A to D.



The Council has ensured that a surplus funds remain to assist HMO households where they are exposed to rising energy prices in a similar way to other households.

The Council is still required to undertake pre-payment checks in line with the mandatory scheme. For any unclaimed payments, the Council will consider crediting the relevant Council Tax account to ensure support reaches the maximum amount of residents as possible.

Residents will be required to make an application to the Council by 30 September 2022. There will be no need to make an application if pensioners have already received their £150 payment under the core scheme. The Council will automatically award this top-up payment into bank accounts.

6. Policy framework implications

- This policy underpins the Council's Corporate Theme of 'Supporting Local People'
- This policy underpins the Council's commitment to supporting the Government's Cost of Living crisis initiative

<p>7. Financial and Resource implications (where practicable)</p> <p>Resource implications of suggested course of action: -</p> <p>The Council has received ring-fenced funding of £169, 800 to deliver this scheme</p>
<p>8. Legal implications</p> <p>Powers have granted under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and payment is covered by Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003.</p>
<p>9. Equality implications</p> <p>By creating a local policy to support our vulnerable residents with the current cost of living crisis will have a positive impact on any resident with protected characteristics</p>
<p>10. Other implications (Environmental/biodiversity/ sustainability must be addressed)</p> <p>There are none</p>
<p>11. Background papers</p> <p>Council Tax Energy Rebate Policy</p>
<p>12. <u>Chief Officer(s) Decision</u></p> <p>Signature of authorised officer </p> <p>I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above</p> <p>Signature(s) and position(s) of other relevant Chief Officer, Corporate Heads or authorised representatives</p> <p>.....</p> <p>NB: this <u>must</u> include the Assistant Chief Executive or his authorised representative where the decision involves expenditure, loss of income, or future implications for budget or financial forecast.</p>
<p>13. <u>Chief Executive's Decision</u></p> <p>Signature of Chief Executive </p> <p>I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above</p>

14. **Chairman and Vice-Chairman Comments**

I concur in the Chief Officer's decision

Signed

Date

Signed

Date

I have the following further comments:



Further information may be obtained from

on Ext.

The completed copy is to be returned by the Councillors to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance (Democratic Services) who will send a copy to the Chief Officer and report to the relevant Committee for information.