

REPORT TO:	FINANCE & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	9 JUNE 2022	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (CORPORATE RESOURCES)	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	ELIZABETH BARTON, elizabeth.barton@southderbyshire.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	£150 ENERGY REBATE: DISCRETIONARY SCHEME	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM12

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 The Committee approves the proposed £150 Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme Policy.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

2.1 To notify Committee of the receipt of £5,886,750 Energy Rebate funding that will be split across a Main Scheme and a Discretionary Scheme as follows:

Scheme	Value
Main Scheme	£5,734,200
Discretionary Scheme	£152,550
Total	£5,886,750

2.2 To note that the Main Scheme funding will be spent in line with the national prescribed scheme, as detailed at www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/energyrebate

2.3 To seek approval for the spend of the Discretionary Scheme funding in line with the policy detailed at Appendix A.

3.0 Executive Summary

3.1 The government has announced a package of support known as the Energy Rebate to help households with rising energy bills in 2022. This package is worth £9.1bn nationally.

3.2 South Derbyshire District Council is responsible for administering two schemes under this package of support:

- A £150 non-repayable energy rebate for households in Council Tax bands A – D. This is referred to as the Main Scheme.

- A non-refundable payment for households that are not eligible under the Main Scheme and are facing severe hardship. This is referred to as the Discretionary Scheme.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 The Main Scheme will be administered in direct accordance with the prescribed government guidelines, and as such a separate policy document has not been devised at a local council level.
- 4.2 The Main Scheme adheres to the following national rules and guidance: [Support for Energy Bills - The Council Tax Rebate 2022-23: Billing Authority Guidance Published 23 February 2022](#) and full details are listed at www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/energyrebate.
- 4.3 The government has provided local councils with some flexibility on how to deliver the Discretionary Scheme in each locality. In order to distribute the funding a draft policy document has been created for the Discretionary Scheme, which is detailed at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 The Discretionary Scheme funding provided will support up to 1,017 payments of £150, although the District Council does have some discretion over award amounts, so payment amounts, and number of payments could differ.
- 4.5 A £150 payment will first be automatically applied to individuals who were in occupation of a Band E – H property within South Derbyshire, where they were the liable taxpayer on 1 April 2022, and the property is their sole or main residence, and they:
- Are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, or
 - Are in receipt of a Disabled Band Reduction, or
 - Are exempt from Council Tax under class U due to a determination of being Severely Mentally Impaired in accordance with The Council Tax (Discount Disregards) Order 1992 (as amended), or
 - Are in receipt of a student exemption or student disregard, or
 - Are in receipt of a carers' disregard.
- 4.6 Customers who qualify under the criteria and pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit (and have made a payment since 1 April 2022) will receive payment directly into their bank account. All other customers will receive a credit to their Council Tax account.
- 4.7 Based on system analysis it is estimated that this will see £30,000 awarded to approximately 200 residents/households.
- 4.8 Once these awards have been made, the Council will also consider applications from residents, who are the liable taxpayer, and who moved into a Band A – H property after 1 April 2022 and before 31 October 2022, and have not previously been awarded a Energy Rebate payment, under either the Main or Discretionary Scheme, within or outside the district, and are:
- In receipt of a Council Tax Reduction, or
 - In receipt of a Disabled Band Reduction, or

- Exempt from Council Tax under class U due to a determination of being Severely Mentally Impaired in accordance with The Council Tax (Discount Disregards) Order 1992 (as amended), or
- In receipt of a student exemption or student disregard, or
- In receipt of a carers' disregard, or
- Occupying a property due to fleeing from domestic violence, or
- A Care Leaver in accordance with The Children (Leaving Care) Act, or
- A registered Foster Carer, or
- Are in receipt of a Ukrainian £350 thank you payment, or
- Have a member of the household who is in receipt of a disability or age-related benefit such as:
 - Disability Living Allowance.
 - Personal Independence Payment.
 - Employment and Support Allowance.
 - Attendance Allowance.
 - Universal Credit with either limited capability for work or work-related activity elements.
 - Pension Credit, or
- Use medical equipment regularly that requires recharging, such as home dialysis machines, stairlifts, sleep apnoea machines etc. We may carry out a home visit in such circumstances and may require evidence.

4.9 The District Council will also consider applications, on a case-by-case basis, from the following:

- Landlords (Band E - H) whose tenants pay their energy bills within their rent and the landlord has not increased the rental charges since January 2022 onwards. Evidence will be requested.
- Tenants who live in a House in Multiple Occupation (any band) and are directly responsible for their energy bills. In such circumstances one payment per property (not payment per tenant) may be payable.

4.10 The government has made provision in its guidance to allow councils to award additional funding to people in extreme financial difficulty, even if they have already received a main scheme payment. As such, anyone who does not fit the criteria set out at 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the policy document but is facing significant financial difficulty, may approach the district council for their case to be considered.

4.11 In the case of **severe financial hardship**, the Council will carry out a detailed financial hardship analysis and request evidence to back up any claim. Such awards will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be individually authorised by the Council's Section 151 officer.

4.12 In cases where **exceptional medical hardship** is shown (for example the case of customers who use medical equipment that requires significant energy usage), the authority has the discretion to increase individual payments. In such circumstances the authority will require evidence of energy usage and home visits will take place regarding medical equipment, also to check whether the customers could be eligible for any other support. Higher awards will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be individually authorised by the Council's Section 151 officer.

- 4.13 Based on the remaining funds, this element of the scheme will support awards up to approx. 800 further residents/households at £150, or fewer if higher awards are approved. Applications will be assessed on a first-come first-served basis, and incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- 4.14 When the funding has been fully spent, no further awards will be made even if an applicant would have been eligible.
- 4.15 Should the Council receive a significantly higher number of applications at the beginning of the scheme than the fund can support, smaller awards may be considered. Decisions on smaller awards will be delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer.
- 4.16 Applications, and all required evidence, must have been submitted no later than 31 October 2022. Any applications received after this date, or any applications that have outstanding evidence that is received after this date, will not be processed.
- 4.17 Where a customer has to apply for a rebate (vs an auto award – see 4.6), all payments will be made to the customer's Council Tax account.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council has been awarded £57,995 funding to support distribution of the Main and Discretionary Scheme.
- 5.2 The funding will be fully spent on the postage, system enhancements and online forms required to deliver both schemes. It will not cover the provision of additional staff to support the delivery of the schemes. As such, the schemes will have to be delivered within existing council resources by the customer services and revenues teams. This could have a knock-on effect on customer contact times and processing times across both service areas.

6.0 Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 6.1 None.

Legal Implications

- 6.2 None.

Corporate Plan Implications

- 6.3 The Energy Rebate will support residents to live healthier lives.

Risk Impact

- 6.4 The Policy has been designed to negate any risks to the Council arising from the distribution of the Discretionary Scheme. The Main Scheme will be implemented in line with government guidelines, to negate any risk to the Council arising from its delivery.

7.0 Community Impact

Consultation

7.1 None required.

Equality and Diversity Impact

7.2 None.

Social Value Impact

6.5 The Energy Rebate will support residents to live healthier lives.

Environmental Sustainability

7.3 Not applicable.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 The Energy Rebate is positive for local residents. It will however need to be delivered within existing Council resources at a time of existing high demand. As such, it is likely that the delivery of the schemes will have a knock-on effect on customer contact times and processing times within the council tax and revenues function.

9.0 Background Papers

Appendix 1 – DRAFT: £150 Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme.