

# Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Policy

**Version: Final**

**Policy Date: 3 May 2022**

**Strategy date: 3 May – 30 Nov 2022**

## Document Control

<b>Organisation</b>	Copeland Borough Council
<b>Title</b>	Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Policy
<b>Version</b>	1
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<b>Filename</b>	Council Tax Rebate Discretionary Policy
<b>Owner</b>	Steven Brown
<b>Subject</b>	
<b>Protective Marking</b>	
<b>Review Date</b>	N/A

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### Revision History

Version Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	Description of Revision
1	May 2022	J Sinnott	Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Policy

### Document Approval

Version	Approved By	Date
	Human Resources	
	Corporate Leadership Team	
	Trade Union Consultation	
	Executive	
	Full Council	

### Document Distribution

This policy is to be distributed to all staff and elected members of Copeland Borough Council and placed on the Council's Intranet Site. A copy must also be provided to contractors and 3<sup>rd</sup> parties undertaking work on Copeland Borough Council premises.

### Contributors

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## Contents

<b>Title .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Date .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Document Control .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Revision History .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Document Approval .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Document Distribution .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Contributors .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Purpose .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Policy Benefits .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Policy Details Including Procedure .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Monitoring of Policy Adherence .....</b>	<b>9</b>

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The government has announced a package of support to help households with rising energy bills. This consists of:
  - A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in council tax bands A-D, known as the Council Tax Rebate (core scheme).
  - £144 million of discretionary funding for councils to support households who are in need but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate, known as the Discretionary Fund.
- 1.2 The allocation for Copeland Borough Council's Discretionary Fund is £140,400.

## **2. Policy Benefits**

- 2.1 This policy sets the criteria for how the discretionary fund will be distributed within Copeland.

## **3. Introduction**

- 3.1 The government recognises the need to support other energy bill payers who are not eligible under the terms of the core scheme and has provided every billing authority with a share of £144 million to devise a local discretionary scheme.
- 3.2 Councils can determine locally how best to make use of the funding to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living.
- 3.3 Copeland Borough Council's policy aims to support the most vulnerable members of society, who are either unable to access the core scheme due to the council tax band of their property, in particular those on a low income and in receipt of a council tax reduction, a disability reduction and/or an exemption or reduction due to a severe mental impairment. In addition, the policy aims to make a top up payment to bands A-B in receipt of council tax reduction.

## **4. Policy Details Including Procedures**

### **4.1 Eligible Households**

- 1) Council taxpayers whose sole or main residence is in a band E-H property on the 1 April 2022, and they are in receipt of a (means tested) council tax reduction at the property.

Award under discretionary scheme £150

- 2) Council taxpayers whose sole or main residence is in a band A-B property on the 1 April 2022, and they are in receipt of (means tested) Council Tax Reduction at that property. This does not include single person discount. A top-up payment will be made.
- 3) Residents of properties as at the 1 April 2022 that have been excluded from the core scheme (due to not being liable for Council Tax) and where responsibility for Council Tax falls with, for example, a housing provider, charity or non-resident owner and the residents are directly responsible for energy costs. Evidence of occupation and direct payment of energy costs will need to be provided in support of the application. Only one £150 payment will be made per chargeable dwelling to the person responsible for the energy bills.

Award under discretionary scheme £150

- 4) Council taxpayers whose sole or main residence is in a band E-H on 1 April 2022, and they have a physical or mental impairment that is substantial and long term, for example, those in receipt of a reduction from Council Tax due to severe mental impairment or disability reduction.

Award under discretionary scheme £150

- 5) Council taxpayers who do not qualify for either the core scheme or the discretionary scheme who are able to evidence financial hardship.

- 4.2 The effective date for the Discretionary scheme is 1 April 2022. The Council will determine eligibility based on the position at the end of the day on 1 April 2022

## **5.0 Ineligible Households**

- 5.1 The following are ineligible for funding under this scheme:

- With the exception of 4.1 (2) above, no discretionary payment will be made to a household that has already received a payment under the Council Tax Rebate Core scheme.
- Empty properties that are not a person(s) sole or main residence
- Properties with no permanent residents, or someone's second home
- Class M (Students living in halls of residence)
- Class O (Ministry of Defence accommodation) as the MoD is providing separate cost of living support

## 6. Payment Amount

- 6.1 Awards under the Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary fund are cash limited, therefore expenditure will not exceed the amount shown under 1.2 of this policy.
- 6.2 If all eligibility criteria are met in full, payment will be made to the household as defined within section 4 above.
- 6.3 With the exception of 4.1 (2) only one discretionary payment will be made per household regardless of the number of occupants or liable council taxpayers.
- 6.4 Where the Council holds a current direct debit instruction for a liable council taxpayer of an eligible household, payment will be made using the bank account details held.
- 6.5 Where the Council does not hold a current direct debit instruction for an eligible household, an application process will be available. A pre-payment check of the bank account provided will be made.
- 6.7 The Council's Director of Financial Resources (s151 Officer) will have delegated authority to ensure that the scheme remains fit for purpose, and to ensure support is targeted to those suffering from financial hardship due to the rising cost of living.
- 6.6 Copeland Borough Council will maintain a record of expenditure under this scheme.

## **7. Application and Information Required to Support Applications**

- 7.1 Payments will be made automatically if the Council has sufficient information to determine eligibility and there is a live direct debit instruction held. Where that is not the case, an online application will be available.
- 7.2 If an application is required as defined under section 4.1 (3), the following supporting evidence may be required:
- Evidence of occupation and direct payment of energy costs
- 7.3 The council reserves the right to request additional evidence from the household, if required.

## **8. Notification and Review of Decisions**

- 8.1 All decisions made regarding the discretionary scheme shall be notified to the liable person either in writing or by email.
- 8.2 If a request is refused, the council will accept a taxpayer's request for a review of its decision. All requests must be made in writing to the Council within one month of the refusal and state the reasons why the taxpayer is aggrieved with the decision. The Director of Financial Resources (s151 Officer) will be consulted.

## **9. Recovery of Amounts Paid Incorrectly**

- 9.1 If it is established that any payment has been made incorrectly due to an error, misrepresentation or incorrect information has been provided to the Council by the taxpayer or any other person, the Council will recover the amount in full.

## **12. Fraud**

- 12.1 Copeland Borough Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud – and any business caught falsifying their records to gain relief may be guilty of fraud under the Fraud Act 2006.

- 12.2 The governments Grant Management and Counter Fraud Function has been made available to assist local authorities in identifying fraud swiftly.
- 12.3 Residents should be aware that the Council will not call them to request bank details to make the energy rebate payment. Payments will be made into a bank account, where we hold details, or residents will be asked by letter to supply the details.

### 13. Monitoring & Review

- 13.1 This policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate to ensure it remains fit for purpose. In accordance with government guidance, the discretionary scheme will close on 30 November 2022.

### 14. Data Protection and Sharing Information

- 14.1 The information provided by the taxpayer, or applicant on their behalf, will be treated as confidential in accordance with the law. The Council has a duty to protect the public funds it administers and may use information held where the law permits, including but not limited to the prevention and detection of fraud. This may include sharing information with other council services and other organisations who administer public funds. Further information can be found here: [cbc\\_privacy\\_statement\\_29\\_3\\_22.pdf \(copeland.gov.uk\)](#)

### 15. Government Guidance

- 15.1 The full government guidance can be viewed here:

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