

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 9 November 2023

Title: Housing Benefit War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Policy

Report of: Tim Whelan, Director of Service Delivery

Cabinet member: Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for finance, assets and community wealth building

Ward(s): All

Purpose of report: To gain Cabinet's recommendation to Full Council for the disregarding, in the assessment of Housing Benefit, War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation income above the statutory disregard.

Decision type: Budget and policy framework

Officer recommendation(s): Cabinet recommend to Full Council the disregarding in full of War Pensions income and the Armed Forces Compensation income in the assessment of Housing Benefit.

Reasons for recommendations: As set out in the report.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 make provision for the first £10.00 of income from War Widows (Widowers)/War Disablement Pension and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to be disregarded in any benefit assessment. The cost of this disregard is fully reimbursed to the Council
- 1.2 The Social Security Administration Act 1992 gives the Council discretion to disregard any amount it chooses in addition to the statutory provision. The Council has taken advantage of this provision and fully disregarded income claimants receive from the War Widows (Widowers)/War Disablement Pension and the Armed Forces Compensation Schemes.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the continued support our veterans by disregarding in full any amounts above the statutory disregard.

3 Outcome expected and performance management

- 3.1 That Veterans continue to receive additional support with their housing costs in recognition of the service they provided to the country.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 No consultation has taken place as the policy has been in place for several years.

5 Corporate plan and council policies

- 5.1 This report supports the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

6 Business case and alternative option(s) considered

- 6.1 There is an option to not disregard part or all of the income above the statutory disregard. However, this would lead to an adverse publicity from the Armed Forces Community and not be in keeping with the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

7 Financial appraisal

- 7.1 The additional housing benefit awarded in 2021/22 due to the application of the policy was £18,472. The mechanics of the housing benefit subsidy claim meant that the actual cost to the Council was £4,562. The pre-audited expenditure in 2022/23 shows an expenditure of £15,219 with a cost to the Council of £3,805. The 2022/23 figures may change slightly following the audit.

8 Legal implications

- 8.1 The provision in paragraph 1.1 above is specified in regulation 40(2) and paragraph 15 of Schedule 5 to the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006.
- 8.2 The discretionary provision in paragraph 1.2 above is specified in section 134(8) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

Date of legal input: 22.08.23

Legal ref: 012336-JOINT-OD

9 Risk management implications

- 9.1 There is a risk that the cost to the Council could increase. The service will regularly monitor expenditure and report to finance and the Portfolio holder any significant rises

10 Equality analysis

- 10.1 The disregard of War widows and war compensation payments, when assessing someone's income for Housing benefit, will have a positive impact on veterans. This means the policy will have a positive impact on people with disabilities, people of working age as well as older residents.

11 Environmental sustainability implications

- 11.1 There are no environmental sustainability implications arising from this report.

12 Contribution to Community Wealth Building

- 12.1 Increasing the amount of housing benefit a veteran receives means they have to spend less of their disposable income on rent which in turn could be spent on goods and services in the local area thus increasing employment opportunities and contribute to business growth.

13 Appendices

- None

14 Background papers

The background papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

- None