

Crawley Borough Council

Consideration Report for Delegated Decision by the Leader

14 September 2022

Council Tax Government Discretionary 'Energy Rebate' Scheme - Revised

Report of the Head of Corporate Finance (FIN/590)

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To seek approval for the Council's Revised Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme in order to allocate Government funds to council taxpayers who are not eligible for the main scheme.
- 1.2. The Council has been allocated £201,750 of grant funding from a £144m discretionary fund from the Government 'to provide support to other energy bill payers who are not eligible under the terms of the core band A – D Energy Rebate Scheme'.
- 1.3. A scheme was approved in March 2022, however there has been low take up across the County for this joint scheme, therefore the scheme has been amended to allow a top-up for those on Council Tax Reduction.
- 1.4. This report requests that the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Finance, approve a revised Discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme to distribute the share to Crawley Borough Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Leader (in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Finance):
 - a) Approve the Council's Energy Revised Rebate Discretionary Scheme Guidelines.
 - b) Give delegated authority to designated senior officers to make relief awards within these guidelines.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1. The Council has been given £201,750 to grant energy rebate to council taxpayers within Crawley who are not eligible for the main scheme. As at 9th September 2022 £13,200 has been allocated leaving a balance of £188,550. These guidelines seek to provide guidance to staff and council taxpayers on how this Revised Discretionary Relief is to be made and what factors are considered when making the top-up award.

4. Background and Issue to be Resolved

- 4.1. On 3 February 2022 the Government announced that it would provide £150 to Council taxpayers in band A – D £150 to assist with their energy bills.
- 4.2. [Government guidance](#) for the scheme was issued on the 23 February 2022. However the teams involved have been working on annual Council tax billing.
- 4.3. Billing authorities will be responsible for designing the discretionary scheme that are to operate in their areas. However, in developing and implementing their schemes local authorities based on the Government guidelines.
- 4.4. Crawley Borough Council has agree guidelines with all the other West Sussex Local Authorities (attached as an appendix to this report). The guidelines are in line with the guidelines issued by the Government. However all the authorities are underspent so request to revise the guidelines in order to allocate a top-up to those on Council Tax Reduction.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. The options considered in this report are the only ones available to the Council as the Council seeks to become more transparent in the use of its discretionary financial assistance to Council taxpayers to assist with their energy bills. These guidelines have been agreed by all West Sussex Local Authorities.

6. Urgency of Decision

- 6.1. Due to the urgent nature of this decision the Special Urgency Rule has been used for this decision as it has been impracticable to publish a Forthcoming Decision Notice for the 28 clear days period. The Chair of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission has agreed the use of this provision. In addition, due to the urgent nature of this decision the Chief Executive has Protected from Call-In, so that an online application process can become live to enable the Council to start supporting eligible residents as soon as possible.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The government grant allocated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in respect of the Discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme is £201,750. This is a cash limited fund and any relief incurred over and above this must be funded by the Council. There is currently no additional funding identified within the Council to support Discretionary Relief, which means that expenditure will need to be contained within the cash limited.

8. Background Papers

- The [Council Tax Rebate 2022-23 billing authority guidance](#) (DLUHC)
- [Councillors' Information bulletin](#) – Wednesday 2nd March, 2022

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