

## **Bath and North East Somerset Council**

### **Full Council meeting 19 September 2024**

#### **Liberal Democrat Group Motion on Winter Fuel Payments for Pensioners**

##### **To be proposed by Cllr Dave Harding**

Council:

1. Notes the recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.
2. Notes with concern that many pensioners on lower incomes will now not receive vital support with winter fuel costs. Across England and Wales, the number of people eligible for winter fuel payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).
3. Notes that in Bath and North East Somerset, the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 32,412. That means 91.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.
4. Believes that the Labour Government has set the threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for Pension Credits. This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.
5. Notes with concern the low take up of Pension Credit, with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.
6. Recognises the importance of raising awareness of benefits, such as Pension Credit, to ensure people receive the support they are entitled to. Council welcomes the work being undertaken by the Welfare Support and Public Health teams, with Citizens Advice and Age UK, to promote the Pension Credit scheme to those who may be eligible, and also welcomes Government awareness campaigns, such as the Pension Credit Week of Action.
7. Further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October which, combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments, risks pushing thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

[Continued on p2]

- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
- *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*

Council therefore:

8. Asks the Leader of Council to write to the Government, calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be immediately suspended and for a new threshold determining eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments to be adopted.
9. Asks the Leader of Council to write to all MPs covering the Bath and North East Somerset Council area, asking them to give their formal support to halting the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility.

- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
- *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*