

FULL COUNCIL

MOTION ON NOTICE

Date of Council Meeting: - 10 October 2024

Title of Motion: - Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance – disproportionately affecting Dorset and the Charities that support older people in poverty

Proposer: - Cllr Carole Jones

Seconder: - Cllr Spencer Flower

Supported by: - Cllrs A Parry, B Ridout, L O'Leary, J Somper, L Beddow, P Dickenson, J Robinson, B Trite, V Potheary, C Lugg, C Monks, B Quayle. B Goringe, S Murcer, A Skeats

Motion Narrative and Action Required

The recent Government's decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Allowance to those pensioners receiving Pension Credit, despite having a fully costed plan, will mean at least 2 million pensioners across the UK, who are fractionally over the £218.15 weekly limit, will have to make difficult choices this winter, often choosing between heating and eating. Analysis shows that energy bills this winter will be the highest on record for elderly people, particularly with a near 10% increase in the cap expected in the autumn.

The demographics in Dorset with 30% over the age of 65, compared with the national average of 19%, will mean that the loss of the Winter Fuel Allowance will have a disproportionate impact on thousands of elderly and vulnerable pensioners across Dorset, in turn placing a huge additional burden on the already overstretched NHS and Adult Social Care budgets. Those who are just above the cut-off for pension credit will suffer the most and it's not fair.

To move that:

1. Dorset Council encourages those not on Pension Credit, who could be eligible to apply, to do so, offering help to complete of necessary forms, which for many could be a barrier. through a pro-active publicity campaign
2. Dorset Council sign up to the '*Save Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners*', petition being run nationally by Age UK.
3. Dorset Council work with those local charities, which support the most vulnerable in our communities, offering guidance to gain access to the resources they need, particularly in support of those who qualify to benefit from the Cost-of-Living Support Fund, to help cope effectively with their

heating needs during the cold Winter months.

4. Dorset Council again writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim pension credit, are protected from fuel poverty with an assurance that energy companies will treat the vulnerable with a degree of leniency in respect to energy debt. Additionally, ask Government to provide data of those who are eligible in the Dorset Council Area.