



Elmbridge

Borough Council

... bridging the communities ...

Discretionary Grant Funding

Household Support Policy

Winter 2021/22

[24 November 2021]

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Government launched a £500 million support fund for vulnerable households over the winter 2021/22. The funding was initially allocated to Surrey County Council, Surrey County Council have distributed approximately 50% to Borough and District Councils within Surrey to allocate in accordance.
- 1.2 Vulnerable households across Elmbridge BC will receive support to help them with essentials over the coming months as the country continues its recovery from the pandemic. Payment is made under Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003.
- 1.3 Elmbridge BC Borough Council has been allocated £273,000 to support families who have been adversely impacted.
- 1.4 Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow Elmbridge BC to set up a local scheme for the granting of discretionary relief where such relief would be of benefit to the local community.

2. Discretionary Grant Funding; Household Support

- 2.1 The Government is asking local authorities to prioritise support for local communities:
 - To use their discretion on how to identify and support those in most need
 - Allocate at least 50% of the funding to households with children
 - Help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills and other essential expenditure during the winter as the country recovers following the pandemic.

3. Who will benefit from this scheme?

- 3.1 This grant is primarily aimed at:
 - Residents who are in the most need of support to pay for food, energy and water bills, and in emergencies, other household costs and expenditure.
 - Alleviating food and fuel poverty where gas, electric, water or food bills have risen.
 - Safeguarding families in their own homes.
 - Avoiding homelessness
 - Assisting with a one-off unexpected, unavoidable expense for example to repair or replace a broken washing machine, broken cooker, new school shoes etc

4. Households with children payment scheme

- 4.1 The majority of the funding will be allocated to households with children who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support on the 22 November 2021. A one-off payment of £100 per household will be awarded.
- 4.2 The Council will identify households who qualify and will contact them directly. These households will be required to confirm their eligibility and payment details by completing the form in their online benefits account by completing a household support form.
- 4.3 This cost of this element of the scheme is estimated to be in the region of £200,000.
- 4.4 If the eligibility form is submitted by 8 December 2021, payment will be made before 15 December 2021. The scheme will close on 15 December 2021 and for those households which submitted their information between 9 December and 15 December 2021 payment will be on 7 January 2022.

5. Severe Hardship Payments Scheme

- 5.1 In cases of extreme hardship, for households in receipt of Housing Benefits and/or Council Tax Support an additional grant payment to a maximum of £1,000 per household (for households with or without children). The maximum amount of funding available for this element of the scheme is £53,000.
- 5.2 The Council has a duty to carefully consider every application on its individual merits, considering the relevant circumstances.

Households will be required to make an online application with supporting documents for evidence, which shows severe financial hardship, to the Council by 15 December 2021. Successful applicants, who have been notified that the application has been successful by the 8 December, will be paid by the 15 December 2021. The Council will aim to pay the all successful applicants by the 7 January 2022.

- 5.3 The funding available for the Severe Hardship payments is limited and will be allocated on the basis of the date of submission of the information (when the funding is completely allocated the scheme will close, this may be before the 15 December). For the avoidance of doubt, if additional information is requested, the date of submission of the additional information will be considered as the submission date.
- 5.4 Government guidance proposes that this money is targeted towards recipients who are struggling to afford food, energy bills and other essential expenditure. The grant for households in receipt of Housing Benefits and or Council Tax support for households with children in section 4 above is assumed as a minimum to cover all, or a significant element of the requirement to provide support for food.
- 5.5 Eligibility for this one-off payment includes goods or services already bought/paid for but no earlier than 1 October 2021 (the date of the government announcement), as well as goods or services which are yet to be bought.
- 5.6 The following criteria will be used to assess eligibility for the payment, where relevant, please submit information for one or more of these criteria which apply to your application.

Criteria	Minimum eligibility	Minimum evidence requirement
Utility bills (energy bills for any form of fuel that is used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking or lighting, including oil or portable gas cylinders. It can also be used for support with water bills.	Where non-payment would cause enforcement action	Evidence of potential action being considered by the utility supplier.
Repair or replacement of essential white goods	Essentials linked to energy and water such as boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens	Evidence of damaged goods and quote for repair or replacement.
Essential: Medical, Ophthalmic or other personal care products.	When these essential would cause distress or discomfort	Quotation or other information showing costs.
School Uniforms or Clothing	Support with clothing and school uniform	Quotation or invoice showing name of school or company, or other information showing cost.

Significant Levels of Council Tax Arrears	More than £500 at 24 November 2021	The council will review the council tax arrears position
Rent or mortgage arrears	More than £1,000 at 24 November 2021	Evidence of the level of arrears showing company/ landlord details

The level of the payment will be solely based on the evidence submitted, to the maximum of £1,000.

If additional funding is made available by Surrey County Council or the Government, then the Council reserves the right to reconsider the grant awards or reopen the scheme for new applicants.

6. Severe hardship applications

6.1 Households will be required to make an online application in their benefits account with supporting evidence to the Council by 15 December 2021.

Residents are required to provide a completed application form plus any such evidence, documents, receipts, financial statements including bank statements clearly showing the reduction in income, the essential expenditure, the name and bank account details etc. necessary to allow the Council to make an informed decision.

6.2 Once the application is received, it will be considered on its own merits.

Where insufficient information is provided, a reminder will be sent within the online account and if there has been no reply within 2 working days of the reminder, the application will be considered to be invalid and rejected.

6.3 In all cases, the Council will notify the resident of decisions made.

Where an application is successful, the following will be notified to them:

- the amount of award granted and the date from which it has been granted;
- a requirement that the applicant should notify the authority of any change in circumstances that may affect entitlement to the grant.

Where the application has not been successful the following information will be provided:

- an explanation of the decision within the context of the authority's statutory duty; and
- an explanation of the appeal rights (see below).

7. Voluntary Sector Partners

The balance of the funding, £20,000, will be paid to voluntary sector partners in Elmbridge BC to support residents, eligible residents in accordance with the overall parameters set out by central government.

8. Funding

If the Households with Children Scheme is under-subscribed then the Council reserves the right to increase the funds available for the Severe Hardship Payments Scheme. If funding is still available, it may increase the funding to voluntary sector partners..

9. Residents without internet access and an email address

Residents can contact Customer Services (01372 474474) at the Council for support in completing the application form and required evidence.

10. Appeal rights

Whilst there is no formal right of appeal except by judicial review, in the interests of natural justice and to eliminate the risk of administrative error, applicants may seek a review of the decision from the Council.

Powers given to the authority for the granting, varying, reviewing and revocation of discretionary relief under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011 shall be delegated to the Strategic Director Resources & Deputy Chief Executive in conjunction with the Head of Finance.

Where the authority receives a request from a resident for a review of the decision regarding the granting or refusal of discretionary funding grant, the case will be reviewed by the appropriate officers.