

# **Cherwell District Council**

## **Executive**

**8 January 2024**

## **Council Tax Support Fund Payment Policy 2023/2024**

### **Report of Assistant Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer**

This report is public

## **Purpose of report**

To consider and approve the Council Tax Support fund payments policy attached at Appendix 1. The policy covers the mandatory payments made to Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) customers of £25.00 or less and the additional discretionary amount of £25.00 also paid to LCTS customers with the eligibility criteria mirroring the Governments scheme.

A one off discretionary payment of £85.00 will also be made to those customers in receipt of LCTS on 16 November 2023 this will be credited to the customers 2023 -24 council tax account.

## **1.0 Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 Agree the proposed policy (Appendix 1) for distributing the Council Tax Support fund received from Department for Levelling Up and the additional funds to be paid from Oxfordshire County Council.
- 1.2 Note a one off discretionary payment of £85.00 will also be made to those customers in receipt of LCTS on 16 November 2023.

## **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 In the Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced its intention to increase referendum principles to 3% for core council tax and up to 2% for the Adult Social Care precept, with additional flexibilities for some other authority types for both 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- 2.2 Recognising the impact of rising bills, the government has provided new grant funding in 2023-24 for local authorities to support economically vulnerable households in their area with council tax payments. Cherwell District Council has received funding of £164,691 and this has been matched by Oxfordshire County Council taking the total allocated funds to £329,382.

- 2.3 The government expects local authorities to use the majority of their funding allocations to reduce bills for current working age and pension age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) claimants by up to £25. Councils can use their remaining allocation as they see fit to support vulnerable households with council tax bills.

### **3.0 Report Details**

- 3.1 As part of the annual billing process in March 2023 customers in receipt of LCTS were credited with £25.00 off of their Council Tax balance for 2023-24
- 3.2 As the funds are matched by Oxfordshire County Council an additional amount of £25.00 was also include reducing the balance by £50.00 in total.
- 3.3 Customers in receipt of LCTS with an outstanding balance received an amount £50.00 or less off their council tax liability for 2023 24.
- 3.4 Payments of £50.00 have continued to be awarded throughout 2023-24 to new eligible customers that are in receipt of LCTS and to date £142,924.16 has been allocated to customers council tax accounts through the awards.
- 3.5 2870 customers have received up to £50.00 which has reduced their council tax liability as at 30 September 2023 and the awards will continue to 31 March 2024.
- 3.4 The remaining balance of £186,457 must be distributed to customers by 31 March 2024.
- 3.5 The attached policy provides eligibility criteria for a one off award to customers council tax accounts that are currently in receipt of LCTS to maximise the spend of the allocation.
- 3.6 Cherwell currently has 5984 customers in receipt of LCTS , of these customers 2179 customers currently have an outstanding balance remaining on their council tax account. 1791 of these will receive the maximum award of £85.00 spending £147,942.50 of the allocation.
- 3.7 A further 388 customers will receive a payment credited to their council tax accounts where their balance is less that £85.00 outstanding, the total spend on these accounts will be £11,372.28.
- 3.8 There is no need for any recipient of LCTS to make a separate claim for a reduction under this scheme. The council has identified who is eligible for support and have applied this discount automatically

### **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 This scheme is recommended as it will ensure the majority of the funds are dispersed quickly to the council tax accounts of those households that are vulnerable whilst also maximising the allocations therefore reducing any unspent funding.

## 5.0 Consultation

N/A

## 6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Invite applications for the funds based a means tested application regarding income and expenditure. This option has discounted due to the additional work this would add and also delay in dispersing the funds.

## 7.0 Implications

### Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 Funding of £164,691 has been received from Department for Levelling up Communities and Housing, the remaining £164,691 will be funded by Oxfordshire County Council on completion of the awards being made.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance, [michael.furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:michael.furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### Legal Implications

- 7.2 Government expects councils to deliver this using their discretionary powers under s13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Comments checked by:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Legal Services Manager

[Shahin.Ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Shahin.Ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### Risk Implications

- 7.3 There are no direct risks arising from this report. Any other arising risks will be handled as part of the service operational risk and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when required

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader, 01295 221556

[Celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 This policy has been developed in accordance with the commitments of our "Including Everyone" Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader, 01295 221556  
[Celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

### **Sustainability Implications**

7.5 There are no sustainability implications

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado – Teeling Performance and Insight Team Leader

01295 221556 [celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## **8.0 Decision Information**

### **Key Decision**

**Financial Threshold Met:** Yes

**Community Impact Threshold Met:** Yes

### **Wards Affected**

All

### **Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework**

Housing that meets your needs.

- Supporting the most vulnerable

### **Lead Councillor**

Councillor Adam Nell, Portfolio Holder for Finance

### **Document Information**

#### **Appendix number and title**

- Appendix 1 – Payment policy

#### **Background papers**

None

#### **Report Author and contact details**

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