

Overview and Scrutiny

Locally delivered Welfare and Council Tax Support

1st December 2022

Locally delivered Council Tax Energy Rebates

- The government announced a package of support to help households with rising energy bills
- Households in Council Tax Bands A to D who are not exempt from Council Tax were eligible for a £150 Council Tax Rebate from 1 April 22
- 86% of households in Rushmoor were in Bands A to D
- 32,677 households in Rushmoor received a £150 payment before the end of September 2022
- 2625 payments were also made for Discretionary Energy Rebates from a fund of £134,550 which Councils could determine locally how best to use.

Scheme	Number Paid	Value Paid
Main Scheme DD Payers	25,357	£3,803,550
Main Scheme Non DD Payers	5,466	£819,900
Main Scheme Transferred to CT Accounts	1,854	£278,100
Discretionary Energy Rebates	2625	£121,200
Total	35,302	£5,022,750

Household Support Fund

Funding received from Hampshire County Council with specific instructions regarding who should receive the support and what form it should take

- £300k to provide a £30 food voucher to all recipients of Council Tax Support and an additional £65 food voucher if the recipient was on Pension Credit
- To be spent by end September 22 – over 6000 issued
- £42k received to make payments to people in housing crisis such as rent arrears and threat of eviction
- Further funding due at the end of December for a similar exercise

Council Tax collection rates

Collection rate for Council Tax – current position and comparison:

October 19 95.86%

October 20 93.59%

October 21 94.19%

October 22 94.45%*

* Affected by the Energy Rebate credits of £299,025

Below pre-covid levels but up slightly on this time last year

	19/20	20/21	21/22
Overall Collection Rate achieved by end of year	97.8%	96.8%	97.8%

Other LA'S Plans for CTS 23/24

Hampshire LA's	22/23 Current scheme - main components	CTS Scheme 23/24 – planned changes where known
New Forest	90% maximum support £6000 capital limit	No change proposed – Benefit rates uprated
Rushmoor	88% maximum support £6000 capital limit Band D restriction	No change proposed – benefits uprated
East Hants	Like Council Tax Benefit 100% for passported benefits	Increasing backdating period to 6 months Reducing non dep charges Increasing capital limit from £6k to £10k Benefit rates uprated
IOW	65% maximum support Income banded scheme	Giving 100% support to Vulnerable/lowest income people Benefit rates uprated
Eastleigh	100% support £6000 capital limit Band D Restriction	No change proposed – Benefit rates uprated
Winchester	100% support to people on passported benefits £16,000 capital limit	
Hart	Like Council Tax Benefit 100% for passported benefits	
Southampton	75% Maximum support £16,000 maximum support	
Test Valley	100% vulnerable Working Age(Therefore those with Support Component of Employment Support Allowance or Limited Capacity for Work element of Universal Credit still get 100%) 90% other Working Age Minimum award £1 per week £6000 capital limit	No change proposed – benefit rates uprated
Gosport	70% maximum support Band D restriction £6000 capital limit	
Fareham	100% for vulnerable Working Age 80% all other Working Age £6000 Capital limit	
Havant	Like Council Tax Benefit 100% for passported claims	
Basingstoke	Like Council Tax Benefit 100% for passported benefits	
Portsmouth	86% maximum support Band D restriction £2 minimum award £6000 capital limit	



Council Tax Support Payments

Payments from the authority's council tax support scheme, are awarded in the form of a reduction to the householder's council tax bill.

Each local authority devises and administers its own council tax support scheme for people in financial need but can only use its discretion for Working Age people. **People of Pension age are protected by a nationally prescribed scheme.**

The scheme costs are reflected in the Council Tax base as the scheme is fully funded from Council Tax payments.
Rushmoor shares these costs with the other major preceptors.

- In 22/23 there are 4778 households currently receiving Council Tax Support
- In November 2022:
 - 2821 are of working age
 - 1957 are of Pension age
- Payments to date of £5,115,379.
- CTS Members group on **22 November 22** are going to make recommendations to Cabinet to keep the scheme the same for 23/24 whilst mirroring the welfare benefits uplift announced in the budget and to carry out a full review of the scheme in 23/24 looking at particularly:
 - Simplification
 - Protecting the most vulnerable
 - Living within cost envelope we already have

Council Tax Support Claims (Working Age only) – Council Tax account balances October 22

Working age	Credit or zero balance	Owe less than £200	Owe between £200 and £500	Owe more than £3000
2804 (59% of total CTS caseload of 4751)	509 (18%) *In July 22 this was 6%	1726 (62%)	369 (13%)	200 (7%)
		1385 owe less than £100 (80%)	203 (55%) owe less than £300	No one owes more than £3000
		341 owe less than £200 (20%)	86 (23%) owe between £300 and £500	4 owe between £2k and £3k (1%)
			80 (22%) owe between £400 and £500	29 owe between £1k and £2k (15%)
CTS recovery rate Working Age				167 owe between £500 and £1k – 84%
18/19 84% 19/20 83% 20/21 85%				
21/22 73% 22/23 Oct 22 78%*	* Improved by £150 Energy Rebate where credited to CT account	Calculated by taking into account what is owed to date for current year to end Oct 22		

Discretionary Housing Payments 22/23 so far

- These payments are made from a cash limited fund provided by the government to support people who need additional help with housing costs not covered by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit
- We have awarded £90,203 to 249 recipients from the allocated funds of £160,572

Reasons for payment	Number	£
Financial Hardship and Debt issues	112	£46,159.14
Social Sector Size Criteria ('bedroom tax')	67	£13,022.00
Benefit Cap	12	£6,232.67
Rent is higher than benefit levels	58	£24,789.68

Exceptional Hardship Payments 22/23

CTS group members agreed to make some funds available to provide additional support to people receiving Council Tax support who were still suffering financial hardship.

This fund has increased to £22k as the demand increased.

22 Nov 22 CTS Members group will recommend to Cabinet that an additional £20k will be added to the fund for this year and next year from the earmarked Council Tax Hardship funding.

- Budget is £22K. £12k was base budget and a further £10k was added from the Council Tax Hardship fund.
- We have spent £16,505 to date on 60 applications, leaving £5,495 in the budget. Expecting higher level of applications as we get into the Christmas period and new year
- Average award is £280
- Main reasons for granting an award are:
 - Health issues
 - Financial hardship
 - Serious debt issues
 - Cost of Living impact