

Decision Maker: Cllr Petrina Lees, Leader of the Council

Date: 25 April 2022

Title: Energy Rebate Scheme

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Summary

1. On 3 February 2022, the Government announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills in 2022-2023. The
 - A one off non-repayable rebate for all households in England in council tax bands A – D.
 - Additional funds to allow Councils to set a discretionary scheme to support households who are struggling financially but are not eligible for the main scheme.

Recommendations

2. The Leader of the Council has approved the Energy Rebate Main Scheme (Appendix A) and the Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme (Appendix B) taken as an Executive Decision under emergency powers.

Financial Implications

3. The scheme is fully funded by Government and New Burdens funding received to cover the administration costs.
4. However, the Government will not provide any additional funding which exceeds the initial allocation for the discretionary scheme.

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Guidance, support for energy bills – the council tax rebate 2022-23: billing authority guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-council-tax-rebate-2022-23-billing-authority-guidance/support-for-energy-bills-the-council-tax-rebate-2022-23billing-authority-guidance>

Impact

Communication/Consultation	The service will work with both the Web and communications teams to ensure that the scheme is widely publicised and hosted appropriately.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	The core scheme may initially adversely impact those residents who are 'asset rich but cash poor' as based on council tax property bands. This will be addressed in the Councils Discretionary Fund scheme.
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No risk as the Council Tax Rebate schemes will be administered through existing definitions and powers contained in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 The Council Tax (Chargeable Dwellings, Exempt Dwellings and Discount Disregards) Amendment Order 1997).
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

6. A total £3,297,450 has been allocated to Uttlesford District Council. This sum consists of the following:
 - £3,120,450 for the Energy Rebate Main Scheme. This is based on paying £150 to 20,803 eligible households. Payments relating to this scheme are required to be distributed by 30 September 2022. Although, the original government public announcement stated it would be paid in April 2022.
 - £177,000 for the Energy Rebate Discretionary Fund, which is required to be distributed by 30 November 2022.

7. The council will be required to comply with regular reporting requirements to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on the allocation of the original funding and progress for the distribution of funds.

Main Scheme

8. The main scheme is mandated by the Government and the Council has no discretion on how this is administered. A one off payment will be made to all eligible households in Bands A – D. Full eligibility criteria is set out in the main policy at Appendix A.
9. Where the Council holds Direct Debit details for the payment of council tax, the payment will be made automatically using these details.
10. If the household does not pay by Direct Debit, then they will receive a letter inviting them to apply and provide bank account details via the dedicated Energy Rebate Portal.

Discretionary Fund

11. The Discretionary Fund has been set up to support those households who are in financial need but do not qualify for the main scheme and the Discretionary Fund Policy is set out in Appendix B. The key elements of the scheme are.
 - to provide a one off payment to households who are in receipt of Local Council Tax Support in bands E and above
 - to provide additional support to households in bands A – D who are in receipt of Local Council Tax Support
 - to provide an application process for all other households in bands E and above who are in financial hardship
12. The Discretionary Fund will be administered using the dedicated Energy Rebate Portal as for the main scheme where we do not hold bank account details for households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support. All other households in band E and above can use the portal to make an application for support.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the local scheme is not administered based on the guidance and eligibility criteria	2 – Correct checks and procedures are in place, however there is a risk of	2 – incorrect allocations of rebate, may reduce the funding for any errors in payments	Experienced staff are collecting and checking details against known Council Tax databases. The Council has purchased bespoke

	fraudulent applications		<p>software from Northgate the main service provider for Revenues and Benefit. This system will support system and account checks and includes bank account verification software.</p> <p>The Government access to the HMRC verification system (Spotlight) which can identify fraudulent claims</p>
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1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.