

Runnymede Borough Council Council Tax Energy Rebate Policy

July 2022

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Introduction

The government announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills, worth £9.1 billion in 2022-23. This includes:

A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in council tax bands A to D, known as the Council Tax Rebate.

£144 million of discretionary funding for billing authorities to support households who are in need but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate, known as the Discretionary Fund.

The Council Tax Energy Rebate is intended to assist households with rising energy bills and payment is made under Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003.

Runnymede Borough Council has been allocated £169,800 to support families in Council Tax Bands E to H, and provide carefully targeted 'top-up' payments to the most vulnerable households in bands A to D. This is a cash limited (no top up) and unspent funds must be returned to the Government at the end of the scheme in November 2022.

Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow Runnymede to set up a local scheme for the granting of discretionary relief where such relief would be of benefit to the local community.

Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate

The government recognises that billing authorities may wish to provide support to other energy bill payers who are not eligible under the terms of the core scheme, or to provide carefully targeted 'top-up' payments to the most vulnerable households in bands A to D.

Occupants of class M (student halls) are ineligible for discretionary support, alongside occupants of property in exemption class O, where the Ministry of Defence will provide cost of living support.

This funding covers the period 01 April 2022 to 30 November 2022 inclusive.

Local Authority	Discretionary Fund (£)	Non-Discretionary Fund (£)	Total Fund (£)
Runnymede	169,800	3,193,050	3,362,850

Scope of the policy

Applications must be submitted by the resident and prepayment checks in line with the requirements of the main scheme are to be carried out on all applications.

Applications are invited until 30 September 2022. No rebate will be paid unless an application is completed and verification checks cleared.

Consistent with the main scheme, no award will be made to a local authority, a corporate body or other body such as a housing association, the government or governmental body.

The scheme is funded by the government and is designed to use all, but not exceed the available funding.

This policy aims to support households in Bands E to H where the residents are in receipt of council tax support.

The policy also provides at the same time as a top up to households in receipt of council tax support in Bands A to D. The Council has ensured that surplus funds remain to assist HMO households where they are exposed to rising energy prices in a similar way to other households.

Definitions

For the purpose of this grant (and without prejudice to other schemes):

For the purpose of the Discretionary Council Tax Rebate, a household is a person or group of persons occupying a single dwelling, as defined in section 3 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Bands E to H - This excludes a property that is valued in band E but has an alternative valuation band of band D, as a result of the disabled band reduction scheme, as they will have received a payment under the core rebate scheme.

Where Runnymede Borough council has reason to believe that the information they hold about the valuation list, liable taxpayer(s) or residents' circumstances in respect of 1 April 2022 is inaccurate, payment shall be withheld until reasonable steps have been taken to determine the correct information.

In receipt of council tax support means awarded a sum for the period 1 April 2022 and for a dwelling which is their sole or main residence at the time the application is made.

Eligibility for scheme

A £150 one-off payment to a liable council tax payer (or an occupant where the property is exempt) where they occupy a property which meets all of the following criteria on 1 April 2022.

Residents who are in receipt of council tax support for council tax property bands E-H under this policy will be entitled to a £150.00 rebate.

A top up for those on council tax support in bands A-D of £40.00. There will be no need to make an application if pensioners have already received their £150 payment under the core scheme. The Council will automatically award this top-up payment into bank accounts.

Applicants in council tax bands F, G or H who are excluded from council tax support and in receipt of a means tested Benefit will be able to claim £150 towards energy bills;

Eligible means tested benefits are:

- Universal Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income Based Job-Seeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance

Funding arrangements

Government has provided funding to the Council however all payments have to be made prior to the 30 November 2022 which is the deadline for the scheme.

Award amounts

Residents in receipt of council tax support for council tax property band E-H under this policy will be entitled to a £150.00 rebate.

Houses in Multiple Occupation in bands A-H where the landlord has been billed council tax and the residents can evidence liability for energy costs under this policy will be entitled to a £150.00 rebate.

A top up for residents on council tax support in bands A-D of £40.00. There will be no need to make an application if they have already received their £150 payment under the core scheme. The Council will automatically award this top-up payment into bank accounts.

Application

Every applicant who hasn't previously been awarded the rebate must complete an application form online via the grant approval portal.

Appeal rights

The council tax energy rebate discretionary fund is awarded entirely at the discretion of the local authority so there is no formal right of appeal except by judicial review, in the interests of natural justice and to eliminate the risk of administrative error, applicants may seek a review of the decision from the Council.

Powers given to the authority for the granting, varying, reviewing and revocation of discretionary relief under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011 shall be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (Resources) in conjunction with the Corporate Head of Customer, Digital & Collection Services.

Where the authority receives a request from a resident for a review of the decision regarding the granting or refusal of discretionary funding grant, the case will be reviewed by the Corporate Head of Customer, Digital & Collection Services.

This could include cases:

- where the applicant cannot provide evidence to satisfy all the criteria but can still demonstrate a significant loss of income and an unexpected significant expense.

How does the Council prevent fraudulent claims for the Scheme?

The Council will ensure that all applications are validated by proof of identity, including checking details submitted using our application form with data held by the Council, and for bank accounts where it is necessary to do so.

If you falsely declare your circumstances, provide a false statement or provide false evidence in support of your application, you may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006.

Any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest must be declared by the referring party. Failure to do so will result in the termination of referrals from the referring organisation and a referral to the Police.

Runnymede Borough Council has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and financial irregularity. All suspicions of fraud relating to this scheme will be referred to Surrey Police. In addition to any criminal action, the Council will seek to recover all fraud losses.

If it is subsequently identified that a payment under the Scheme has been awarded as a result of false or fraudulent information, including the claiming of duplicate awards, the Council reserves the right to withdraw the award and recover the resulting sum due.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Policy will be applied in a “fair, consistent, and equal manner” and discretion may be exercised on a case-by-case basis.

Privacy Notice

For information on how the Council treats the data provided by citizens when applying for a council tax rebate, please refer to the Privacy Notice on the Council's website: www.runnymede.gov.uk

For all information contained within this document contact:

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23rd June 2022