

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	28 SEPTEMBER 2022	5
ENERGY REBATE DISCRETIONARY SCHEME			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

On 3rd February 2022, the government announced a package of support for rising energy costs. This included a main scheme allocating £150 to the majority of households in Council Tax Bands A to D and a Discretionary Fund.

It is for Local Authorities to determine how best to utilise these discretionary funds by 30th November 2022; Fylde Council have received an allocation of £181,350.

On 23rd June 2022 the Finance and Democracy Committee agreed six proposals and these are in the process of being allocated. Given these six schemes will not utilise all the funding available this report outlines the potential proposals for using the remaining funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That members accept the proposed recommendations for the distribution of the remaining funding based on the information in the main body of the report.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Finance and Democracy Committee - 23 June 2022 – Resolved as follows:

1. To approve a fully funded revenue budget increase of £181,350 in 2022/23 from the Discretionary Fund Government Grant allocated to the council for this purpose, and to agree to the distribution of funding proposals 1 -6 (contained in paragraph 5 of the report).
2. That subject to the outcome of 1 above, a further report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee to determine how the balance of funding is to be allocated.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	✓
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	

REPORT

1. On 3rd February 2022, the government announced a package of support for rising energy costs. This included a main scheme allocating £150 to the majority of households in Council Tax Bands A to D and a Discretionary Fund.
2. Main scheme payments have now been issued and the proposals agreed at the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting on 23rd June 2022 are in the process of being allocated. Given that these proposals will not utilise all the funding available the additional proposals for how the funding can be spent are shown below. It is estimated that somewhere between £75K and £99K will be available. Allocations from the discretionary fund must be spent by 30 November 2022. Any remaining funding will be required to be repaid to government.
3. Whilst it is up to each authority to determine how they allocate the monies, the guidance and frequently asked questions issued by government have suggested that billing authorities may wish to provide support to other energy bill payers who are not eligible under the terms of the main scheme, or to provide carefully targeted 'top-up' payments to the most vulnerable households and to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living.
4. The proposals for how funding should be allocated, which specifically includes tenants in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's), are shown below:

Category 1: An application process will be made available for all tenants who are not directly responsible for energy bills (i.e. the landlord is responsible for paying the energy bill) as it is likely that these tenants will not benefit from the £400 paid to all domestic energy customers, which would most likely be retained by the landlord. A payment of £150 will be made to each applicant so more than one tenant in a property could benefit, **and**

Category 2: An application process will be made available to any tenant who is paying by card or cash meter, given that the tariffs paid by these residents are generally higher than those who receive a domestic energy bill and that these tenants will not have received support under other schemes. Again, a payment of £150 will be made to each tenant.

5. For category 1, tenants will be asked to provide a copy of their tenancy agreement, which will verify that they are resident at the address and that bills are inclusive in the rent, and a bank statement showing their current address. This will allow us to verify that they are not directly responsible for bills, that they are resident in the property and allow payments to be made direct to their bank.
6. For category 2, these residents may have received support under the main energy rebate scheme but if they have received a payment under the proposals approved at 23rd June 2022 Finance and Democracy Committee then they will not be eligible for another discretionary payment. Many people with a meter will have an account therefore we will ask for evidence of this along with a bank statement in order for a payment to be made. If they are a tenant then we will ask for a copy of their tenancy agreement.
7. If there is funding remaining once the application process is closed and allocations of payments of £150 to tenants as set out in categories 1 and 2 above have been made, then further payments will be made to ALL recipients of discretionary funding (including those approved by the committee in June 2022) such that all the allocated funding is distributed to residents in the borough.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the proposal for allocation of the energy rebate discretionary funding as set out in the report.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	This committee approved at its June meeting a fully funded revenue budget increase of £181,350 in 2022/23 from the Discretionary Fund Government Grant allocated to the council for this purpose, and approved the initial distribution of funding as set out in that report. This update report presents proposals for further distribution of the remaining funding such that all the allocated funding is distributed to residents in the borough.

Legal	None arising from this report
Community Safety	None arising from this report
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising from this report
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None arising from this report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising from this report

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Support for Energy Bills - Council Tax Rebate 2022-23 guidance	16/03/2022	Support for energy bills - the council tax rebate 2022-23: billing authority guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Council Tax Rebate Frequently Asked Questions	16/03/2022	7/2022: Council Tax information letter - 16 March 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)