

LABOUR AMENDMENTS WITH TRACKED CHANGES

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. amend: DELETE AFTER 'NOTES' AND REPLACE WITH:

Notes that in 2010, the Liberal Democrat/Conservative coalition government removed winter fuel payments from 60-64 year olds.

Notes that in 2013, former LD MP and Lib Dem-Conservative coalition Care Minister Paul Burstow said Winter Fuel Allowance should only go to those on pension credit.

Notes that in 2015, the Lib Dem-Conservative coalition targeted winter fuel payments further, removing them from pensioners living anywhere warmer than the south west of England.

~~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. Amend as follows:

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 do not qualify for targeted currently eligible for support from the tax payer to pay for their winter fuel. payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.~~

Notes that BNES is one of the country's wealthiest areas, in the lowest quartile for income deprivation.

Notes that c8% of our pensioners still qualify for winter fuel payments.

Notes that, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies and BBC Verify, pensioners are the least deprived group, while 20% of the country's children live in relative poverty. Across BNES this is 11% but in Twerton it's 17%, Radstock and Keynsham 14% and Westfield, 13%.

Notes that 1,000 of the children in BNES in poverty are below school age.

4. Delete and replace to clarify: 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.~~

Notes that it is not ONLY those on a lower pension than this who qualify for pension credits. Government guidelines clearly say that, "if your income is higher, you might still be eligible for Pension Credit if you have a disability, you care for someone, you have savings or you have housing costs."

-5. Amend:

~~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.that an estimated 1,700 BNES residents aren't claiming Pension Credit, but are eligible.~~

Notes that by working with the third sector, BNES should reasonably be expected to reach these 1,700 residents.

Notes that the third sector in BNES was called "the best in the country" at Scrutiny on 9 September, by the departmental director and plays a key role in reaching into the community in situations such as this.

Notes that the third sector have been waiting since February to hear how BNES will implement c£1m of cuts to their contracts, but in spite of repeated requests for engagement, has been told little, and worse, their engagement on the matter has been repeatedly misrepresented, as they have informed the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet this month.

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. Amend:

~~Further notes~~Notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, but thanks to Labour's decision to keep the pension triple lock, the state pension is expected to rise in April by around 4% - a rise of £460.

~~which, combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments, risks pushing thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.~~Notes that GB Energy and the Warm Homes Plan will lower energy prices.

Notes that with the Warm Homes Plan, the Government is investing £6.6 billion extra to upgrade five million homes to cut bills for families, offering grants and low interest loans to improve home energy efficiency and cut bills and will work with councils to deliver this.

Council therefore:

8. DELETE

~~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. DELETE

~~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.~~

8. Believes we should support those most in need as a priority when poverty rates amongst children in BNES is harming their life chances and when resources are tight

9. Asks the Cabinet to work with the voluntary sector across BNES to find those eligible non-claimants as a matter of priority, and support them to apply.

10. Asks the Cabinet to expedite their delivery of home insulation across the district's social housing estate, and all homes where the most income-deprived pensioners live – regardless of who runs it.