

## **COUNCIL TAX HARDSHIP FUND – 2020/21**

On 18 June 2020 the committee adopted a Council Tax hardship scheme for 2020/21 and approved an update to the existing section 13a Hardship Policy.

The policy set out the Council's approach to the awarding of discretionary reductions to individuals in respect of a council tax liability. The policy allows the Council to reduce the Council Tax payable on the grounds of hardship or where there are exceptional circumstances.

We have provided all recipients of working age local Council Tax support during the financial year 2020-21 with a further reduction in their annual Council Tax bill of up to £150, using the discretionary powers to reduce the liability of Council Tax payers outside of the formal local Council Tax support scheme design.

The allocation of funding for Stroud District Council for the financial year 2020-21 was £628,575. The government have recently confirmed this funding could be carried forward to 2021/22 to continue to be able to provide that support.

We have been able to apply discounts to over 2,200 Council Tax accounts which has seen a total of £288,734 in support to residents. We will continue to award discounts to those falling into difficulties and find themselves claiming support for the first time. These awards will generally be made automatically without the need for application.

Whilst our case load has risen by around 16%, we have not seen that new spike in claimants as the Government have continued to extend the Self-employed income support and furlough schemes. During this financial year we have generally suspended the statutory debt collections process, meaning we are not necessarily aware of some of those more pressing hardship cases. Once the Covid-19 restrictions relax we will have more opportunity to assist those in need.

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