

COUNCIL – 22 JANUARY 2025 CLLR TONY RIORDAN MOTION TO COUNCIL

MOTION

Motion submitted by Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Niall Innes to second:-

“Council notes that:

At the meeting of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council held on 25 January 2023,

Members agreed the following motion:-

“Fair Compensation for WASPI Women

- *In the 1995 Pensions Act, the Government increased State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with a further increase to 66 in the 2011 Pensions Act.*

- *The change was not properly communicated to 3.8m women born in the 1950s until 2012, giving some only one year’s notice of a six year increase in their anticipated retirement age. Many of the affected women are in our own authority area and a total of 65,000 in the North East. Source: Copy of CBP-07405 Constituency Estimates, House of Commons Library.*

- *The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has found that the Department for Work and Pensions was guilty of maladministration in its handling of the State Pension Age increase for women born in the 1950s.*

- *The All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women has concluded that “The impact of DWP maladministration on 1950s-born women has been as devastating as it is widespread. The APPG believes that the case for category 6 injustice is overwhelming and clear. Women have had their emotional, physical, and mental circumstances totally obliterated by a lack of reasonable notice.”*

- *Research commissioned by campaign group WASPI has found that by the end of 2022, more than 220,000 1950s born women will have died waiting for justice since the WASPI campaign began in 2015.*

- *WASPI’s figures show that over the course of the two year COVID pandemic, 1 in 10 women who died was affected by these uncommunicated changes and lost both their state pension income and the opportunity to make alternative retirement plans.*

- *Despite the Ombudsman’s findings and the rapid death rate of those affected, the government is choosing to wait for further reports before taking any action.*

Council believes this injustice has not only had a profound effect on the individuals involved but on the wider community in Stockton and on local government, not least because:

- *Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners are unable to afford to*

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do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care

- *Women who would have retired and engaged in caring responsibilities for grandchildren*

are having to continue working, increasing the childcare burden on the state locally

- *Women who have been left in poverty are struggling to meet their housing costs, with a knock-on impact on local housing stock*

- *There is a broader impact on voluntary services of all kinds locally, which are missing out on able, active volunteers who would otherwise have been able to retire from full-time work as planned*

- *Our local economy is negatively affected by the reduced spending power and disposable income the uncommunicated State Pension Age changes has brought about among women born in the 1950s*

Council supports:

- *The conclusion of the All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality that women born in the 1950s have suffered a gross injustice, affecting their emotional, physical and mental circumstances in addition to causing financial hardship.*

- *A swift resolution to this ongoing injustice before more and more women die waiting for compensation.*

- *The WASPI campaign asks for an immediate one-off compensation payment of between £11,666 and £20,000 to those affected, with the most going to women who were given the shortest notice of the longest increase in their state pension age.*

Council asks:

- *The Leader of the Council to write to local Members of Parliament, and to the Secretary*

of State for Work and Pensions to outline the effects of the injustice to 1950s women on the communities in Stockton Borough and to seek their support for an immediate compensation package.”

- *Council further notes that the Current Labour Government have rejected the Ombudsman’s recommendations and is refusing to pay the compensation suggested.*

Council believes that:

- *The Labour Government have committed a shameful betrayal and let down WASPI Women by failing to honour the compensation package suggested as part of the Ombudsman Report.*

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- The decision further adds to the numerous 'u-turns' undertaken by this Government such as the removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance for Vulnerable Pensioners, and continued Tax Rises on working people and pensioners.

- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Liz Kendall committed to supporting the WASPI campaign and has now refused fair compensation.

- The Chair of WASPI Angela Madden has responded saying:

"The Government has made an unprecedented political choice to ignore the clear recommendations of an independent watchdog which ordered ministers urgently to compensate WASPI".

- At a time when many pensioners are struggling with soaring costs and energy prices, this decision will further impact pensioners.

Council resolves:

- To request that the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive write separately to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to outline the Council's dismay at this decision and calls on the Government to provide the fair compensation owed.

- That the Leader of the Council engages with local women impacted by this decision and community representatives and meets with them alongside other Group Leaders to discuss what support Council can do to support them in their campaign.

