



## **Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Household Support Fund Scheme**

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## Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

**‘the Council’**; means Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

**‘Council Tax Rebate Scheme’**; means the scheme announced by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 3 February 2022 as part of a package of support for rising energy costs;

**‘Council Tax Payer or Liable Person’** means the liable person determined by the Council as being responsible for Council Tax under section 6 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;

**‘Council Tax Reduction (or Support)’** means any entitlement awarded under section 13A 1(A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;

**‘Effective Date’** ; means the effective date of this scheme. The effective date shall be the situation as at the end of the day on 1 April 2022

**‘Pensioner household’**; means any household in the Borough containing any person who has reached state pension age by 30th September 2022

**‘Relevant support agencies’**; means organisations operating across the Borough with the aim to assist households vulnerable to cost of living and energy rises. These may include Citizens Advice North West Kent, Tonbridge Baptist Church/Crosslight, foodbanks and other charitable groups.

**‘the Scheme’**; means the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Household Support Fund 2022 (1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022) determined by this policy.

## 1.0 Purpose of the Scheme and background.

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to determine eligibility for a payment under the Council's Household Support Fund (HSF). The initial tranche of funding relates to 1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022.
- 1.2 Government has provided funding to Kent County Council (KCC), initially relating to the period 1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022. It is anticipated that a further tranche(s) may follow. KCC has distributed part of their initial funding for 2022/23 to all district councils across Kent. [Decision - 21/00107 - Household Support Grant \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- 1.3 The Council's scheme has been designed based on general guidance issued by the Department for Work & Pensions [Household Support Fund \(1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022\): final guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and an agreement between Kent County Council and the Council dated 27 June 2022.
- 1.4 The Scheme is part of a national and local package of support for households in hardship through rising energy costs and general rise in costs of living.

## 2.0 Funding

- 2.1 KCC has allocated 2 amounts of HSF funding to the Council totaling **£326,896.00** :
- 2.2 **Allocation A** to support pensioners with energy bills **£262,710.00**
- 2.3 **Allocation B** to support vulnerable households in accordance with wider Government guidance **£64,186.00**
- 2.4 This grant is to be used in the period 1 April 2022 until the end of September 2022. This includes payments made, or committed, between the period 1 April 2022 and 30 September 2022. There is no carry forward of this grant into October 2022 beyond honouring any expenditure committed before 30 September 2022. Funds must be used by 30 September 2022.

## 3.0 Administration costs

- 3.1 Reasonable costs incurred in administering the Scheme will be charged to the fund. These charges may include:
- staff costs
  - advertising and publicity to raise awareness of the scheme
  - web page design
  - printing application forms and postage costs

- small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production

## 4.0 Eligibility criteria and awards

**4.1** KCC has asked districts to consider identifying appropriate households for support and making direct awards where possible owing to the relatively short timescale to use funds, urgency in demand and resource intensity of application processes.

**4.2** KCC advise, 'the intention behind the grant is to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials. Funding can also be used to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.'

**4.3** The Council has decided that funds will be used in the following ways:

**4.3.1 Allocation A:** A single one-off payment of £100 will be awarded to any pensioner household with an active award of local council tax reduction on any day from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022, and

**4.3.2** Any surplus funds following payments made in accordance with 4.3.1 above (subject to administrative deductions) will be used to make payments (at a level considered appropriate to each individual case) to pensioner households with or without awards of local council tax reduction, on the recommendation of relevant support agencies where remaining funds allow. Discretionary decisions will be made by an officer within the Revenues & Benefits Service experienced in making discretionary decisions of a similar responsibility.

**4.3.3 Allocation B:** to be distributed, in agreement with the Council's Director of Finance & Transformation and Chief Executive, amongst relevant support agencies in line with the objectives of each organization, to enable direct support of vulnerable households in the Borough.

### Effective date

**4.4** The effective date for the scheme to run is 1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022. Payments from the fund must be made or committed to be made by 30 September. Payments will not be made based on any new information received after the close of Scheme. No balances can be rolled forward.

### Eligibility Disputes

**4.5** The decision of the Council on any eligibility matter will be final. Should any householder feel aggrieved by any decision, then matters will be dealt with through the Council's complaints procedure. Full details are available on the Council's website.

