

Council – 16 October 2024

## Labour Party Group Amendment to motion 5a – Winter Fuel

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.
- There are more than 41,450 people over age of 65 in Trafford, 17.6% of the population, and most of these residents will be pensioners.
- 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 Trafford 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 previous Conservative Government wrecked our economy, leaving a £22bn black hole in the public finances.
- It will take time to repair the previous Government's financial mismanagement and the new Government will have to consider some difficult decisions.
- We have a strong track record in supporting people out of poverty, especially in response to some of the pernicious decisions taken by Conservative-led governments from 2010-2024.
- 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 as many thousands across Trafford 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, was unexpected and

could disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.

- The government's approach needs to give greater consideration to the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.
- The Government's commitment to protect the triple lock is welcome.
- The Government's decision to extend the Household Support Fund for a further six months whilst exploring options around how best to provide sustainable support to vulnerable households in the longer term is also welcome.

Therefore, Council:

- Notes the Leader's letter to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions acknowledging the country's fiscal challenges and expressing our desire to collaborate with the national government to support residents, particularly through encouraging Pension Credit sign-ups. Council also notes we have expressed an interest in participating in any pilot programs to improve Pension Credit uptake and reduce poverty in the community. Will continue and expand our Communications Campaign to encourage greater awareness and uptake of Pension Credits including targeted letters to those who may be eligible.
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- We will continue to support our dedicated Council Pension Credit action group and our Poverty lead in bringing together key Trafford agencies and community groups to encourage and support people to claim Pension Credit.
- Will continue to support and further fund more staff hours in our Exchequer services team and a specialist worker to identify those who receive Housing Benefit but not claiming Pension Credit, so we can target our efforts on a one to one personal basis. As such have requested the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide better data on eligible households.
- Will continue our mission to support people out of poverty by ensuring advice and guidance remains in place to enable people to access all benefits they're entitled to.

## Council – 16 October 2024

### Liberal Democrats Group Amendment to motion 5a – Winter Fuel

#### 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.
- There are more than 41,450 people over age of 65 in Trafford, 17.6% of the population, and most of these residents will be pensioners.
- According to Department of Work and Pensions data, 34,706 pensioners in Trafford will lose out. That means 89% of pensioners currently eligible for Winter Fuel Payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards. There are an estimated 9,766 Trafford pensioners over the age of 80 who are set to lose out.
- 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 Trafford 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.
- A significantly increased communications budget was approved in February, enabling the Council to support residents with the challenges they are facing.

#### 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 as many thousands across Trafford 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.
- Take up of Pension Credit has been worryingly low, more than one in three eligible pensioners are not signed up.

This Council further notes that:

- The Energy Price Cap has risen by 10% this month, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Therefore, Council:

- Requests that the Council Leader and the Chief Executive 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.
- Will use the Council's significantly increased communications budget to commence a Communications Campaign to encourage greater awareness and uptake of Pension Credits including a dedicated advice line, promotion in the local press, as well as targeted letters to those who may be eligible.
- Will sign the Age UK petition to save the Winter Fuel Payment for struggling pensioners and will encourage all members to do the same.

## **Council – 16 October 2024**

### **Liberal Democrats Group Amendment to motion 5b – Bike Library**

Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality accounting for 6% of deaths globally. People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20-35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke compared to those who have a sedentary lifestyle.

Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon/breast cancer and with improved mental health.

In older adults, physical activity is associated with increased functional capacities.

Because of these many positive outcomes reduction in physical inactivity is one of Trafford Council's 5 Priorities for Public Health.

Multiple studies have shown that one of the best ways to achieve this is to build physical activity into people's everyday lives – for example by enabling people to increase their opportunities for cycling.

An excellent way of increasing cycling opportunities is the provision of Bike Libraries – i.e. a library which allows people to borrow a bicycle, as they would a book. Their aim is to boost access to cycles and allow people a chance to give cycling a go.

With this in mind, a Bike Library has been established in 'Woodsend Library' in Davyhulme.

The establishment of the 'Woodsend Bike Library' has been a true example of multi-agency co-operation and working across the Public and Private Sector to improve Public Health by allowing residents, who otherwise would have been unable to do so, to access cycling.

Funding has also been approved for a Bike Library at Broomwood Community Centre in Timperley. The new project will enable people to take up cycling and will support future active travel initiatives in the area.

The Davyhulme Ward Councillors, who volunteer at the bike library in an apolitical capacity, therefore asks this Council to propose a motion of thanks to the following organisations/people for their part in ~~this~~ these partnership projects:

- 'Transport for Greater Manchester' for start up funding provision
- Trafford Council's Wheeling and Cycling Team for their expertise and guidance
- Trafford Council's Libraries Team for systems integration
- 'One Trafford Amey' for groundworks
- 'SUEZ' for sourcing bikes
- 'Manchester Bike Kitchen' for their advice, bike sourcing and ongoing technical expertise
- The BlueSCI team and everyone at Broomwood Community Centre for their ongoing support

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**Council – 16 October 2024**

## **Labour Party Group Amendment to motion 5d – Winter Fuel Payments**

This Council notes that:

The recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal Winter Fuel Payments has restricted eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credit, excluding too many vulnerable pensioners.

Many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will no longer receive the payments. Across England and Wales the number of people eligible for Winter Fuel Payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).

According to data obtained by the Liberal Democrats from the Department of Work and Pensions, 34,706 pensioners in Trafford will lose out. That means 89% of pensioners currently eligible for Winter Fuel Payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards. There are an estimated 9,766 Trafford pensioners over the age of 80 who are set to lose out.

A significantly increased communications budget was approved in February, enabling the Council to support residents with the challenges they are facing.

This Council believes that:

That the previous Conservative Government wrecked our economy, leaving a £22bn black hole in the public finances.

It will take time to repair the previous Government's financial mismanagement and the new Government will have to consider some difficult decisions.

We have a strong track record in supporting people out of poverty, especially in response to some of the pernicious decisions taken by the coalition and conservative governments from 2010-2024.

The criteria for Winter Fuel Payments that the Labour Government is using **may exclude** pensioners who need help. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for Pension Credit. This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.

Take up of Pension Credit has been worryingly low, more than one in three eligible pensioners are not signed up.

The Government's commitment to protect the triple lock is welcome.

We have a role to play to increase awareness of welfare support such as Pension Credit to ensure people get the help that they need.

Regarding wider support, the Government's decision to extend the Household Support Fund for a further six months whilst exploring options around how best to provide sustainable support to vulnerable households in the longer term is welcome.

This Council further notes that:

The Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

This Council resolves to:

1. **continue and expand our** awareness campaign to maximise uptake of Pension Credit. This should include community outreach , promotion in the local press as well as targeted letters to those who may be eligible.
2. **Notes the Leader's letter to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions acknowledging the country's fiscal challenges and expressing our desire to collaborate with the national government to support residents, particularly through encouraging Pension Credit sign-ups. Council also notes we have expressed an interest in participating in any pilot programs to improve Pension Credit uptake and reduce poverty in the community.**
3. **Will continue our mission to support people out of poverty by ensuring advice and guidance remains in place to enable people to access all benefits they're entitled to.**