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Title of report: Discretionary Energy Rebate Policy 2022/23

Report : On 3 February 2022, the Government announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills and including two elements to be administered by Ipswich Borough Council.

- A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A – D, known as the Council Tax Energy Rebate; and
- £144 million of discretionary funding for billing authorities to support households who are in need but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate, known as the Discretionary Fund.

Ipswich Borough Council received £274,350 in discretionary funding. The policy sets out the administration process and qualification criteria for entitlement to the discretionary funding. Depending in take-up there will be up to 3 phases

Phase 1

Households liable to pay Council Tax in a property and it was your sole or main residence on 1 April 2022 and

- o In Valuation Bands E-H on the 1 April 2022, and you are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction or
- o In Valuation Bands E-H on the 1 April 2022 and in you are in receipt of a discount or exemption due to a member of the household suffering from severe mental impairment or
- o In Valuation Bands F-H on the 1 April 2022 and you receive Disabled Band Reduction.

Households who meet the following criteria can also apply for a Discretionary Energy Payment

- o Households who, on the 1st April 2022, live in a property within the Ipswich Borough Council boundary
- o Council Tax for your home is paid by the property owner or you live in a house of multiple occupation (HMO)
- o The property is in bands A to H
- o The property owner or you are not eligible under the main Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme for this property
- o You are liable to pay rent
- o You pay the energy bill
- o You are in receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit

Phase 2

In Council Tax bands A – D Have liability for rent on 1st April 2022, but not Council Tax, and can provide evidence to the Council that they are responsible for energy bills (gas, electricity etc) and are not in receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. Up to £150
Applicants in houses of multiple occupation will receive £75

Phase 3

In Council Tax bands A – H Apportion the remaining funding to top-up the amount received by households in receipt of a Council Tax Reduction on 1st April 2022.

What evidence/data is being used to support this equality analysis? Please select all that apply.: Knowledge from the team, data from the Council Tax Reduction scheme and Council Tax discount, exemptions and reductions, feedback from the citizen advice

Service area: SRP (Council Tax)

Corporate Manager: Justin Jupp

Corporate Manager email: Justin.Jupp@ipswich.gov.uk

Links to supporting documents where available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-council-tax-rebate-2022-23-billing-authority-guidance/support-for-energy-bills-the-council-tax-rebate-2022-23-billing-authority-guidance>

Please upload any supporting documents: Ipswich Discretionary Energy Rebate Policy v1.5.docx

What is proposed?: The introduction of a discretionary energy rebate policy that set out the administration and qualifying criteria for the allocation of the £274,350 provided by Central Government

Why are the changes being introduced?: Government Policy

On 3 February 2022, the Government announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills and including two elements to be administered by Ipswich Borough Council.

- A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A – D, known as the Council Tax Energy Rebate; and
- £144 million of discretionary funding for billing authorities to support households who are in need but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate, known as the Discretionary Fund.

The Government have stipulated Councils can determine how best to use their Discretionary Fund to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living, in consideration of paragraphs 36 – 40 of the guidance. Where councils consider it the best means of supporting those in financial difficulty, they can use the discretionary fund to offer carefully targeted 'top-up' payments to the most vulnerable households in bands A - D (for example, those on means tested benefits), or to offer support exceeding £150 per household under their discretionary scheme. The Government expects that all support from the Discretionary Fund is targeted towards those most

likely to be suffering hardship as a result of the rising cost of living. Allocations from the Discretionary Fund should be spent by 30 November 2022. Any remaining funding will be required to be repaid to government.

What evidence is being used to support this Equality Impact Assessment, and how is it being used?: Knowledge from the team in respect of the data held about households. Feedback from the citizen advice in respect of the qualifying criteria.

How will this change be implemented?: A press release and social media campaign will promote the scheme. Where know a letter will also be sent to potential qualifier promoting the scheme

Age: Positive

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: It is considered that this policy will have a positive impact on people of any age that meet the qualifying criteria and are responsible for the payment of the energy bill for their home and will not negatively impact on people of particular ages or ranges of ages that fall outside of the scope of the policy.

Disability: Positive

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: Those households in receipt of Council Tax Disabled Band Reduction excluded from the Government's mandatory scheme due to being in bands F - H, are being supported through the discretionary scheme.

Marriage & Civil Partnership: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: Marital or Civil partnership status is not a factor in determining eligibility to this scheme as it's not a characteristic that requires greater assistance when assessing support.

Race: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: Race is not a factor in determining eligibility to this scheme as it's not a characteristic that requires greater assistance when assessing support.

Pregnancy & Maternity: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: Pregnancy alone is not a factor in the current assessment of Council Tax Reduction, or this scheme, as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires a higher level of support.

Religion or Belief: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: We do not hold data on religion or belief within our Council Tax or Council Tax Reduction (CTR) records. Religion and belief is not a factor in any part of the assessment of CTR, or this scheme, as it is not

considered to be a characteristic which requires greater assistance when assessing support.

Gender Reassignment: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: We hold no data on our Council Tax system to identify the names or numbers of current CTR applicants who share this protected characteristic. Gender reassignment is not a factor in any part of the assessment of CTR, or this scheme, and it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires greater assistance when assessing support.

Sex: Positive

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: Gender will not be a direct factor in any part of the assessment of CTR, or this scheme, as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires greater assistance when assessing support.

For both men and women that are in receipt of CTR and are responsible for the payment of home energy bills the impact of this scheme is expected to be positive and will not negatively impact those within this group that fall outside of its scope

Sexual Orientation: No impact

Please provide an explanation of this impact and actions to mitigate any adverse impact, or further promote positive impact.: We do not hold details of people's sexual orientation on our Council Tax records. Sexual orientation is not a factor in any part of the assessment of CTR, or this scheme, as it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires a higher level of support.

I can confirm the report does meet Ipswich Borough Council's equality objectives: I can confirm the report does meet Ipswich Borough Council's equality objectives

The report helps us to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment & victimisation' in the following way(s): The policy is open to all households in the Ipswich Borough Council boundary who meet the qualifying criteria.

The report helps us to 'advance equality of opportunity...' in the following way(s): The policy is open to all households in the Ipswich Borough Council boundary who meet the qualifying criteria.

The policy helps us to 'foster good relations...' in the following way(s): It supports households impacted by increased energy costs that are excluded from the Government's mandatory scheme

The new provisions will be reviewed in the following way(s): The funding has to be spent by the 30th November. Progress in respect of paying out this funding will be monitored on a weekly basis. The policy will be reviewed if demand for the funding is low. The Government are also undertaking a monthly data collection exercise to monitor the scheme.
