

**RECORD OF URGENT DECISION OF THE LEADER OF THE
COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN.**

(In accordance with Section 3A of Part 3 (paragraph 3) of the Council's Constitution.)

SUBJECT: WELSH GOVERNMENT COST OF LIVING SUPPORT SCHEME

DECISION (Date): 24TH March 2022

Councils in Wales have been tasked with delivering a £150 Cost-of-Living Support Scheme (COLSS) and a Discretionary Cost-of Living Support Scheme (DCOLSS) on behalf of the Welsh Government. The package was announced as part of the Welsh Government's Supplementary Budget on 15 February 2022.


Guidance on the scheme has been formulated and was published by WG on the 23rd March 2022. The basis of the distribution of the £25M Discretionary Scheme funding across Wales is yet to be finalised and formal funding letters are expected to be received soon.

With regard to the discretionary scheme, the underlying principles as per the guidance include :

- Each local authority will determine how it utilises the available funds;
- In addition to supporting the eligible categories outlined above through the main scheme, each local authority may use the funding provided under the Discretionary Scheme to provide support to households it considers to be in need of assistance with their living costs;
- This support may take the form of a payment to a household not already covered in the main scheme, or it may cover the cost of essential services provided to the household;
- Payments (or other support) may be provided to households who do not fall into one of the eligible classes in the main scheme but who live in a property which is exempt from council tax, for example care leavers and people with a severe mental impairment exemption;
- The authority will also have discretion to award a reduced amount or pay by instalments if it considers making a full payment would not be in a household's best interests or that it might compromise their welfare.

In order to ensure that this Council is able to provide this much needed support to our residents, in a timely manner and reflecting the cost of living crisis, the proposed basis of distributing the discretionary funding is as set out in the attached report.

It is proposed that authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Digital Services to implement the scheme in line with the principles set out in the attached report subject to final confirmation of funding and any supplemental guidance being received and in consultation, as appropriate, with the Chief Executive.

 Leader's Signature	Print Name Andrew Morgan	Date 24.03.22

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

 Deputy Leader CLLR WEBBER

 DATE

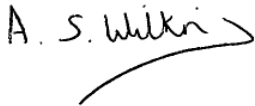
CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE



 24.03.22

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES CONSULTEE SIGNATURE

DATE



 24.03.22

CHIEF EXECUTIVE CONSULTEE SIGNATURE

DATE



 24.03.22

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

DATE



 24.03.22



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT TO ACCOMPANY AN URGENT DECISION OF THE LEADER OF
THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN**

24TH MARCH 2022

WELSH GOVERNMENT COST OF LIVING SUPPORT SCHEME

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

Author(s): MR BARRIE DAVIES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide details of Welsh Government's Cost of Living Support Scheme including a proposal in respect of the associated Discretionary Scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended to:
- a) Note the detail of the Welsh Government Cost of Living Support Scheme;
 - b) Consider and if appropriate agree the Discretionary Scheme; and
 - c) Note and agree the implementation arrangements and delegation to the Director of Finance and Digital Services as detailed at section 11.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide details of the Welsh Government scheme and to set out the proposed discretionary scheme.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Welsh Government (WG) announced a package of measures to help people with support towards the cost of living. The package includes £152M to provide a £150 cost-of-living payment to eligible households (the main scheme) and £25M to provide discretionary support for other purposes related to living costs.

- 4.2 The schemes are intended to provide **immediate** support as Wales recovers from the pandemic and support households to deal with the impact of increasing energy and other costs.
- 4.3 The Discretionary Scheme funding can be used by each local authority to support other households it considers to be in need of assistance with their living costs. Each local authority will determine its use of discretionary support as it deems appropriate to address local needs.

5. COST OF LIVING SUPPORT SCHEME

- 5.1 A payment of £150 can be made to a household under the main scheme if the householder(s) meets one of the following conditions.

A. Council Tax Reduction Scheme Entitlement Condition

If the householder(s) was in receipt of support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) on 15th February 2022, they are automatically assessed as being entitled to a payment of £150 regardless of the valuation band in which their property is placed.

B. Council Tax Band Condition

Households occupying properties in council tax Bands A to D are assessed as being entitled to a payment of £150 provided they were:

- Liable for council tax on a property on 15th February 2022;
 - Not in receipt of an exemption for that property on 15th February 2022;
 - Living in the property as their main or primary residence on 15th February 2022; and
 - Responsible for paying the associated utility and other regularly incurred bills for the property on 15th February 2022.
- 5.2 Local authorities administering the scheme will be able to make the reasonable assumption that household(s) liable to pay council tax are also responsible for paying the utility and other regularly incurred bills.
- 5.3 Households living in properties which attract a disability adaptation band reduction are eligible for a payment, e.g. a property which has been valued as Band E but which receives a disability adaptation band reduction to Band D is eligible.
- 5.4 Households are eligible for a payment if their property band recorded on a valuation list is amended retrospectively after 15th February 2022 to fall within an eligible category, for example, as a result of a successful review or appeal made to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) that concluded after this date. Households living in new-builds awaiting an official banding from the VOA are also eligible for a payment if the official banding subsequently allocated by the VOA, effective on 15th February 2022, meets the eligibility criteria for the

scheme. However, for operational reasons, payments will no longer be made in these respects after the scheme has closed on 30th September 2022. Any disputes about property banding should be resolved through the VOA's usual process for reviews, proposals and appeals.

