

Cheltenham Borough Council

Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme Phase 3

October 2022

1.0 Introduction.

- 1.1 On 3rd February 2022 the Government announced a package of support to help households with rising energy bills. This included a £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate payment for households in England in Council Tax bands A to D, to be administered by billing authorities.
- 1.2 The government has also provided billing authorities discretionary funding to provide support to other energy bill payers who are not eligible for the main scheme.
- 1.3 This Policy sets out eligibility criteria and administrative arrangements for Cheltenham Borough Council's Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme.
- 1.4 To be eligible for an award under this scheme applicants must meet the eligibility criteria specified in sections 2 and 3 of this policy.

2.0 General eligibility criteria

- 2.1 The Council is able to use the discretionary funding to support other households who are either council taxpayers or energy bill payers, but are not covered by the main Energy Rebate scheme.
- 2.3 Households will be eligible for one payment of up to £150, regardless, of the number of occupants, provided:
 - a) the household has their sole or main residence in the relevant dwelling which must be within Cheltenham Borough Council's area
 - b) the council tax liable person and/or the applicant is not a local authority, a corporate body, or other body such as a housing association or charitable organisation.

3.0 Eligibility and awards

- 3.1 This Council has received funding of £162,450 for the discretionary scheme and will make it available for eligible households in phases

Phase One

- 3.2 Closed 30 September 2022

Phase Two

- 3.3 Closed 30 September

Phase Three

3.5 Phase 3 is the final phase. Payments will be directly awarded to all eligible households prior to 30 November 2022

- a) Households that are council tax payers in receipt of council tax support or housing benefit, where the claimant's income consists of only capital, earnings or occupational pension and therefore are not eligible for the Government's cost of living payment.
- b) Households that are council tax payers in bands A to D and not eligible for a main scheme payment due to being temporarily absent from the property on 1st April as a result of:
 - Residing elsewhere receive care. Exemption class I must apply and the property must have reverted to the householder's sole or main residence before 30 September 2022
 - Residing elsewhere due to extensive fire damage. The property must have been assessed for council tax class D
- c) Households that are council tax payers and are sponsors on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme where Ukrainian guests are living in the property with them. Sponsors must have returned the payment registration and be approved for payment by 24 October 2022
- d) The remaining balance of the discretionary funding, after payment has been made under a – c above, will be distributed equally across households that are council tax payers in receipt of council tax support or housing benefit and the claimant is a pensioner over 80 years of age at 24 October 2022

4.0 Exclusions

4.1 The following will not be considered eligible for discretionary funding:

- a) Household that were not living in the relevant property on 1 April 2022.
- b) Households in properties that have already received a payment through the main Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme apart from those eligible under 3.4 above
- c) Occupants of properties in exemption Class O (Armed Forces Accommodation) where the Ministry of Defence will provide the cost of living support.
- d) Occupants of properties in exemption Class M (Student Halls of Residence)
- e) Second Homes
- f) Unoccupied Properties
- g) Any council tax payer or energy bill payer that does not have their primary residence in the property
- h) Any applicant that does not provide the requested evidence or supplementary information

5.0 How the Discretionary energy rebate will be paid

Council tax payers

- 5.1 Where the eligible household is paying council tax by direct debit and the Council holds a current direct debit, payment will be made to the bank account held provided that it can be verified
- 5.2 The Council is required to verify that bank details held are those of the eligible household and where multiple residents are jointly liable for council tax the full payment will be made to the direct debit bank account. The award is however for the benefit of the household as a whole.
- 5.3 Direct payment will not be made where the name on the bank details for direct debit purposes does not match eligible person/household and an application form must be submitted
- 5.4 Where the Council does not hold direct debit details an application form will need to be submitted. The Revenues and Benefits team will make every effort to contact the eligible household inviting them to apply using the application form on the Council's website.

Allocating Payment to the council tax account

- 5.9 Eligible households with a council tax account in respect of the relevant property will be given the option to receive a payment or, if they have a balance to pay, have the payment allocated to their council tax account to reduce the amount payable. Where households are invited to apply but fail to do so and it is clear that they are eligible the payment will be allocated to the council tax account, if appropriate.

Non-council Tax payers

- 5.10 Eligible residents and households who are not council tax payers will be required to apply for a discretionary energy rebate payment using the application form on the Council's website.

6.0 Application Process

- 6.1 Where an application is required the application form on the Council's website must be submitted
- 6.2 Bank details and a copy bank statement will be required and these must match the name of the eligible person and address.
- 6.3 The same verification checks required for the main scheme will be made to ensure that the correct person is receiving the payment.

- 6.4 Those unable to use the on-line application form will be able to provide details by telephone
- 6.5 Applicants must provide any evidence or supplementary information that is requested to support their application

7.0 Appeals

- 7.1 There is no right of appeal against any decision not to award a discretionary payment. A person will not be eligible if they do not meet the eligibility criteria.

8.0 Managing the risk of fraud

- 8.1 The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation of the schemes or fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain a discretionary energy rebate payment will face prosecution.

9.0 Recovery of amounts paid

- 9.1 If it is established that any amount has been paid incorrectly due to error, misrepresentation or incorrect information provided the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

10.0 Closure of the scheme

- 10.1 Individual phases of the scheme may be open for a specific application window and once the window closes no further applications will be accepted . To ensure applications can be assessed and the required verification checks made, the scheme will close on 31 October 2022 so that payment can be made by the end of November 2022. The scheme may be closed for all applications at an earlier date available funding has been allocated.

11.0 Data protection and use of data

- 11.1 All information and data provided by applicants shall be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.