

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 27 June 2022

Title: Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme

Report of: Chris Watchman, Revenues and Benefits Manager

Cabinet Member: Councillor Jeeawon

Ward(s): ALL

Purpose of Report: To agree the Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme to provide support to residents not eligible for the main scheme.

Decision Type: Non-Key

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED:** That the:

- 1) Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme outlined in the report be approved; and
- 2) Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management to finalise the detailed criteria and make any necessary changes to the policy in order to ensure the maximum funding is utilised.

Reasons for

Recommendations: To enable support to be provided to low income households not eligible for the main Energy Rebate scheme.

Introduction

1. In February 2022, the Government announced measures to help protect millions of households from rising energy costs. This included the following two schemes to be administered by Local Authorities.
 - **Council Tax Energy Rebate** – A non-repayable payment of £150 to households who are liable for Council Tax and reside in properties with a Council Tax band of A – D on 1 April 2022.
 - **Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate** – A non-repayable payment to support households not eligible for the main scheme. Including properties in bands E to H.
2. The following report provides information on the eligibility and operation of the main scheme and makes proposals for the discretionary scheme.

Phase 1 Main scheme

3. The Council Tax Rebate Scheme is a mandatory scheme in that all households that meet the eligibility criteria will receive the rebate. In Rother there are 31,527 properties which fall into bands A-D. Therefore, the Council is administering in the region of £4,729,050 under this scheme.
4. Where the Council hold a live Direct Debit instruction and the name on the bank account matches the liable council tax payer a payment has been automatically made into the resident's bank account.
5. Where a live direct debit instruction is not held, all eligible households have been contacted by letter inviting them to complete a short online application form to provide their account details so that payment can be made.
6. Where residents have been unable to access the online form, support has been provided by way of Council officers completing the application form over the phone with the residents.

Phase 2 Discretionary scheme

7. A discretionary fund has been provided so that Local Authorities can offer support to residents who are not eligible under the terms of the main scheme. Rother has been allocated £294,000 to fund this scheme, allowing support to be provided to an additional 1,960 households.
8. The Council can determine locally how best to make use of this funding. This could include providing support to households living in property valued in bands E – H that are on low incomes or those where the energy bill payers are not liable for Council Tax.
9. Due to the level of funding that the Government has provided, there is insufficient resources to provide a payment of £150 to all households not eligible for the main scheme. Rother has 14,509 households in Band E and above.
10. Officers have been working in partnership with Councils across the County with the aim of designing a comparable scheme across East Sussex. Based on this work it is proposed to make a £150 payment to household that meet the following criteria:
 - The Household is liable for Council Tax and resides in a property with a Council Tax band E – H or the household is not liable for Council tax and reside in a dwelling with a Council Tax band A – D but are responsible for energy bills **AND**

Is in receipt of at least one of the following:
 - Universal Credit
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Reduction
 - Working Tax Credit
 - Income Support
 - Income Based Job-Seeker's Allowance

➤ Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; **OR**

Has a net income of not more than £257.69 per week for a single person or £384.62 per week for a couple and has capital of no more than £6,000.

11. The application and payment process will mirror that of the main Scheme with those applying required to claim via an on-line form. Applications will be processed in date of receipt order with the fund closing on 30 November 2022 or when the fund has been exhausted, whichever is the sooner.
12. In-line with the objectives of Rother's Anti-Poverty Strategy, support will be provided to residents who cannot access the scheme online. Council officers will again be available to complete application forms over the phone with residents in order to maximise the schemes accessibility. Partner organisations will also have full details of the scheme so that they can promote it with their service users.
13. The scheme will also be promoted via the Council's website and social media channels. Take up will be closely monitored to see if more direct promotion is required.

Conclusion

14. Members are asked to approve the Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme as detailed in the report. It is also proposed to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management, to finalise the detailed criteria and make any necessary amendment to the scheme to utilise the available funding

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	None
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None