



**Melton
Borough
Council**

**Council Tax Support Fund
Discretionary Scheme**

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Version No:	1.0
Date:	April 2023

APPROVALS:

Designation	Title	Date of Approval	Version
Director for Corporate Services			
Cabinet	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources		

DISTRIBUTION:

Title	Date of Issue	Version
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1. Background to Council Tax Support Fund

- 1.1 In December 2022, alongside the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement the Government announced £100m of additional funding for local authorities to support the most vulnerable households in England.
- 1.2 This funding will allow councils to deliver support to households already receiving council tax support, whilst also providing councils with the resources and flexibility to determine a local approach to support vulnerable households in their area.
- 1.3 Of the £100M funding made available to billing authorities, Melton Borough Council has been awarded £56,478.
- 1.4 The Government expects local authorities to use most of their funding allocations to reduce bills for current working age and pension age Council Tax Support claimants by up to £25. Where a net council tax liability is below £25 an award will only be made up to the amount that would result in a nil charge.
- 1.5 Councils can use their remaining allocation as they see fit to support vulnerable households with council tax bills. Initially from this funding all households in receipt of council tax support will be credited up-to £25 to their annual council tax bill, any remaining funding can be used by the council to fund a discretionary scheme.

2. The Discretionary Council Tax Support Fund

- 2.1 The Government recognises that existing support mechanisms vary locally, including council tax support schemes, discretionary council tax discount/hardship schemes and local welfare schemes. Councils will want to consider using a proportion of their allocation to establish their own local approach to helping economically vulnerable households with council tax bills
- 2.2 Local authorities should revisit their discretionary approach at intervals during the financial year, to ensure expenditure for 2023-24 remains within their allocation.
- 2.3 The Scheme will run until 31st March 2024. No discretionary payment will be made after this date even if 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 Government and the Council's own scheme. This policy meets this requirement.

3 Total Funding Available

- 3.1 After the initial payment is made in 1.4 above the remaining funding available will be used for the discretionary scheme. 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 fund has been used, no further relief will be awarded.

4. Eligibility to the fund

- 4.1 Be a resident of a property in the Melton Borough and liable to pay the council tax throughout the 2023-24 financial year (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024).
- 4.2 After any discounts, exemptions or council tax support still have an amount of council tax to pay for the 2023-24 financial year.

5. Criteria for awarding fund.

- 5.1 Support will be directed automatically towards people who start to receive council tax support for the first time in the 2023 – 24 financial year who did not receive an initial payment. Awards will be credited to the council tax bill up-to £25.00, no application will be required. Awards will be subject to funding being available at the time we identify eligibility for a payment from the fund. If a bill is reduced to nil because of a council tax support award no award will be granted.
- 5.2 Support will also be considered for vulnerable households and people in financial hardship, who do not receive council tax support or who require an additional payment on top of the £25 already received as outlined above. An application for a [Discretionary Council Tax Payment](#) will need to be made if this situation applies. Applications will then be decided as set out in the Discretionary Payment policy.

6. Amount of fund to be awarded

- 6.1 New Council Tax Support claimants who did not receive an initial payment will be awarded up-to £25.00.
- 6.2 Amounts for applications made to the [Discretionary Payment Scheme](#) will be decided when applying the criteria of that policy.

7 How payment will be made

- 7.1 Credits will be applied to the council tax bill.

8. Application Process and Timescale

- 8.1 The Council expects to start making automatic credits to council tax accounts for new council tax support claimants from April 2023. A new council tax bill will be issued displaying the credit that has been applied.
- 8.2 Payments will be made during the 2023-24 financial year for as long as the council has funds remaining, should funding be exhausted then no further applications can be considered
- 8.3 The Council will individually assess and validate applications made through the [discretionary scheme](#) in line with the schemes policy as they are received and may request further information should it be required. The checks undertaken may include confirming eligibility, against external sources available to the Council.

9. Appeals

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 Appeals should be made by email to cscbenefits@melton.gov.uk or in writing to the Benefits Team, Council Offices, Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray LE13 1GH.

10 Managing the Risk of Fraud

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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.

11 Policy Review

- 11.1 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.