

# Surrey Heath Borough Council

## Executive

19 July 2022

---

### The Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme 2022-23

<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Robin Perry – Finance & Customer Services Portfolio
<b>Strategic Director/Head of Service</b>	Bob Watson
<b>Report Author</b>	Robert Fox – Revenues and Benefits Manager
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Date Portfolio Holder signed off the report</b>	6 July 2022
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All

---

#### Summary and purpose

To consider and agree a scheme to allocate the discretionary fund to support other financially vulnerable energy bill payers not covered under the Government's main Energy Bills Rebate scheme.

#### Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that

- (i) the Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme, as set out at Annex A to this report, be approved; and
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Finance & Customer Service in consultation with the Finance & Customer Service Portfolio Holder, to distribute any remaining funding to any specific identified vulnerable group as a credit to their Council Tax account by the end of November 2022.

#### 1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 In February 2022 the government announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills. The scheme includes a £150 rebate to all properties in council tax band A-D with criteria set by the government (the main scheme).
- 1.2 The announcement includes a discretionary fund to support other financially vulnerable energy bill payers not covered under the main scheme. This report sets out a local scheme to comply with the government guidance.

## **2. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 Surrey Heath has been allocated discretionary funding of £136,500 to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living, but not eligible for the main energy rebate scheme. All payments of this funding have to have been made prior to the 30 November 2022, which is the deadline for the scheme.
- 2.2 Councils can decide locally how best to use the funding to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living. This could include providing top up funding the most vulnerable households in bands A to D and to households living in property valued in council tax bands E to H that are on income related benefits or those where the energy bills payers are liable for council tax.

## **3. Proposal and Alternative Options**

- 3.1 Return the funding to the government

## **4. Contribution to the Council's Five Year Strategy**

- 4.1 A discretionary scheme that seeks to help the those vulnerable residents in our Borough to meet their increased energy bills will contributes to the goals of the Health and Quality of life arm of our five year strategy

## **5. Resource Implications**

- 5.1 The scheme is funded by the government with a one-off cash limited amount of £136,500 and the government requires unallocated monies as of 30 November 2022 will be returned.
- 5.2 The proposed delegated powers for the balance of any unspent monies will ensure that a maximum amount of funding is distributed to the vulnerable in the borough.
- 5.3 The government has provided New Burdens funding of £35,999 to cover the administrative cost of the whole scheme.
- 5.4 The staff time needed to deliver this scheme has been taken as an additional burden on existing staff at no additional cost to Surrey Heath.
- 5.5 Software has been purchased to deliver the core scheme and additional expenditure will be incurred to set up this discretionary element

## **6. Section 151 Officer Comments:**

- 6.1 No additional matters arising.

## **7. Legal and Governance Issues**

- 7.1 The scheme is discretionary but the guidance on qualifying core criteria has been specified by the government as detailed in the report.
- 7.2 The Universal Credit (Energy Rebate Scheme Disregard) Regulations 2022 confirm that any discretionary payments do not adversely impact the calculation of universal credit.

## **8. Monitoring Officer Comments:**

- 8.1 No matters arising.

## **9. Other Considerations and Impacts**

### **Environment and Climate Change**

- 9.1 Surrey Heath declared a climate change emergency on 9 October 2019 and pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 9.2 The claim process for the Energy Rebate is by default online, all payments are made by BACS and notification of the payment is by email, reducing the carbon footprint impact.

### **Equalities and Human Rights**

- 9.3 The scheme has to be within the guidance set out by the government and is aimed at those in receipt of Council Tax Support or other benefits.
- 9.4 There are no wider specific direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report.

### **Risk Management**

- 9.5 The discretionary scheme has been costed against our council tax database. Allowing for 100% take up, the value of the payments made will not exceed the government funding provided.

### **Community Engagement**

- 9.6 No matters arising.

## **Annexes**

Annex A - Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme 2022-23

## **Background Papers**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities guidance issued to Local Authorities can be access from the link below

[Support for energy bills - the council tax rebate 2022-23: billing authority guidance](#)