

# Executive Report

Delegated Decisions - 7 January 2025

## Discretionary Financial Assistance Policy

Name of Cabinet Member	<b>Councillor Lauren Townsend</b> (Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Resources and Customer Experience)
Report sponsor	<b>Steve Richardson</b> Director of Finance and Resources
Report author	<b>Robin Bates / Mary Swanston</b> Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits / Service Delivery Manager - Revenues and Benefits

Exempt / confidential / not for publication	<b>No</b>
Council Plan reference	<b>Not in Council Plan</b>
Wards affected	<b>All wards</b>

## Executive Summary

The Revenues and Benefits service operate several national statutory schemes alongside several operational polices relating to local discretionary assistance.

The Discretionary Financial Assistance Policy considers the affordability of local discretionary help and complies with relevant legislation on support provisions. The policy aims to safeguard the most vulnerable members of the Milton Keynes community by helping those in crisis.

The policy is refreshed regularly, and the revised policy can be found at **Annex A**.

This report summarises the amendments to the policy, as well as highlighting any significant changes to the policy.

### 1. Proposed Decision

1.1 That the Discretionary Financial Assistance Policy be approved.

### 2. Reasons for the Decision?

2.1 The Discretionary Financial Assistance Policy is reviewed regularly to ensure that its aims and objectives remain current.

### 3. Background to the Decision

3.1 The Council manage and allocate discretionary funds for various benefits and services.

3.2 The paper is seeking approval on four funding discretionary areas referenced within the policy. There was a separate policy relating to a Local War Pension Disregard Scheme, in place since 2008, which has now been consolidated into the single policy.

3.3 The four areas covered by the policy are:

a) Discretionary Housing Payments

These are additional payments made to individuals who need extra help with housing costs. Councils have the discretion to decide who receives these payments and how much they receive, based on local priorities and individual circumstances. These payments are grant funded from Central Government.

b) The Local Welfare Provision Scheme

This includes emergency support for individuals and families in crisis, such as food vouchers, utility payments, or essential household items. Councils have the discretion to determine eligibility criteria and the type of support provided. This is funded by the Council. This is locally funded and supplemented by the current Household Support Fund.

c) Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Complements the main Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and allows for a further reduction in the amount of Council Tax charged where exceptional circumstances exist. This is locally funded and supplemented by the current Household Support Fund.

d) Local War Pension Disregard Scheme

The Council have the discretion to modify the Housing Benefit scheme by disregarding a further amount, or all, of specified war disablement pensions and payments. This is funded by the Council.

### 4. Implications of the Decision

4.1 The revisions refresh and consolidate two policies into one. The revisions have no additional financial cost to the Council.

Financial	N	Human rights, equalities, diversity	N
Legal	N	Policies or Council Plan	Y
Communication	N	Procurement	N
Energy Efficiency	N	Subsidy	N
Workforce	N	Other	N

## 5. Alternatives Considered

### 5.1 Agree and Approve the Policy (**recommended**)

The policy has been circulated to internal services that may be impacted and the proposed content is in keeping with the ethos and finances of the Council.

### 5.2 The policy has been reviewed as part of a regular review and is not proposing any changes to the administration of local schemes.

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## List of Annexes

Annex A                      Discretionary Financial Assistance Policy

## List of Background Papers

None