

Public Agenda Pack



FULL COUNCIL

**Thursday, 26 September 2024 at 1.00 pm
Hollinsworth Hall, Canalside Conference Centre,
Marsh Lane, Huntworth, Bridgwater, TA6 6LQ**

SUPPLEMENT 2 TO THE AGENDA

To: The members of the Full Council

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Agenda Item 10 Motion (Pages 3 - 4)

To consider a motion – Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting Somerset pensions from fuel poverty.

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Amendment to the Motion, proposed by Councillor Sarah Wakefield and seconded by Councillor Bill Revans

Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting Somerset pensioners from fuel poverty

Somerset Council Notes:

- *The Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit.*
- *The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says may mean 2 million pensioners who rely on the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.*
- *The significant role that the Winter Fuel Payments play in helping many of the 110,000 older residents of Somerset afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.*
- *The response from Age UK, and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this policy change.*
- *The additional strain this decision may place on some vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not currently claim Pension Credit despite being eligible.*

Council believes:

- *This decision has been taken by the Government with no impact assessment having been taken about the effect on household finance and on vulnerable older people.*
- *That the Winter Fuel Payment has been relied upon by many older people and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving other pensioners in financial hardship.*
- *While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, there will be many across Somerset who are close to or who are just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and who will now lose their winter fuel allowance.*
- *The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures basing it solely on the unfairly low pension credit ceiling will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our older residents on lower incomes.*
- *The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.*

Therefore Somerset Council resolves to:

- *Send a letter from Cllr Bill Revans, Council Leader to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling on the Government to postpone cutting the Winter Fuel Allowance and for an impact assessment to be undertaken.*
- *Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.*
- *Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to*

ensure that all eligible pensioners in Somerset are supported in claiming their entitlement.

- *Work with our Voluntary Charity Faith and Social Enterprise (VCSFE) partners to ensure that a substantial proportion of the Household Support Fund available from 1st October 2024 until 31st March 2025 is spent, awarded and utilised to help people in Somerset who are struggling with fuel poverty.*