



4 February 2022 (MHDC)

TO SHARE

Support for energy prices – the council tax rebate

Yesterday (3 February), the Government announced measures to help protect millions of households from rising energy costs.

This includes a £150 council tax energy rebate. Detailed guidance and funding allocations will be published in the week beginning 7 February.

The Government will provide funding for billing authorities to give all households in England whose primary residence is valued in council tax bands A – D a one-off council tax energy rebate payment of £150. This payment will operate outside of the council tax system, using council tax lists to identify eligible households. [Read more about the council tax rebate.](#)

Levelling Up White Paper

The Government has published its long-awaited Levelling Up White Paper.

This sets out the plan for reversing the UK's geographic inequalities and improving the country by:

- Unleashing the full potential of the private sector, boosting pay, productivity, innovation and economic growth
- Improving public services, including giving everyone access to higher quality schools and training, improving people's health, particularly in disadvantaged communities, and increasing the supply and standard of housing
- Regenerating town centres and high streets, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour to make streets safer, and ensuring everyone has access to culture

The White Paper contains 12 national missions – all quantifiable and to be achieved by 2030 – which will be given status in law in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, including:

- A new devolution framework which sets out a clear menu of options for places in England that wish to unlock the benefits of devolution. By 2030, every part of England that wishes to have a 'London-style' devolution deal will have one.
- A transformation of the government's approach to data and evaluation, with a new independent body created to improve transparency of local government performance.
- A commitment to simplify the local growth funding landscape.
- The intention to mobilise £16 billion of the Local Government Pension Scheme for investments in local projects.
- The £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be decentralised to local leaders as far as possible.
- Councils will be given the power to require landlords of empty shops to fill them if they have been left vacant for too long.
- 68 more councils to be supported by the High Streets Task Force.
- All homes in the Private Rented Sector will have to meet a minimum standard – the Decent Homes Standard.
- 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) will be designated where school outcomes are currently weakest and will benefit from intensive investment and support.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, has written to all councils in the UK with details of the White Paper. See the attached document.

Youth investment fund

One of the announcements alongside the Levelling Up White Paper was the creation of a Youth Investment Fund.

Youth services across 45 Local Authorities, and around 600 district wards in the most deprived parts of England, will be eligible to apply for the £378 million Youth Investment Fund.

I am pleased to report that Pickersleigh is one of the ward areas chosen.

The first phase of funding is open for applications now and charities, voluntary sector organisations, schools, uniformed groups and sports clubs providing activities in the Droitwich West area can apply.

Read the [Youth Investment fund announcement](#).

Find out how to [apply for money from the Youth Investment Fund](#).

Lower Pond Works

Work is set to start next week on cleaning out and enhancing the lower pond in Priory Park.

As part of preparations this week, the surrounding trees are being pruned and draining of the pond started. Specialists will remove the fish safely.



To assist with the works, the Council House car park on Avenue Road will be closed on Monday to Thursdays between 7 February and 29 April.

The footpaths by the lower pond in the park will also be closed between 7 February and 29 April. Visitors are being asked to follow the signs.

The works follow recent desilting and repair of the upper pond, which has reinstated water flow into the lower pond however, more significant works

are required to the lower pond to improve water quality and biodiversity.

Desilting will enable the pond to start capturing carbon again and provide the right environment for plants to grow.

In addition to desilting, the project also includes:

- Specialist fish removal prior to draining.
- Installation of gabion baskets to create planting shelves.
- Wetland planting to create habitat for aquatic invertebrates and insects.
- Tree works to reduce overshading and leaf litter accumulation.
- Installation of wildlife features including kingfisher perch and habitat log piles.
- Non-native shrub thinning or removal and re-planting with native.
- Shrubs and woodland bulb planting.

Works on the lower pond will run until April 2022.

Visit www.malvern hills.gov.uk/priorypark to keep up to date with the improvements to Priory Park.

Youth Chair Fund

Young people can now apply for up to £500 to fund projects that will benefit communities within the Malvern Hills district.

Our Youth Chair Fund will fund upcoming projects designed by the district's young people aged between 11 to 17, the deadline to apply is 4 March 2022.



The fund will help support a wide range of ventures such as short-term projects, celebrations, trips, and equipment.

Local projects that have already gained from the fund include Tenbury High Ormiston Academy's Time to Talk cabin, which provides a safe space for students to talk about and seek support with their mental health and wellbeing.

Perfect Circle Youth Theatre group also created a short film

based on their ideas and projects, teaching them how to film and edit, and Upton Young Farmers received funding to support a new member's day to encourage new people to join.

This is a great opportunity for young people, please pass on to your local community groups and mailing lists.

Visit www.malvern hills.gov.uk/youth for more information.

Malvern Hills businesses could benefit from £2,000 upskilling grants

Local businesses could receive up to £2,000 towards the cost of taking on a new apprentice or trainee thanks to a new Upskilling Grant.

Malvern Hills District Council has introduced the grant as part of the Upskilling Project, which is part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund.

The £283,000 project involves a range of activities designed to boost skills, help businesses grow and support people into work.

Businesses in any sector can apply for up to two upskilling grants, as long as the trainees started after 1 April 2021 and before 31 March 2022.

To qualify, businesses need to be based in the Malvern Hills district postcode area and employ fewer than 250 people.

They must pay at least the minimum wage to the trainee for a post of at least 20 hours a week, including training, over a minimum of three months. They must also provide for the trainee to gain a recognised qualification.

Grants are paid on a first come first served basis and will only last for as long as the funding does. Businesses are urged to apply early, so they don't miss out.

Grants are paid after the apprentice or trainee has completed three months of their course.

Businesses can find out more about the grant, and how to apply, by visiting www.malvern hills.gov.uk/skills

Malvern Hills offers £500 incentive to new apprentices and trainees

Payments of £500 are on offer to anyone starting an apprenticeship or training course as part of a new incentive scheme.

The 'golden hello' has been introduced by Malvern Hills District Council to encourage the take up of apprenticeships and trainee programmes, which help many people take their first steps in the world of work or embark on new careers.

This incentive forms part of the Malvern Hills and Wychavon Upskilling Project, which has been given £283,000 from the UK Government's UK Community Renewal Fund.

New apprentices or trainees of any age are eligible to receive the one-off £500 payment if they meet the criteria.

To qualify, they must live or work in the Malvern Hills area, earn less than £15,000 a year, complete the first three months of their courses and claim the payment themselves.

Support payments of up to £1,000 are also available to help apprentices and trainees cover the cost of travel, equipment, clothing and other associated expenses.

Applications for this scheme must be made by 31 March 2022. Other funding schemes to help with training costs will still be available after this date.

People can apply for the payment, and find more details, including full terms and conditions, online at www.malvern hills.gov.uk/skills