

Executive decision taken by Leader/Cabinet portfolio holder



Pro-forma for completion in respect of executive decisions taken by Leader of the Council or by an individual Cabinet portfolio holder.

Decision taken by:

Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of the Council, following consultation with other Cabinet members.

Date of decision:

2 April 2020

Subject of report:

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Exceptional Hardship Payments Policy

Exempt matter (if any as given under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972):

Not applicable.

Key decision?:

Yes

Open summary of decision made:

- (1) To approve the revised Council Tax Reduction Scheme Exceptional Hardship Policy set out at Appendix 1 of the Report, incorporating the following amendments:
 - (i) The Council may accept an application for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) as an application for an Exceptional Hardship Payment (EHP).
 - (ii) The Council may use Exceptional Hardship Payments to meet arrears of council tax.
 - (iii) The Exceptional Hardship fund and equalities.
- (2) To grant delegated authority to the Director of Service Delivery to implement the revised Policy.

Reason(s) for decision:

Approving amendment (1) above would mean that a resident would only have to complete one application form to potentially get a Discretionary Housing Payment and an Exceptional Hardship Payment rather than, as is currently the case, having to complete two forms.

Currently, an Exceptional Hardship Payment can only be awarded for council tax due in the financial year that the claim is made. This excludes people who are struggling to meet arrears from previous years.

Alternative options considered:

None

Was an executive councillor(s) consulted before decision was taken? If so, what was the result of this consultation?

Members of the Cabinet who were available (Councillors MacCleary, Bird, Collier, Meyer, O'Brien and O'Keeffe) met via video conference on 26 March 2020 to discuss the proposals set out in the Officer's report, and were supportive of the recommendations in the report.

Councillors commented as follows:

- Councillors approved of changes which had been made in the language and tone of the Policy. In response to a question as to whether the scheme might need to be revised further, the Director of Service Delivery explained that officers had this week received Government guidance on hardship and that his existing delegated powers enabled him to make changes required in response to this. Advice on use of the Government's own hardship fund was not expected until the second week of April 2020.

Does the proposal involve any unplanned expenditure? If so, please confirm that you have consulted with the Chief Finance officer and include the date of consultation

No

Signed:

Cllr Zoe Nicholson

Leader of the Council