

NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY CLLR LINDA GROOBY SECONDED BY CLLR ADRIAN HOPKINSON

CHANGES TO THE WINTER FUEL ALLOWANCE AND PROTECTING PENSIONERS FROM FUEL POVERTY.

Council notes:

The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict winter fuel payment to only pensioners in receipt of means tested benefits such as 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 High Peak and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing the 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 policy change. The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom will not claim pension credit despite being eligible.

The Government claim that many pensioners do not require the payment is far outweighed by the many thousands who 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. Increasing pressure on the already overstretched hospitals.

The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent pensioners from claiming pension credit leaving many without the support they desperately need.

- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means test 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 to sign the petition themselves.

- Encourage local efforts to promote uptake through the council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations in High Peak are supported in claiming their entitlement.