

**Cheltenham Borough
Council
Discretionary Council Tax
Energy Rebate Scheme
Phase 2
July 2022**

1. 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. General eligibility criteria

- 2.1. The Council is able to use the discretionary funding to support other households who on 1 April 2022 are either council taxpayers or energy bill payers, but are not covered by the main Energy Rebate scheme.
- 2.2. The effective date for the discretionary scheme is 1st April 2022 and eligibility will be determined based on the position at the end of that day.
- 2.3. Households will be eligible for one payment of £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. 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. Phase one of the scheme will be available for eligible households to apply from 24 June 2022 to 30 September 2022
 - a) Council tax payers in bands E – H that are in receipt of council tax support
 - b) Council tax payers in bands F – H that are in receipt of a disabled band reduction (those in band E qualify for the main scheme)
 - c) Council tax payers in bands E – H that are in receipt of a carer or severely mentally impaired disregard

Phase two

3.3. A discretionary energy rebate payment of £150 will be available for the following eligible households to apply from 3 August 2022 to 30 September 2022

- a) Households that, as a result of a review, proposal or appeal which was made prior to the announcement on 3 February 2022, and is successful after 1st April 2022, are in council tax Bands A to D
- b) Households that are council tax payers in payers in bands E to H and are in receipt of housing benefit, but do not qualify for council tax support
- c) Residents who live in a House in Multiple Occupation and are not liable for council tax but are liable to pay the gas/electricity bills. To be eligible the applicant must provide evidence to show the property is their sole or main residence and has been since 1st April 2022 and payment that has been made for energy at the property within the last 3 months.

3.4. A top up payment £150, in addition to the main scheme payment will be available to the following eligible households

- a) Households that are council tax payers in payers in bands A to D and are in receipt of housing benefit, but do not qualify for council tax support.
- b) Households that are council tax payers and have become a new Universal Credit claimant between 26 May and 26 July 2022 and therefore not eligible for the Government's cost of living payment. Any new claimants eligible for the cost of living payment due to receiving other qualifying benefits are excluded
- c) Households that are council tax payers and the eligible person is in receipt of Contributory, or "new style", Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and therefore not eligible for the Government's cost of living payment. Any new claimants eligible for the cost of living payment due to receiving other qualifying benefits are excluded

3.5. Further phases of the scheme will be made available to households

4. 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. 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

- 5.5. 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

- 5.6. 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. Application process

- 6.1. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.