

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Report To/Date: Strategy and Resoures 4 April 2022
Topic: Support for energy bills – Council Tax Rebate
Report by: Head of Customer Focus

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 3 February the Government announced measures to help millions of households from rising energy costs. These measures include a £150 council tax energy rebate. The Government is providing funding for billing authorities to give all households in England whose primary residence is valued in council tax bands A-D a one off council tax energy rebate payment of £150. This payment will operate outside the council tax system, using council tax lists to identify eligible households.
- 1.2 The Government will also provide funding for billing authorities to operate a separate discretionary fund for households in need who would not otherwise be eligible. These could include for example individuals on low incomes who live in properties valued in bands E-H.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to update members on the current situation regarding our administration of this rebate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. To note the contents of this report
- 2.2. To note that details of the separate discretionary scheme will follow at the next scheduled Strategy & Resources Committee in May 2022.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The main scheme will commence during April and this report gives an overview of how this will be administered.
- 3.2. To highlight that details for the discretionary scheme are not yet available but the proposal will mirror other district councils within Devon.

4. REPORT

- 4.1. The Government recognises that many households will need support to deal with the rising costs of household bills in 2022-23, driven by increasing energy bills. They will provide funding for billing authorities to give all households in England whose primary residence is valued in council tax bands A-D a one off

council tax energy payment of £150. **Excluded from this are properties such as second and empty homes.** For the purpose of this rebate residents must be resident at the property as of 1 April 2022. This payment will operate outside the council tax system, using council tax lists to identify eligible households.

- 4.2. Each household who pays their council tax by direct debit will receive their payment directly into their bank account where bank account details match the details of the liable parties. Our intention is to make these payments in late April after April's debit-debit payments have been made to ensure that bank account details are up to date.
- 4.3. For customers who do not pay by direct debit or whose direct debit bank account details do not match the liable party (i.e where council tax is paid by a third party) our intention is to run an application process. However, in the meantime customers are being encouraged to set up direct debit instructions, to pay their council tax bill, where they have not already done so, as this will ensure that payments can be made as quickly as possible in April without the need for an application.
- 4.4. The Government has made it very clear that these payments are intended to assist households to pay their energy bills and that every effort should be made to make a payment however, as a last resort we can offer the option to non-direct-debit payers of crediting their council tax account. Our intention is to do this where we have been unable to make a direct payment as in 4.2 or when customers fail to make an application as in 4.3.
- 4.5. Government have produced a leaflet which has been included within all Council Tax bills for 2022/23 that were sent to customers in March 2022 (**attached at Appendix A**).
- 4.6. In addition to the main scheme, we are due to receive funding of £192,000 to operate a discretionary fund for households in need who are not eligible for payments under the main scheme. We are working with the other Devon District Councils to devise a scheme that will involve a common approach across the County. This scheme will require member's approval which we propose to bring to the May committee.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. North Devon Council has been allocated total funding of £5,847,750 which includes £192,000 for the discretionary fund and £5,655,750 for the main scheme fund
- 5.2. Government recognises that the implementation of this policy will place an additional burden on local authorities. In accordance with the New Burdens doctrine the government have said that they will conduct an assessment of the expected reasonable additional costs associates with the implementation of the policy and will announce new burdens funding allocations in due course.



6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. (Please detail if there are/are not any equalities implications anticipated as a result of this report. If so, please complete the Equality Impact Assessment Summary form available on Insite and email to the Corporate and Community Services Team at equality@northdevon.gov.uk).

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Please undertake an Environmental Assessment and complete the checklist (EAC) form available on Insite. If there are no environmental implications arising from your proposals please state that there are none. If after completion of the assessment there are environmental implications please provide a brief summary. If you require any further information please contact the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer. Email completed EACs to donna.sibley@torridge.gov.uk.

7.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the proposals in this report.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1. The commercialisation agenda: Neutral

8.2. Improving customer focus: Positive; it is essential that the Council provides this support to the many households that need financial assistance to deal with rising cost of household bills driven by increasing energy bills.

8.3. Regeneration or economic development : Neutral

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. Article of Part 3 Annexe 1 paragraph: Part 3 Annex 4

9.2. Delegated power

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

10.1. This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1. The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

12.1. The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Julie Dark Revenues and Benefits Manager