

## 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.**