

Council 7th October 2024

Item 12 refers

Notices of Motion

1. Motion from Cllr Bateman

Seconder Cllr Nunn

Protecting Our Most Vulnerable Pensioners from Fuel Poverty.

Labour's proposal to remove the Winter Fuel Payment (WFP) from pensioners who do not claim Pension Credit or are on other benefits is regressive and backward.

Particularly for those living in rural communities.

850,000 pensioners are eligible for the credit but don't claim it.

One in five excess winter deaths are directly attributable to cold homes, and one in ten to fuel poverty.

- (1) This Labour Government policy will mean more pensioners will die from the cold this winter. Why does this policy unfairly affect rural communities?
- (2) Rural housing is more likely to be older and less energy-efficient, with a significant proportion built before modern insulation standards were introduced.
- (3) Over 70% of rural homes in the UK were built before 1980, compared to about 50% in urban areas.
- (4) Rural houses have on average 49.6% energy efficiency compared to 65.5% in city centres.
- (5) Many rural homes are not connected to mains gas network, with households often relying on more expensive off-grid heating sources like oil, wood, or canister LPG. Around 1.5 million homes in the UK rely on oil for heating, with the majority located in rural areas.
- (6) Heating oil in January 2020 was 54p per litre, it is now 66p per litre, further straining the limited financial resources of rural pensioners. In addition, OFGEM has announced a further 10% increase in energy costs further increasing the burden.
- (7) Public Health England reports a 1.5% increase in EWDs for every degree Celsius drop below 18°C, underscoring the critical need for adequate heating. Excess winter deaths (EWDs) are a significant issue, with over 30,000 EWDs recorded in the UK each year, and a higher incidence in rural areas where healthcare access is limited.
- (8) Rural communities often face isolation due to poor transport links and limited access to services. This lack of connectivity can hinder pensioners from accessing alternative financial support, energy efficiency schemes, or healthcare services.

(9) Council resolves to:

Condemn the proposal to remove the Winter Fuel Payment from pensioners who do not claim Pension Credit or are on other benefits, recognising the disproportionate impact this will have on our most vulnerable residents, particularly those in rural communities.

Commits the Leader of this Council to write to both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ask for funding for a local advertising and outreach campaign to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting pensioners who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.

Furthermore the Leader should commit the Council to support 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.

2. Motion from Cllr Knowles – Leader of the Council

Seconder: Cllr Bateman – Leader of the Opposition

In Harborough District we are proud of our local sports champions and in September 2021 I had the honour of seconding a motion put by the then leader of the Council to recognise the sporting achievements of our local Olympians in the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

Now as leader of the council I have the pleasure of again proposing a motion to recognise the latest Gold medal winner from our district, Lauren Henry, who won as part of the team who competed in the Womens quadruple skulls rowing event. The team competed on 31st July in the final for this event and narrowly beat The Netherlands in a photo finish to bring home the gold medals. It is the first gold medal Team GB has ever won in the event.

Lauren, 22, who lives in Lutterworth was the youngest member of the crew. She joined Leicester Rowing Club when she was just 13 and has had a great many other wins and achievements on her journey to the Olympic gold.

To recognise this amazing success, I propose that we again ask officers to arrange for the Freedom of District to be granted to Lauren Henry in recognition of her sporting achievements and her local connection to our district ; and to arrange a special Council meeting to agree the proposal prior to the Council meeting on 9th December 2024.

The Freedom can then be bestowed on Lauren at a suitable public meeting of the Council in the coming months.

I hope that all Councillors can support this motion.