



**Melton
Borough
Council**

Council Tax Rebate – Support for Energy Costs Discretionary Scheme

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1. Background to Council Tax Rebate – Support for Energy Costs

- 1.1 In February 2022, the Government announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills this included
 - A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in council tax bands A to D, known as the Council Tax Rebate. (Core Scheme)
 - £144 million of discretionary funding for billing authorities to support households who are in need but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate (Discretionary Scheme)
- 1.2 The government recognises that many households will need support to deal with the rising cost of household bills in 2022-23, driven by increasing energy bills. While these rising costs will affect most households across the country, they are more likely to disproportionately affect those on lower incomes, who tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on utility bills.
- 1.3 Of the £144M discretionary funding made available to billing authorities, Melton Borough Council has been awarded £73,050.

2. The Discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme

- 2.1 The government recognises that billing authorities will wish to provide support to other energy bill payers who are not eligible under the terms of the core scheme (i.e., the £150 non-repayable rebate in 1.1 above).
 - 2.2 While Councils can determine locally how to make use of this funding to support those suffering financial hardship as a result of the rising cost of living, Government guidance issued to Councils in how this discretionary fund can be applied says 'This could include households living in property valued in bands E to H that are on income related benefits or those where the energy bills payers are not liable for council tax. 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 to D (for example, those on means tested benefits), or to offer discretionary support exceeding £150 per household.
 - 2.3 The Scheme will run until 30 November 2022. No discretionary payment will be made after this date even in the event that an award may otherwise have been made.
 - 2.4 It is for each local authority to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case whether, having regard to the guidance provided by the
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Government and the Council's own scheme. This policy meets this requirement.

3 Total Funding Available

3.1 The Government has set each council's funding allocation and the allocation to Melton is £73,050. This funding will be notionally allocated based upon a series of eligibility criteria listed in section 4 below

3.3 This is a cash limited sum. No additional funding will be made available by the Government. As any further relief would be a cost to the Council, once this pot of money has been used, no further relief will be awarded.

4 Who Will benefit from the Discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme?

4.1 Principles of the Discretionary Scheme

- Support will be directed towards people who do not qualify for the Core Scheme and are most likely to suffer from financial hardship due to the cost of living rises
- Support will be given to those who qualify under the Core Scheme but are considered to be the more vulnerable households in Bands A -D
- The Council can use any information which they hold to administer the rebate (for example to confirm eligibility or to make payments) where they are satisfied that they can lawfully use it under GDPR for administering the rebate. This may depend on the types of data and ways in which it is collected.

4.2 Eligibility to the fund

People eligible to be considered will:

- Be a resident of a property in the Melton Borough on 01 April 2022.

4.3 Criteria for awarding relief.

To support local people hardest hit, and to achieve the intentions laid down by Government, the following criteria will be used:

- Payment of £150 will be awarded to all those Council Tax Support claimants who live in Bands E-H who missed out on the core funding as they do not live in properties in Bands A to D
- A top-up payment will be made to all Council Tax Support claimants living in Bands A to D up to a limit of £25

- Where a property does not meet the criteria listed above an application for payment can still be made if funding is available and the applicant can demonstrate that:
 - They will suffer financial hardship to the increases in Energy costs
 - They would have met the conditions of the Core Scheme, but their property had not been Banded as of 01 April 2022 by the Valuation Office Agency at this date, or they had made an Appeal against the banding of their property prior to 4 February 2022 which would reduce the band within the A to D range

4.4 **Amount of relief to be awarded**

- Council Tax Support claimants who live in Bands E-H £150
- Council Tax Support claimants living in Bands A to D a top up of £25
- Other claims up to a maximum of £150
- It should be noted that the amounts above may be subject to change.

5 **How payment will be made**

- 5.1 Where the Council holds Bank account details, a payment will be made directly to the eligible recipient's bank account.
- 5.2 Where the Council does not hold bank account details, the Post Office – acting as an agent of the Council- will send a voucher which can be redeemed for Cash at any of the 11,000 Post Offices in the Country. Payment must be redeemed within 3 months of receiving a Voucher from the Post Office. The Voucher will fail to be valid after this date. No payment can be redeemed after 30 November 2022 even if a valid voucher has been issued.

6. **Application Process and Timescale**

- 6.1 The Council expects to start making payments to Council Tax Support claimants either in Bands E to H or the top-up payment either directly to a bank account or via the issuing of a letter or email from the Post Office in early October 2022.
- 6.2 Providing funds are still available an application window will be opened on 10 October 2022 until 4 November 2022.
- 6.3 The Council's application will set out the information required from applicants, which will be the minimum reasonably required to establish eligibility and enable a fair and equitable assessment of the funding.
- 6.4 The Council will individually assess and validate applications as they are received and may request further information should it be required. The pre-

payment checks may include confirming eligibility, against external sources available to the Council.

- 6.5 Successful applicants will be advised of any award and how and when it will be paid to them.

7. Appeals

- 7.1 Appeals against the non-award or the amount of an award will be heard by a panel of Senior Officers within the Council who were not part of the original application process.

Details of the appeals process will be made available on the Council's website.

8 Managing the Risk of Fraud

- 8.1 The Council and the Government will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any business or person caught falsifying their records or the information submitted to gain an award will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to clawback, as may relief paid in error.

- 8.2 The Council also reserves the right to use any details submitted by person (s) to check against national records and databases to highlight any potentially fraudulent activity.

9 Policy Review

- 9.1 This policy has been written in line with Government guidance and Local Priorities. It will be subject to dynamic review as circumstances dictate and in line with future clarifications and changes that may be announced by the Government.