


Officer decision record

Officer: Rachael Mann, Director Resources and Property	Service: Resources and Property
<p>Delegated power being exercised</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On 3 February 2022 the Government announced measures to help protect households from rising energy costs. These measures include a £150 Council Tax energy rebate. 2. The Government has provided funding to billing authorities to give all households in England whose primary residence is valued in Council Tax bands A to D a one-off Council Tax energy rebate payment of £150. West Suffolk Council has received £9,533,400 for this "main scheme". This payment operates outside of the Council Tax system, using Council Tax lists to identify eligible households. 3. The Council has also received £270,300 for use as a Discretionary Fund, which will be the subject of a separate decision. 4. Delegation has been given to the Director for Resources and Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property, to implement in full the council tax energy rebate scheme and discretionary fund. 5. This power is being exercised through this decision in order to develop a Council Tax energy rebate scheme in West Suffolk through which grants will be paid to residents liable for Council Tax. 	
Subject of decision	A decision on the implementation of the Council Tax energy rebate "main scheme", following the allocation of funding from Government
Decision taken (specify precise details)	<p>To use the following approach to allocate the £150 payments to households under the "main scheme":</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To replicate the Government eligibility criteria for the scheme, as set out in the Government guidance. 2. For the scheme to be administered by Anglia Revenues Partnership 3. To make payments to Council Tax payers who have direct debits in place straight into the relevant bank

	<p>account as soon as at least one successful direct debit payment has been made (so long as the name on the account matches the liable party for Council Tax). These recipients will be asked through social media messaging and other communications to check their eligibility against the criteria on the council website</p> <p>4. To contact householders with no direct debit in place (or no matching names – see above) by letter, asking them to complete an online form to provide bank details so that payments can be made to them. If no response is received within 28 days, the £150 will be applied to the Council Tax account relating to the property, and a new bill issued. If, following payment of the rebate, the Council Tax account shows a credit balance, a follow-up process will then be initiated whereby the liable person is contacted by post and phone to help them claim a refund (a range of methods will be offered). No time limit has been set by Government for this process.</p>
<p>Reasons for the decision (specify all reasons for taking the decision including, where necessary, reference to council policy)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils are required to develop local arrangements for distributing the energy rebate funding from Government. • The funding is critical to supporting householders who are impacted by rising energy prices • The decision was within the delegation given to the Director for Resources and Property • The principles set out above have arisen from work by Council officers, including expert operational advice from Anglia Revenues Partnership, in order to identify the arrangements that will: not result in high administration costs; enable as many residents as possible to easily access the money, even if they don't pay Council Tax by direct debit; and ensure payments can be made quickly.
<p>Alternative options considered (if appropriate)</p>	<p>Other options include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing to all direct debit payers to ask them to apply for the grant - Putting in place no, or a different time limit for non-direct debit payers to contact the Council with payment details <p>Following consideration, all of these options were dismissed on the grounds of their negative implications for speed of payment; volume of customers to whom payments can be made quickly; or excessive cost to the public purse in terms of administrative burden.</p>
Background/reports/information considered and attached (legal, personnel, financial implications and so on)	<p>Government guidance to local authorities on the Council Tax energy rebate grant:</p> <p>Government guidance on Council Tax energy rebate grant</p> <p>West Suffolk Council Tax energy rebate scheme, April 2022 (Appendix A).</p>
Parties consulted before the decision has been taken	<p>Resources and Property Portfolio Holder. Growth Portfolio Holder.</p> <p>Cabinet members informed.</p>
Conflicts of interest declared by executive members consulted, including whether the Chief Executive has authorised councillors with conflicts to continue to act	None
Decision	To make available funding to households based on the scheme criteria
<p>Signature</p>  <p>Rachael Mann, Director Resources and Property</p> <p>21 April 2022</p>	