

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.