



Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Cabinet

29th June 2022

Report of the Chief Finance Officer – Huw Jones

Matter for Decision:

Delivery of the Welsh Government's Discretionary Cost of Living Support Scheme

Wards Affected: All

Purpose of report

To agree the criteria for the delivery of the discretionary element of the Welsh Government's cost of livings support scheme (COLSS).

Background

The Welsh Government have announced funding to the 22 Unitary Authorities to provide support payments to households within the County Borough in order to assist with the current cost of living crisis.

The purpose of the funding is to support households across Wales facing an unprecedented cost-of-living crisis, fuelled by soaring energy bills and household living costs.

There are two elements to the funding:

A main scheme – Councils are required to make a £150 payment to all eligible households within council tax bands A – D; and to all households in receipt of council tax support (CTRS) irrespective of band.

This scheme has now been substantially delivered with approximately 53,000 payments having been made.

A discretionary scheme – For local authorities to provide support for those not included within the criteria for the main scheme. This report

includes proposals for the criteria to be applied for this discretionary scheme.

Proposed Qualifying Criteria- Discretionary Scheme

In relation to the discretionary scheme Welsh Government guidance is that:

- In developing a local Discretionary Scheme, each local authority has complete autonomy to target the funds to best support its residents and to ensure its approach best suits the needs of individual households.
- This support may take any form the Authority considers appropriate in order to satisfy the aims of the scheme. For example a payment to a household not already covered in the main scheme or an additional payment on top of the £150 main scheme payment.

In light of the above guidance it is proposed that the discretionary scheme for Neath Port Talbot be as follows:

- To provide a £150 payment to all households within bands E and F who meet the criteria detailed in Appendix 1.

This is in recognition of the fact that the cost of living crisis isn't only impacting on households who live in Bands A-D. The Council Tax bandings which are based on 2005 valuations do not necessarily reflect household income levels. The proposal is in line with many other Welsh local authority discretionary scheme.

It is also proposed that this discretionary scheme be used to provide:

- A £150 payment to a household in Band A – F who did not qualify for the main scheme or the above discretionary scheme due to the exemptions listed in Appendix 1.

Financial Impact

The cost of the scheme(s) will be met by Welsh Government.

Integrated Impact Assessment

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at Appendix 1, has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Community Impacts

Positive impact for all households within all communities.

Workforce impacts

There will be additional staff resource time required to deal with the administration of the scheme(s). The admin funding provided will meet this cost.

Legal impact

No impact

Risk management

No impact.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the criteria for the discretionary scheme.

Reason for proposed decision

To enable the Council to administer the Welsh Government discretionary cost of living support scheme.

Implementation of decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Detailed qualifying criteria

Appendix 2 - Stage 1 Integrated Impact Assessment

List of background papers

Welsh Government Grant Scheme Guidance.

Officer contact

Ms Ann Hinder - Principal Council Tax Officer

Tel. No. 01639 763908

E-mail: a.hinder@npt.gov.uk

Qualifying Criteria for Discretionary Scheme – Bands E –F

- Be liable for Council Tax on the property on 15 February 2022 and
- Not be receiving a Council Tax exemption for that property on 15 February 2022 and
- Be living in the property as their main or primary home on 15 February 2022 and
- Be responsible for paying the utility and other regular bills for that property on 15 February 2022.

Qualifying Criteria for Discretionary Scheme in exempt categories – Bands A – F

- The person is liable for Council Tax on the property on 15 February 2022 and
- Is responsible for paying the utility and other regular bills for that property on 15 February 2022 and
- Is **not** eligible for a payment from the main Cost of Living scheme and
- Receives a 100% Council Tax exemption for one of the following reasons:
 - a) **Exemption Class J** -The property is unoccupied as the liable person is absent from the property as they are **providing** personal care to another person elsewhere
 - b) **Exemption Class N** -The property is occupied only by students
 - c) **Exemption Class S** -The property is occupied by a person under 18 years old
 - d) **Exemption Class U** -The property is occupied by severely mentally impaired persons only
 - e) **Exemption Class X** – Is a care leaver aged 18 or over but not yet reached the age of 25

Impact Assessment – First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative description and summary: Delivery of the Welsh Governments discretionary cost of living support scheme
Service Area: Finance
Directorate: Chief Executive's Office

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users	✓	
Staff	✓	
Wider community	✓	
Internal administrative process only		✓

3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age		✓				
Disability		✓				
Gender Reassignment		✓				
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓				
Pregnancy/Maternity		✓				

Impact Assessment – First Stage

Race		✓				
Religion/Belief		✓				
Sex		✓				
Sexual orientation		✓				

4. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language		✓				
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English		✓				

5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity		✓				
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment,		✓				

Impact Assessment – First Stage

such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people		✓	
Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives		✓	
Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative		✓	
Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions		✓	
Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	✓		Funding will help to ease the cost of living crisis for eligible households.

Impact Assessment – First Stage

7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required	✓
Reasons for this conclusion	
The scheme will target all households in bands E-F and will complement the main scheme already delivered for Bands A-D.	

A full impact assessment (second stage) is required	x
Reasons for this conclusion	

	Name	Position	Date
Completed by	Ann Hinder	Principal Council Tax Officer	6 th June 2022
Signed off by	Huw Jones	Chief Finance Officer	6 th June 2022