

**9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**

**MOTION TO COUNCIL PRESENTED BY - COUNCILLOR MRS TINA ELLIS**

**Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty**

Fareham has a high number of pensioners within the Borough who currently benefit from the Winter Fuel Allowance, irrespective of whether they are in receipt of other benefits. It should not be forgotten that the Borough, among this group, has one of the highest numbers of over 80's in the country. This allowance, for so many is a lifeline, giving peace of mind that they can keep their heating on, it can mean the difference between affording to stay in their own home or not so has additional risk of overloading the requirement for alternative accommodation in the area. The potential impact of the change will affect up to 25,000 residents across the Borough and I ask Members' consideration to support the following:-

**Council Notes:**

- The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Fareham Borough Council and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- 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.

**Council believes:**

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Fareham Borough sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- 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 eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

**Council resolves to:**

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible for Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write 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.
- 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 Fareham Borough are supported in claiming their entitlement.

Tina Ellis  
Councillor Mrs Tina Ellis  
Avenue Ward