## **5.0 How payments will be made**

### **Allocation A**

- 5.1** Letters will be sent to households identified as eligible for payment and where the Council holds bank account information used for council tax energy rebate payments, households will be informed that payments will be made using the details held on record unless information is provided otherwise.
- 5.2** Where the Council determines that all of the eligibility criteria are met in full, payment will be made to the household by direct credit to the bank account held on record or otherwise supplied.
- 5.3** Where support is agreed in accordance with 4.3.2 above, relating to surplus funds, payments will be made directly to the appropriate household by bank transfer using information confirmed by the relevant support agency.
- 5.4** Payments will be made as soon as practicable 3 weeks after issue of the letters.

### **Where the Council does not hold payment details for an eligible household**

- 5.5** Where the Council does not hold bank details and no details are supplied following a letter to the household, it will make reasonable efforts to contact the household and obtain the necessary bank details, offer a payment voucher or ultimately credit a householder's council tax account.
- 5.6** In all cases, the Council will ensure that payments are made correctly and where appropriate, require households to verify that they are eligible for the payment. Where no such verification can be made or where a household fails to respond to the Council's request, no payment shall be made.

### **Allocation B**

- 5.7** Awards to relevant support agencies will be agreed in consultation and made on condition of meeting Scheme criteria and agreement to provide required management information. Any assistance scheme operated by a relevant support agency must demonstrate compliance to the Council's equality duties.
- 5.8** The total fund to be distributed is limited to £64,186.00 or other amount should KCC alter the grant for Allocation B during the period the Scheme is running. Payments will be made promptly by bank transfer to each relevant support agency following agreement.

## **6.0 Scheme of Delegation**

- 6.1** The Council's Cabinet authorise the Director of Finance & Transformation to establish the Scheme as set out in this policy.
- 6.2** This policy may be amended by agreement of the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property, Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Transformation in order to accommodate further grants of Household Support Fund made either directly from Government or through Kent County Council.
- 6.3** Payments will be limited to the fund provided for these purposes by Kent County Council.

## **7.0 Notification of Decisions**

- 7.1** HSF payments will be administered by the Revenues and Benefits Service.
- 7.2** Decisions of payment will be notified to the householder in writing or by email.

## **8.0 Reviews of Decisions**

- 8.1** The Council will operate an internal review process and will accept a householder's request for a review of its decision. Any such request must be made by writing or email to the Council and should state the reasons why the householder is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted to support the householder's review
- 8.2** A request for review will be reconsidered by a senior officer and the householder informed of the final decision.

## **9.0 Taxation and the provision of information to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)**

- 9.1** The Council does not accept any responsibility in relation to a householder's HMRC tax liabilities. All payees should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.

## **10.0 Managing the risk of fraud**

- 10.1** The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation of this policy or fraud. Any person found to falsify information to gain a payment will face prosecution and any amount awarded will be recovered.

## **11.0 Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid**

- 11.1** If it is established that **any** payment has been made incorrectly due to error by the Council, or error, misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the Council by any person, the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

## **12.0 Data Protection and use of data**

- 12.1** All information used to make awards, including information provided by households shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.

## **13.0 Equalities**

- 13.1** The Council sets this policy and will operate the Scheme having consideration to the impact of its equality duties. Eligibility to **Allocation A** funding has been set by Government and targets pension age households, further criteria to identify the target sub-set are based on financial vulnerability and hardship. Payments will be made to eligible households within the protected characteristic group. No information is held to identify other protected characteristics.
- 13.2** Consideration of equalities impact will form of consultations to establish partners to act as relevant support agencies to assist with the fair distribution of the **Allocation B** fund.

## **14.0 Monitoring and Management Information**

- 14.1** Spend of the fund will be monitored and reported to KCC in accordance with the agreement between KCC and the Council. Monitoring and reporting, with required return dates will be agreed with relevant support agencies in order for the Council to report fully to KCC.

## **15.0 Further Funding**

- 15.1** This policy may be subject to amendments as necessary in order to establish the use of further rounds of Household Support Fund made to the Council by Government or Kent County Council. Amendments will be made in accordance with 6.2 above.
- 15.2** Amendments to the Scheme must comply with criteria set by Government or Kent County Council and should complement other associated key policies of the Council.