

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

11 APRIL 2023

REPORT OF CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for a Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy, in line with powers set out in Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as inserted by Section 10 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012).
- 1.2 Cabinet is also asked to approve an amendment to the Council's Scheme of Delegation of Functions to enable applications to be dealt with in a swift and timely manner.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
 1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient**– taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.
- 2.2 The total council tax collected for the Council makes up approximately 27% of the funding for the Council's net revenue budget. The budget strategy is an integral part of the Corporate Planning process.

3. Background

- 3.1 Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides the billing authority with discretionary powers to reduce Council Tax liability where national discounts and

exemptions cannot be applied. It can be used for individual cases or the Council can determine classes of case in which liability is to be reduced.

3.2 The Council does not currently have an agreed Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy, and the objective of the proposed policy is to offer financial assistance to council taxpayers who are experiencing exceptional circumstances. Each application for discretionary relief will be treated strictly on its own merits and all council tax payers will be treated fairly and equally.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The proposed Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy is attached at **Appendix A**. The policy outlines three categories of eligibility, namely:

- Exceptional Financial Hardship
- Crisis Situation e.g. fire or flood
- Other Circumstances – e.g. specific groups of individuals

4.2 Any relief offered will be on a short-term basis and will require the applicant to provide a range of information, including full income and expenditure breakdowns, in order to be considered.

4.3 It is proposed that any determinations of awards will be made on the recommendation of the Taxation Section, and to facilitate this, it is proposed that an amendment be made to the Council's Scheme of Delegation of Functions, Scheme B2, paragraph 2.2, to include an additional sub-section (c) as follows:

2.2	To determine: (a) applications for discretionary rating relief from charities; (b) applications for rating relief on grounds of hardship. (c) applications for council tax relief in line with approved policies
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4.4 Appeals will be considered by the Section 151 Officer, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member, Resources.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 The proposed policy will require a change to the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The cost of awarding Section 13A(1)(c) Discretionary Council Tax Reduction must be funded from within the total income generated by council tax.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) approve the proposed Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy at **Appendix A**;
- b) approve a change to the Scheme of Delegation of Functions, as set out in paragraph 4.3.

Carys Lord

Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change and Section 151 Officer

April 2023

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Background Documents: None