



- B. Make a targeted payment for council tax support claimants in bands E-H in receipt of council tax support as of 1 April 2022 (i.e. that will not receive the rebate from the core scheme).
- C. Make an additional top up payment of £70 to existing working age council tax support claimants in receipt of council tax support as of 1 April 2022 (and who are continuing to claim council tax support as of 1 August 2022) and utilise any remaining balance for wider applications for support.
- D. Run an application process, against set criteria for support.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1. The recommended approach would be to progress both options B and C as set out in paragraph 2.4 above.

## **REPORT**

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.1. There is an opportunity to identify an approach that provides the maximum support to identifiable households needing additional support, that also enables funds to be distributed easily and quickly.
- 4.2. Failure to distribute the money in the time frame will result in funds being returned to Government, and pressure being put on other discretionary welfare fund streams.
- 4.3. There is a reputational risk to the Council if funds fail to be distributed within the available timeframe.

### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications to the Council as the proposal will ensure the discretionary fund is wholly contained within the funding allocation from Central Government.

### **6. Climate Change Appraisal**

- 6.1 There are no direct implications for climate change as a result of this report and full implications and considerations of climate change as a result of any changes to the approved approach will be reviewed at that time.

## 7. Background

- 7.1. In February 2022 the Government announced a package of support called the energy bills rebate. Part of this support was a £150 non-repayable rebate for households in council tax bands A-D known as the council tax energy rebate.
- 7.2. In addition to the core scheme the Government have provided £144m of discretionary funding to support those that do not meet the eligibility criteria of the main scheme. Shropshire Council have been allocated £0.584m of this fund.
- 7.3. The discretionary fund has to be spent by 30 November 2022. Any unspent funds must be returned to Government.
- 7.4. The options for consideration are detailed below.

### **A. Extend the core scheme to provide some support for residents bands E-H**

- The properties in Council Tax bands E-H are set out in the table below. These figures include empty properties and properties exempt from the main scheme.

Band	Properties
E	17,013
F	9,097
G	4,716
H	344

- To stay within the available funding envelope, the maximum award payable to residents in band E properties would be around £34 per property
- Given the low value of this arbitrary award and associated administration it is not recommended to progress this option.

### **B. Make a targeted payment for council tax support claimants in bands E-H in receipt of council tax support as of 1 April 2022.**

- There are estimated to be 471 council tax support claimants in bands E-H. To offer to extend the additional £150 energy rebate payment to these residents via the discretionary fund would utilise £71,000 of the available funding.
- It is recommended that this option is approved.

### **C. Make an additional top up payment to existing working age council tax support claimants in receipt of council tax**

**support as of 1 April 2022 and continuing to be in receipt of council tax support on 1 August 2022.**

- There are currently 8,205 pensioners claiming council tax support and 7,162 working age council tax support claimants. Pensioners are due to be paid £100 additional cost of living support from the Household Support Fund within the same timescales i.e., prior to the end of September 2022.
- Given this additional support to pensioners from the Household Support Fund, the discretionary fund could be used to offer a top up payment to working age claimants in receipt of council tax support as of 1 April 2022 and continuing to claim council tax support as of 1 August 2022 based on one of the levels set out below.

Level of Top Up	Estimated Cost	Discretionary Balance
£50	£0.358m	£0.226m
£60	£0.430m	£.0154m
£70	£0.501m	£0.083m

- In addition, bank details already obtained as part of the core scheme administration could be utilised, and where these are not held, targeted application letters could be sent. Any residents that had not responded prior to the 30 November 2022 cut-off date could have the top up credited to their council tax account.
- It is recommended that this option is approved.

**D. Run an application process, against set criteria for support**

- This option will require substantial additional resources and there would be a danger that the fund would not all be spent before the 30 November 2022 deadline.
- Given the logistics of this approach and associated administration it is not recommended to progress this option.

**8. Conclusion**

8.1. A combination of option B with option C would provide a targeted approach ensuring all funds can be allocated in a timely and reasonably efficient manner. The combined cost would be estimated as follows.

Band E-H council tax support claimants	£0.071m
£70 top up to all council tax support claimants	<u>£0.501m</u>

Estimated expenditure £0.572m

The recommended approach would leave around £12,000 of available funding held in a contingency to support any other residents in severe financial hardship via an application process. The estimated expenditure as recommended would allow a further 80 awards at £150.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)**

Cllr Gwilym Butler

**Local Member**

All

**Appendices**

None