

Member Briefing

Number: 1428

Title: Support to Council Tax payers

Summary: This briefing note sets out information and contact details for residents that may be experiencing financial difficulty and require support or advice about Council Tax payments as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak.

The Coronavirus outbreak will have a significant impact on some households' incomes and they may need support and advice about their Council Tax bills during this time. The following sets out some of the support mechanisms available and provides contact details and links to relevant information.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Council operates a Council Tax Reduction Scheme to support households that meet certain criteria. If a resident has seen a reduction in their income, they may now be eligible for a reduction in their Council Tax bill and should be encouraged to make a claim as soon as possible. Information about the scheme and an online application form are available on the [Council website](#).

The Council has been granted £2.4m to further support those working age residents eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. As a minimum, any working age recipient of support through the scheme will receive either a further £150 off their Council Tax bill or the balance of their bill if it is below £150. This will be processed automatically as soon as possible and revised bills will be issued.

Discretionary Hardship Payments

The Discretionary Hardship Payments scheme is aimed at vulnerable residents who still have a Council Tax liability after their Council Tax reduction award has been applied. Those defined as vulnerable include:

- households where either the applicant, their partner or a dependent child is terminally ill
- applicants under 25 on a limited income
- expectant mothers or those with a child under the age of one on a limited income.

Further information and an application form are available on the [Council website](#).

HELP Scheme (Help in emergencies for local people)

This scheme provides support in the form of food vouchers and recycled goods to residents that are considered vulnerable. To be awarded a food voucher people must be in both financial hardship and in immediate need of food. Our Get HELP online form can be used to

apply for discretionary funds, to get advice about benefits or housing, or for digital support. Further information and an application form are available on the [Council website](#).

Housing benefit, Council Tax reduction and free school meals applications

Staff are working from home to prioritise these applications and experienced staff have transferred to provide additional capacity to deal with high volumes of applications.

Support for residents experiencing difficulties paying their Council Tax

Any resident that is experiencing difficulties paying their Council Tax bill should contact us at the earliest opportunity. There is an [online form](#) which allows residents to request an arrangement to pay any outstanding Council Tax. Alternatively, residents can email: counciltax@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

For further information contact: Debbie Hall, Director of Finance
debbie.hall@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Responsible Committee, Cabinet Member: Cllr Carol Gahan, Legal and Finance
Date: 31 March 2020