- 5.5 Only one £150 payment is to be made in relation to any single dwelling under the main scheme. In cases of joint and several liability, only one payment is to be made and it should be paid to the first named person on the council tax bill. Where this is not possible, local authorities have discretion to identify the most appropriate person to whom the payment should be made.
- 5.6 The estimated number of eligible households in Rhondda Cynon Taf are shown below:

	RCT Households / Payments	RCT Value
Main Scheme		
£150 to all households in receipt of CTRS	24,182	£3,627,300
£150 to all other households (not in receipt of CTRS) in bands A to D	68,702	£10,305,300
	92,884	£13,932,600

6. DISCRETIONARY COST OF LIVING SUPPORT SCHEME

- 6.1 In addition to supporting the eligible categories outlined above through the main scheme, each local authority may use the funding provided under the Discretionary Scheme to provide support to households it considers to be in need of assistance with their living costs. This support may take the form of a payment to a household not already covered in the main scheme, or an additional payment, or it may cover the cost of essential services provided to the household.
- 6.2 Each local authority will determine how it utilises the available funds.
- 6.3 The all Wales resource for the discretionary scheme amounts to £25M.
- 6.4 The proposed design for the RCT Discretionary Scheme is as set out in the table below and will mean that approximately 86% of households in RCT will receive a payment of £150 and a further 10% will receive a payment of £100. All families with (statutory) school age children will also receive a £50 payment.

	RCT Households / Payments	RCT Value
Discretionary Scheme		
£150 to Exempt Occupied Properties:		
Care Leavers (Class X)	85	£12,750
Severely Mentally Impaired (Class U)	318	£47,700
People Receiving Care (Class I)	21	£3,150
People Providing Care (Class J)	5	£750
	429	£64,350
£100 to all non CTRS households in bands E and F	9,749	£974,900
£100 to HMO's/All Student Dwellings (Class N)	828	£82,800
	10,577	£1,057,700
Funding for Food Banks		£50,000
Payment of £50 to families with one child or more of statutory school age	22,700	£1,135,000
Total Cost of Scheme		£2,307,050

7. INDICATIVE SCHEME DELIVERY TIMETABLE

- 7.1 The Cost of Living Support Scheme is open until 30th September 2022 and therefore will be operationally delivered over a number of months between March and September 2022.
- 7.2 The delivery arrangements will include a combination of automatic payments and registrations. Indicative timelines are shown below.

April / May 2022

- Automatic payments and notifications to all eligible households where bank details held
- Write out to and registration process opens for those households where no bank details are held / families with one child or more of statutory school age

May / June 2022

- Payment made following registrations
- Payment made to families with statutory school age child(ren)

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 Due regard has been given to the Council's public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010, namely the Public Sector Equality Duty and Socio-Economic Duty.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

10.1 There are no consultation requirements associated with the WG Scheme.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

11.1 The main scheme is fully funded by WG.

11.2 The allocation basis for the all Wales funding of £25M for the discretionary scheme is in the process of being finalised. However, based on the allocation basis of the main scheme, the cost of the proposed discretionary scheme is broadly in line with the expected funding arrangements (with any final shortfall, subject to take up, being funded by utilising other one-off resources available to the Council).

11.3 Scheme guidance has been published (23rd March 2022) by WG with formal funding letters expected to be received shortly.

11.4 The detail of the scheme including eligibility, assessment and its administration is delegated to the Director of Finance and Digital Services in line with the Council's Constitution. Any changes necessary and consequential to the final funding and any supplemental scheme guidance is also delegated to the Director of Finance and Digital Services in consultation, as appropriate, with the Chief Executive.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 The Director of Finance and Digital Services will administer the scheme and make the necessary determinations in accordance with the Council's 'officer scheme of delegation'.

13. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

13.1 The proposals are aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan "Making a Difference" 2020-2024, in particular the priority 'Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper' and also the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 well-being goal of "A more prosperous Wales".

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 The Welsh Government Cost of Living Support Scheme will provide almost £180M to households across Wales to help with the increasing cost of living that is being experienced by many families in Wales and across the UK. These payments will provide a much needed boost to

the finances of over 100,000 households in RCT at a time when they are most needed.