

Budget amendment for the Council meeting on 22nd February 2022

Motion to amend the budget to include a one-off rebate to those residents in Uttlesford who are in receipt of Local Council Tax Support but still have to pay some Council Tax.

Proposed by Cllr Ayub Khan Liberal Democrats. Member for Stansted South & Birchanger.

Seconded by Cllr Vere Isham Green Party. Member for Takeley

The amendment:

The cost-of-living crisis has been growing in scale and impact over the last six months, with inflation reaching historic levels and yet to peak. Those on the lowest incomes are most exposed.

Whilst the crisis is already affecting households across Uttlesford, it is set to deepen further with rising inflation as well as a planned National Insurance hike in April. The increase in energy prices will push more of our households into fuel poverty. The Citizens Advice service in Uttlesford has seen a 35% rise in people accessing fuel debt advice in 2021

The Government has announced some assistance with a £150 payment to households in properties rated A to D. In addition, they have made provision for a £200 bill credit loan for households which will be automatically added to bills in October and then repaid by those households in equal instalments over four years from April 2023.

Data provided by the Section 151 Officer indicates that as of 31st January 2022, there are currently 3,334 claimants in Uttlesford who qualify for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. All claimants are subjected to means testing to determine the percentage they must pay. However, low-income pensioners and vulnerable people are protected, and receive 100% discount. Working age people, which equated to 948 of the claimants only receive partial support as per the Council's Local Council Tax Support Policy and are required to pay a minimum of 12.5% of the Council Tax bill.

We propose to help these people by providing a one-off cash rebate of £100 per household. The qualifying date to be eligible for the rebate was 31 January 2022. The rebate would be allocated to the household's Council Tax account. The total cost would be £94,800 to be funded from the MTFS Reserve.

Even after providing a £100 rebate, each of the 948 households will still have a Council Tax liability. Nobody will end up in the situation whereby the Local Council Tax Support they receive plus the £100 will be more than their Council Tax bill.

Supporting this amendment, Members will send a very strong message to low-income families in our district that we are helping them through targeted action at this time of high inflation, low benefit levels and soaring energy costs.

Supported by:

Cllr Melvin Caton, Liberal Democrats

Cllr Alan Dean, Liberal Democrats

Cllr Janice Loughlin, Liberal Democrats

Cllr Geoffrey Sell, Liberal Democrats

Cllr Barbara Light, Green Party

Cllr Paul Fairhurst, Green Party