

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS (SHARED SERVICE)	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	24 JUNE 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 most households in Council Tax Bands A to D together with 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That members approve a fully funded revenue budget increase of £181,350 in 2022/23 and approve the proposed recommendations for the distribution of the funding based on the information in the main body of the report.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

None

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 most households in Council Tax Bands A to D and a Discretionary Fund.
2. Most main scheme payments of £150 have now been issued to households in Council Tax Bands A to D, and the discretionary scheme is now being considered with £181,350 allocated to Fylde Council. 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 because of the rising cost of living.
4. Since the guidance and frequently asked questions for the Discretionary Fund were issued, a further package of national support has been announced by Government, which will see the following households and people given additional financial support:
 - All households with a domestic electricity connection will be automatically eligible for a £400 grant, including those with pre-payment meters.
 - Households in receipt of Universal Credit, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Pension Credit will also receive a one-off £650 cost of living payment. This payment will be made in two instalments—one in July and the second in the autumn.
 - Households who receive the Winter Fuel Payment will be eligible for £300.
 - People receiving Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, Armed Forces Independence Payment, Constant Attendance Allowance, and War Pension Mobility Supplement will receive £150.
5. Considering the guidance and the package of national support measures detailed above, it is proposed that the Discretionary Fund for Fylde should be allocated as shown below:
 - 1) A payment of £150 to households that are in Council tax bands E to H who are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction.
 - 2) A payment of £150 to households that are in Council Tax bands F to H where a Disabled Council Tax band reduction has been applied.
 - 3) A payment of £150 to each household living in properties that are recorded as Houses of Multiple Occupation for Council Tax purposes where the occupants are responsible for the direct payment of energy costs i.e. they receive a bill (evidence of occupation and direct payment of energy costs will be required).
 - 4) A payment of £150 to households that are in Council Tax bands E to H who have a disregarded person for Council Tax purposes i.e. Severely Mentally Impaired or Carer disregards or are classed as exempt from Council tax due to a Severe Mental Impairment.
 - 5) A payment of £150 to new build properties where a decision is made that it is in Council Tax Bands A to D as at 1st April 2022.
 - 6) A payment of £150 where an appeal against a Council Tax banding was made before 3rd February 2022 and the band is reduced to Band D, backdated to before 1st April 2022.
 - 7) A payment to all residents in Council Tax Band E properties, amount to be determined once the above categories have been dealt with. If there is maximum take-up of proposals 1-6 then the amount would be around £14.49 per household. This option will not be able to be properly costed until proposals 1-6 have been paid.

Table 1 : Costs associated with the above combination of allocations are currently:

Proposal	Number of households	Total cost
1	302	£45,300
2	132	£19,800
3	Maximum of 76 households according to Council Tax records, assuming 2 payments per household	£22,800
4	79	£11,850
5	Estimate of 20 properties	£3,000
6	Estimate of 20 properties	£3,000
7	5219	£75,600
	TOTAL:	£181,350

NB. These costings are based on system data extracted as at 1st June 2022.

6. Residents will not need to make an application to receive these payments, they will be automatically awarded, either via a payment to their bank account where details are held or by a Post Office Payout voucher. Where Houses of Multiple Occupation for Council Tax purposes are involved, the Council will make direct contact to determine whether they are eligible for support.
7. Support from the Discretionary Fund does not have to be provided in relation to the position as at 1st April 2022, as was the case for the main scheme, therefore it is proposed that an eligible date of 1st September 2022 is used.
8. Where a Post Office Payout voucher is not cashed then a payment will be credited to the Council Tax account prior to the payment deadline of 30th November 2022.
9. The Committee is requested to approve the proposal for the allocation of the energy rebate Discretionary Fund.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The report recommends that members approve a fully funded revenue budget increase of £181,350 in 2022/23 and approve the proposed recommendations for the distribution of the funding based on the information in the main body of the report.
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)