



**NEW FOREST DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**DISCRETIONARY ENERGY REBATE
SCHEME**

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1. Background

- 1.1 On 3 February 2022 the government announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills, worth £9.1 billion in 2022-23. This includes:
- A £200 discount on their energy bill this autumn for domestic electricity customers in Great Britain. This will be paid back automatically over the next 5 years.
 - A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in council tax bands A to D, known as the Council Tax Rebate.
 - £144 million of discretionary funding for billing authorities to support households who are in need but may not be eligible for the Council Tax Energy Rebate, known as the Discretionary Fund.
- 1.2 This policy covers the administration of the Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Fund and the scheme has been designed based on general guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Government has determined that Council's can decide locally how to best make use of the discretionary funding to provide support to households suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living or where they are not eligible for the main energy rebate scheme.
- 1.3 Payments made under the Discretionary Fund are to be passed on directly as one-off payments to households that the Council has chosen to support.
- 1.4 In view of the limited amounts available for the Discretionary Scheme, should funding be exhausted, the Council reserves the right to either reduce the awards available or to close the scheme.

2. Funding

- 2.1 Government has provided funding to the Council and all Discretionary Fund payments must be made by 30 November 2022.
- 2.2 The Council will promote this scheme to fully utilise the funding to maximise the support given to residents. Where a resident is not eligible for the energy rebate we will signpost to alternative support if appropriate and available.

3. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for the discretionary energy rebate

- 3.1 To be eligible for a discretionary payment the applicant must be occupying a property as their main residence on 1 April 2022, and

- a) be liable for council tax, in receipt of Council Tax Support and occupying a property in council tax bands E to H
- b) be liable for council tax and occupying a property in Bands E to H and is exempt from council tax due to being severely mentally impaired, a student, a care leaver aged under 25, or an annex occupied by a dependant relative.
- c) be liable for council tax and occupying a property in Bands E to H and receive a carer or severe mental impairment disregard discount
- d) does not pay council tax directly to the Council and can provide evidence to the Council that they are responsible for paying energy bills, e.g. electricity.
- e) were in emergency accommodation on 1 April 2022 following a placement by our Housing Team to prevent homelessness and have become liable for council tax prior to 1 October 2022 and occupy a property in any council tax band and have not received an energy rebate payment.
- f) have had a banding appeal decision from the Valuation Office Agency before 1 October 2022 and the band is now between A to D

3.2 Residents occupying armed forces accommodation are exempt from council tax and will not be eligible.

4. The amount to be paid and application process

Scheme A

- 4.1 Where an applicant meets the eligibility criteria, the one-off payment will be £150.00. For 3.1 d a household is defined as someone with a separate liability to pay rent to a non-resident landlord within the same property.
- 4.2 Where the Council considers the eligibility criteria is met and the holds the bank account details, payments will be made directly to that bank account.
- 4.3 Where an application is required, applications will be via an eform. As with the application form itself, evidence can be submitted electronically. For those unable to do this, support is available. Payments will be made direct to the applicant's nominated bank account once all the evidence is provided and pre-payment checks are completed.
- 4.4 For eligibility under 3.1 d the applicant must provide evidence of bank statements to confirm their bank account details and evidence to confirm the payment of energy bills.
- 4.5 The Council will undertake pre-payment checks before making any payment. To ensure all those eligible to the discretionary energy rebate receive the support, where the Council considers a resident meets the eligibility criteria but has not made an application, the energy rebate will be credited to their council tax account, if applicable.

4.6 The closing date for applications for this scheme is 30 September 2022.

Scheme B

4.7 Should there be any residual funding after making payments to those in Scheme A the Council will provide a “top-up” to all those in receipt of Council Tax Support in all council tax bands by evenly distributing the funding available.

4.8 Payments will be made by 30 November 2022.

5 Notification of Decisions

5.1 Applications will be considered by officers of the Council and all decisions made by the Council shall be notified to the applicant either in writing or by email.

6 Implications for other benefits and reductions

6.1 The Council has been advised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that the discretionary energy rebate will be disregarded for the purposes of all means- tested benefits.

6.2 Any payment made under this scheme shall not affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

6.3 Any award is non-taxable and there is no need for recipients to notify HMRC of any amount received.

7 Review of Decisions

7.1 Whilst there is no statutory appeal process, the Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant’s request for an appeal of its decision by the Service Manager – Revenue and Benefits.

7.2 All such requests must be made in writing to the Council, within 10 working days of the Council’s decision, and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant’s appeal. The application will be reconsidered as soon as practicable, and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision.

8 Complaints

8.1 The Council’s ‘Complaints Procedure’ (available on the Councils website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about the administration of this scheme.

9 Managing the risk of fraud

9.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain payments will

face prosecution and any payment issued will be recovered from them and this may also include other recovery costs. The Council will actively participate in any exercises to detect and prevent fraud.

10 Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

- 10.1 If it is established that any energy rebate payment has been made incorrectly due to incorrect information provided to the Council by an applicant or their representative(s), the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

11 Delegated Powers

- 11.1 The Council has implemented this scheme in line with Government requirements and guidance.
- 11.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Service Manager – Revenue and Benefits is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it continues to meet the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Central Government guidance.

12 Data Protection and use of data

- 12.1 All information and data provided by applicants shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.