

Public Document Pack

Officer Decisions

Friday, 14th January, 2022

AGENDA

1. **Household Support Fund - Council Tax Support**
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Date Published: 14th January 2022
Denise Park, Chief Executive

RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY FROM EXECUTIVE/COUNCIL/COMMITTEE



DELEGATED OFFICER	Dean Langton, Director of Finance
DECISION TAKEN BY:	
DELEGATED BY:	Executive (date of delegation)
IN CONSULTATION WITH:	Executive Member
PORTFOLIO AREA:	Resources

SUBJECT: Household Support Fund – Council Tax Support

1. DECISION

Blackburn with Darwen BC's proposed Household Support scheme includes an element that seeks to assist working age households with families that are in receipt of Council Tax Support. After consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Governance it has been agreed that all such families will have their Council Tax accounts credited with a £50 payment in January 2022.

2. REASON FOR DECISION

The initial discussions regarding the design of the Household Support Scheme looked at the costs and bills facing households. It is widely accepted that Council Tax continues to be a primary bill for all households, and, unlike many others, can incur significant court and enforcement costs if payments are not made, or delayed. The total additional costs facing a household for non-payment or late payment of a Council Tax bill can be as high as £386. This proposal looks to reduce the possibility of recovery action being taken against those families most in need, and also provide some much needed financial support.

During the design of the scheme, councils have been encouraged by the government to review and use a broad range of data sources to identify the most vulnerable in the community. The Benefits Service has reviewed several data sets and produced a detailed breakdown of all Council Tax Support claimants. This data has been key to establishing which households will be targeted in this element of the scheme.

Due to the high number of working age Council Tax Support cases and the limited funding available, it has been necessary to look at targeting the most affected by the high cost of living over the winter period. It is therefore proposed that the support is targeted at families with children.

3. BACKGROUND

In October 2021 the government announced the provision of addition funding for tier one authorities to support households most in need during the winter period. Whilst the guidance does provide councils with discretion on the design of the scheme, the government guidance states that all schemes should include support to households most in need with food, energy water costs, and other essential bills. In addition, a minimum of 50% of the funding should be targeted and payable to families with children.

Blackburn with Darwen BC's proposed scheme includes support with free school meals during holiday periods and an extensive partnership with voluntary sector organisations to deliver financial support. This report deals with the element of the proposed scheme that seeks to assist working age households with families that are in receipt of Council Tax Support.

4. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

As the scheme guidance was to support the most vulnerable households with bills over the winter period, the initial discussions identified the most pressing costs for families. Once it had been accepted that the council tax bill was a primary bill for households, the issue was who should receive the support and how much should be awarded.

In deciding the targeted group and the amount, we looked at the large households, i.e. those with children and a value that would be material to the cost of the council tax bill. After discussion on the matter it was agreed that £50 would be a suitable value.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A full policy document for the full Household Support scheme is contained within the Adult Services and Public Health Executive Board decision paper.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The support with Council Tax bills outlined in this report is fully funded by the Government.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Any additional work required will be undertaken from within existing resources.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

This matter has been determined in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Governance

11. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of the officer with delegation and the any Member who has been consulted, and note of any dispensation granted should be recorded below:

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Dean Langton
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DATE:	22 nd December 2021
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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:	
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DIRECTORS - has legal and finance advice been considered ?	
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
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NB. Legal and Finance advice was sought and received during the Executive Board decision