

APPENDIX J

COUNCIL TAX AND DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT (DFG) POLICIES

1 Discount for Council Tax Payers Paying in Full

The Council has agreed in the past to offer a discount to Council Tax payers who pay their Council Tax in full. It is necessary for Cabinet to recommend Council to agree a specific resolution for this purpose or for any change proposed as the current assumption is that the discount remains at 1.5%. Cabinet should note that a similar discount is not permitted under business rate regulations. Any revenue foregone by offering a 1.5% discount is offset by the notional interest earned on the advance payment of Council Tax.

Resolution

“Any Council Tax payer who is liable to pay an amount of Council Tax to the authority in respect to the year ending on 31 March 2027, who is served with a demand notice under Article 20(2) of the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 and who makes payment to the authority of the full balance of the estimated amount shown on that demand by 1 April 2026, may deduct a sum equivalent to 1.5% from the estimated amount and such reduced amount shall be accepted in full settlement of that estimated amount”.

The Council meeting in February will receive a resolution in the form required reflecting the recommendations of Cabinet.

2. Policy regarding war pension income in relation to Housing Benefit Assessment

The Housing Benefit regulations 2006 make provision for the disregard of the first £10 of War Pension income in the assessment of Housing Benefit entitlement. The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 makes further provision that Local Authorities may modify the Housing Benefit scheme by disregarding a further amount or all War Pension Income as part of a local policy.

Since the London Borough of Havering was first established, the custom of disregarding this income in full has been carried out by staff assessing Housing Benefit entitlement.

It is necessary for the council to formally record its local policy of disregarding this income in full in the assessment of Housing Benefit. There is already a corresponding disregard of this income in the council's Local Council Tax Support scheme rules.

The legislation which covers these arrangements is as follows:

- The Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 paragraph 40(2) and schedule 5
- Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the age qualifying for the State Pension Credit) Regulations 2006 paragraph 33(9) and schedule 5
- Sections 134 and 139 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 provide the Council with the discretion to modify the Housing Benefit scheme by disregarding a further amount, or all, of specified war disablement pensions and payments.
- The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (War Pension Disregards) Regulations 2007 (as amended) prescribe which pensions and payments are in scope for the local policy.

3. Recommendation to Adopt Policy Change: Disregard of Armed Forces Compensation in Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Means Test

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the introduction of a local discretionary disregard for Armed Forces Compensation when calculating contributions for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). This change would align Havering's approach with the Armed Forces Covenant principle of 'no disadvantage' and respond to the Royal British Legion's national "Credit Their Service" campaign. Civil compensation is already disregarded, and this amendment would address an inequity while creating consistency across council policies, as military compensation is already disregarded in Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, and Discretionary Housing Payments.

The financial impact of this change is expected to be minimal. Modelling indicates that likely cases are extremely low (around one per year), with an average grant cost of £10,000. The benefits include alignment with best practice among London boroughs (approximately one-third have adopted this policy) and a positive reputational impact as part of our Armed Forces Covenant commitments. It is proposed that the policy be implemented by updating the Housing Assistance Policy under the Regulatory Reform Order.