

MOTION – WINTER FUEL ALLOWANCE

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

“Winter Fuel Allowance

Stockton Borough Council notes the recent decision by the Labour led Government to end universal winter fuel payments for our pensioners and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.

The government’s approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent our eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping our older residents of Stockton and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.

Council is deeply concerned that the vast majority of our pensioners who do not meet this threshold will now not receive the payments. Across England and Wales, the number of people eligible for winter fuel payments will fall by ten million (from 11.1million to only 1.2 million).

In Stockton Borough, the number of our pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 30,234. That means 87% of our pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards. 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.

Stockton Borough Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of our pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council resolves to:

- Instruct the Leader, Cllr Bob Cook to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be immediately reversed.
- Council further requests the Leader, Cllr Bob Cook write to the three Members of Parliament, Matt Vickers MP, Chris McDonald MP and Andy McDonald MP, who represent our pensioners and their families in the Borough asking them to give their formal support to reversing the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility by writing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.
- Request all group leaders within Stockton Borough Council sign a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the new Winter Fuel Payment policy to be reversed.”