

Template for Impact Assessment Level 1: Initial screening assessment

Subject of assessment:	Council Tax Energy Rebate Discretionary Fund.			
Coverage:	Cross cutting			
This is a decision relating to:	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Function
	<input type="checkbox"/> Process/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Review
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
It is a:	New approach:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Revision of an existing approach:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
It is driven by:	Legislation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local or corporate requirements:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Key aims, objectives and activities ○ The discretionary fund has been set up in line with Central Government guidance and is intended to provide support to over 80% of households within the borough. It provides a framework for to providing funding to residents who may be experiencing difficulties paying increased energy bills. ○ Statutory drivers (set out exact reference) ○ On 3 February 2022 Central Government announced a package of extra financial support of £9.1 billion to families to cope with the rising energy prices. Within the package, £1 billion has been allocated to Local Authorities in the form of a Council Tax Rebate which is intended to provide support to over 80% of homes in England within Bands A to D. Middlesbrough have been allocated £8.7m for awards that can be made within the guidance issued defining eligibility. ○ The Council Tax (Demand Notices and Reduction Schemes) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 amends legislation to provide that billing authorities' schemes must include provision for an Energy Rebate Scheme. ○ Differences from any previous approach ○ There has not been a local or national approach to the distribution of Government funds to help residents pay their increased energy bills. ○ Key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries (internal and external as appropriate) ○ The key stakeholders include Middlesbrough residents, staff administering the scheme, local partners and national government. ○ Intended outcomes. ○ To ensure a quick, efficient and consistent process for residents who qualify for this financial support, ○ Provide a process for allocating the Energy Rebate in line with Government guidance, ○ Introduce effective performance management arrangements to ensure payments are timely, accurate and can be accounted for by the Council, ○ Support the Council's other policies where those in crisis need financial help. 			
Live date:	June 2022			
Lifespan:	Likely to only be required during the 2022/23 financial year, although this is subject to Central Government direction			
Date of next review:	The process is subject to ongoing reviews building in learning from the initial roll out along with guidance from Central Government and good practice from the experiences of other Councils.			

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
<p>Human Rights</p> <p>Could the decision impact negatively on individual Human Rights as enshrined in UK legislation?*</p>	☒	☐	☐	<p>This proposed procedure is designed to ensure that the Council is able to distribute Central Government funding in a fair, consistent and equitable manner. The council's approach is designed to provide a payment and eligibility framework for Middlesbrough residents. There are no concerns that the policy could infringe qualified or absolute human rights.</p> <p>Evidence used to inform this assessment includes the Government's guidance information, and is intended to be operated to complement current support provisions from various council services across the council. It also incorporates evidence from engagement to date with senior officers who have been involved in the development of the policy and supporting detailed delivery plans.</p>

* Consult the Impact Assessment further guidance appendix for details on the issues covered by each of these broad questions prior to completion.

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
<p>Equality</p> <p>Could the decision result in adverse differential impacts on groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equality law?</p> <p>Could the decision impact differently on other commonly disadvantaged groups?*</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires that when exercising its functions the Council must have due regard to the need to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. <p>In having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity, the Council must consider, as part of a single equality duty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it; and encouraging people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation is low. <p>The proposed process should provide consistency, fairness and efficiency in the council's approach, whilst being mindful of Central Government's guidance and the overall aims of the Energy Rebate scheme (which is to help reduce the impact of fast rising energy prices on the financially vulnerable). Liaison between the council's various supporting services is in place so that where a resident is identified who has not claimed the rebate, signposting to this service can be carried out quite quickly. The Council's website contains clear and concise information on roll out, and is updated very regularly (usually daily where required) The Energy rebate will also link into the Council's overall Welfare Strategy and vulnerability policy. For those residents who are digitally excluded, support is in place to help them to claim.</p> <p>It is potentially relevant to all the protected characteristics. The aim of the process is to provide funds for the financially vulnerable and other Middlesbrough residents who are experiencing fast rising energy costs. The process does not discriminate within the protected groups. Eligibility is based initially on Council Tax bands (A-D). Once distributed to those initially eligible for the payment, remaining funds will be distributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vulnerable households who may not qualify automatically for the Council Tax Energy Rebate low-income households living in properties in Council Tax bands E to H <p>There are no concerns that the Energy Rebate process could have a disproportionate adverse impact on individuals or groups because they hold one or more protected characteristics. The application of a case by case approach to eligibility based on guidance will ensure fairness, consistency and ensure those most affected by the energy price rises are supported.</p> <p>Evidence used to inform this assessment includes the Government's guidance information, and is intended to be operated to complement current support provisions from various council services across the council. It also incorporates evidence from engagement to date with senior officers who have been involved in the development of the policy and supporting detailed delivery plans.</p>

Screening questions	Response	Evidence			
<p>Community cohesion</p> <p>Could the decision impact negatively on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town?*</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #90EE90; text-align: center;">☒</td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700; text-align: center;">☐</td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700; text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> </table>	☒	☐	☐	<p>The proposed process should provide a coordinated, joined up and consistent approach to the distribution of the Government funds for this Energy Rebate. It is being administered by a single service (Resident & Business Support) administering payments which will prevent inconsistencies across customers who access support.</p> <p>Where there may be any different needs because of a protected characteristic or geography, this joined up approach with the Council's Welfare Strategy will help to develop follow up actions focussed on addressing those unequal impacts. There are no concerns that the policy could have an adverse impact on community cohesion.</p> <p>Evidence used to inform this assessment includes the Government's guidance information, and is intended to be operated to complement current support provisions from various council services across the council. It also incorporates evidence from engagement to date with senior officers who have been involved in the development of the policy and supporting detailed delivery plans.</p>
☒	☐	☐			
<p>Next steps:</p> <p>➡ If the answer to all of the above screening questions is No then the process is completed.</p> <p>➡ If the answer of any of the questions is Yes or Uncertain, then a Level 2 Full Impact Assessment must be completed.</p>					

Assessment completed by:	Mark Symmonds	Head of Service:	Janette Savage
Date:	21/06/2022	Date:	21/06/2022