

Council Tax (Energy Bills) Rebate Discretionary Policy

Approved by:



Strategic Director of Finance and Governance

Date: October 2022

Background

On 03 February 2022 the Government announced that it would provide local authorities with sufficient funds to make a mandatory payment of £150 to households living in a property banded A,B,C or D to assist with the impact of rising fuel costs.

It also announced that further funding would be made available to run a discretionary scheme to make awards available to persons not entitled to an award of £150.

All unspent funds must be returned to the Government and the Council is determined to ensure that all funding available under the discretionary scheme is distributed to residents. This means that it will run out of money before the scheme officially ends on 30 November 2022.

Following the completion of the exercise to make payments of £150 to residents entitled to an award under the mandatory scheme, the Council is now beginning to make payments under the discretionary scheme which has a total of £776,250 funding available.

Qualifying Criteria

The Council has decided against having a general applications-based scheme. This is because the complexity of such a scheme would be disproportionately expensive in terms of resources and would exclude residents not in a position to make a claim. The Council holds significant information regarding its most disadvantaged residents and is therefore in a position to determine the groups most in need of assistance under this scheme.

Awards will be made in the following circumstances:

Qualifying Criteria for Bands E to H	Award (£)
Persons who are in receipt of Council Tax Support (CTS) because they have limited means.	£150
Persons who are in receipt of a 2 nd adult reduction who would otherwise have had an entitlement to CTS	£150
Persons receiving either a 25% discount on the grounds that at least one resident of the property is severely mental impaired.	£150
Persons in receipt of assistance under one or both of the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment or Discretionary Council Tax Hardship schemes	£150
Persons mistakenly awarded a payment under the mandatory scheme when there was no authority to make such a payment, where it is deemed unreasonable to recover the payment.	£150
Persons who would have received an award under the mandatory scheme but have not received a payment.	£150
Persons resident in properties banded E-H on 1 April 2022 who did not receive an award under any of the other provisions of this scheme which will be approximately £65. ¹	Dependant on numbers

Qualifying Criteria for Bands E to H	Award (£)
¹ In the event that it becomes clear that the Council will be unable to distribute the full amount of the grant, a further award will be made to households falling within this category to ensure that all funds are distributed to Waltham Forest residents.	

Exclusionary Criteria

No person shall be entitled to an award under this scheme if;

1. They or their partner have already received an award under the mandatory scheme whether in Waltham Forest or any other borough.
2. Another person has received an award under the mandatory scheme which they or their partner ought to have benefited from, whether in Waltham Forest or any other borough.
3. They are resident in a House in Multiple Occupation (shared house) and another person has received an award under this or the mandatory scheme in respect of that property.
4. The funds available under this scheme have been exhausted.
5. None of the occupants have a responsibility to pay utility bills and/or housing costs

In the event that a person falls within more than one of the categories listed above they will not be entitled to more than one award.

Payment

Payment of £150 will be made by way of a Post Office voucher which will be sent to the person responsible for paying the Council Tax. If it is not cashed within one month of the date of issue, the voucher will be cancelled and replaced with a credit to the relevant Council Tax account.

Payments of £62 will be made by way of a credit to the relevant Council Tax account.

Challenging Decisions

A person may challenge a failure to make an award, or the amount of an award under this scheme by emailing revenue.services@walthamforest.gov.uk.

Any challenge must be received by 21 November 2022 and must state the grounds on which a person believes the award should have been made or, as the case may be, should have been made for a higher amount.

Equalities statement

The Council will, in all cases, endeavour to ensure that all members of the community are able to receive assistance offered by this scheme regardless of race, gender, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status and/or disability. It will ensure that the decision making process is fair and that no person is disadvantaged by virtue of their membership of one or more of the groups listed in this paragraph.

Anti-fraud statement

This scheme is discretionary and subject to significant financial constraints. The making of a false declaration with a view to obtaining or increasing an award may amount to a criminal

offence under the Fraud Act 2006. Where the council suspects that an offence may have been committed, the matter will be investigated and appropriate action taken, including the initiation of criminal proceedings.