

Supplemental Items for Council

Thursday 26 September 2024 at 7.00 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

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Sarah Clarke

Sarah Clarke

Service Director (Strategy & Governance)

For further information about this/these item(s), or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Darius Zarazel (Principal Democratic Services Officer) on (+44)1635519778

e-mail: Darius.Zarazel1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



Supplemental Items
Council to be held on Thursday 26 September 2024 *(continued)*

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Sadie Owen on telephone (01635) 519052.

Item 12: Notices of Motion

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 26 September 2024

(a) The following Urgent Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Matt Shakespeare:

Council 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.

Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will now not receive these payments which are critical for their well-being. 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).

Council believes that the Labour Government has set the threshold at which pensioners will not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments is 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.

Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them – and over 880,000 pensioners not in receipt. Council recognises the role we must play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support to which they are entitled.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push a significant number of West Berkshire pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council welcomes and appreciates 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.

Council therefore resolves to:

- invite the Leader to write to Olivia Bailey MP asking her to give her formal support to halting the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, Lee Dillon MP, having already given his support.
- invite the leaders of the Opposition and the Minority Group to sign a joint letter with the Leader to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the new Winter Fuel Payment policy to be suspended and reviewed along with pausing the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt introducing a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments.

In the event that they are not prepared to sign such a letter then Council invites the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting same.

- invite the Leader to agree that the Council commence a wide-ranging awareness campaign to maximise the uptake of pension credits.

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Agenda Item 13

Member Questions to be answered at the Council meeting on 26 September 2024.

Members of the Executive to answer the following questions submitted by Councillors in accordance with the [Council's Constitution](#):

(A) Question not related to an item of business to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

“What assurances can you give residents and campaigners that Pincent's Hill will not be developed for housing as part of the Local Plan?”

(B) Question not related to an item of business to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

“How many West Berkshire pensioners are likely to lose their Winter Fuel payments as a result of the Government's withdrawal of the allowance?”

(C) Urgent question not related to an item of business to be answered by the Leader of the Council

“Could the Leader please provide Council with an update on the review into the Schools' Clawback process given that the schools affected had to provide their input to the review by 11th September; and I am sure that both those Schools and Council will wish to know the outcome at the earliest opportunity.”

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