

Amendment to 12.2 MOTION ON THE WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

Proposed by: Cllr

Seconded by: Cllr

Additions in red and underlined

Deletions in red and struckthrough

This Council notes:

- The last Labour Government introduced the Winter Fuel Payment in 1999 in recognition that many older people were struggling with the costs of their gas and electric bills;
- By 2005, the sum paid was set at £300 for over-80s and £200 for those pensioners under-80 and that this figure has not increased for nearly 20 years;
- That the current administration has introduced several additional measures to prevent choices between heating and eating, including:
 - Warm banks and warm packs in several Council buildings across the borough, where elderly and vulnerable residents can come for a warm drink, a chat, and to receive free goods to keep them warm, including hats, scarves, and hot water bottles.
 - A generous cost of living package to support residents struggling to make ends meet.
 - A freezing of Council Tax for the year 2022-2023; and a capping of this freeze for all residents earning £49,500 or less.
- The new Labour Government has inherited a dire economic situation, which will require it to make difficult decisions, including removing this key lifeline to millions of pensioners nationally, and thousands in Tower Hamlets;
- The Chancellor has announced that the Winter Fuel Payment will be stopped for older people who are not in receipt of Pension Credit;
- This will impact upon nearly 9,000 of the 15,913 Tower Hamlets residents who are in receipt of the Basic State Pension;
- Ministers have instructed the Department for Work & Pensions to undertake a 'take-up' publicity campaign to persuade those who are eligible but not in receipt of Pension Credit to apply, so they also get the Winter Fuel Payment too. the Administration pledges to launch such a campaign locally as a matter of urgency.

This Council believes:

- Tower Hamlets has many older people with small occupational pensions who are slightly above the £13,000 a year income threshold for Pension Credit and that these residents cannot be described as "wealthy";
- Against a backdrop of the dramatic increase in energy prices since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many older people who are not in receipt of the Pension Credit will struggle with the costs of keeping their home warm without the Winter Fuel Payment;

- Tower Hamlets Council ~~has sufficient~~ will explore whether it has the financial resources to be able to enable it to cover the £1.5 million cost of a one-off Payment, and will provide this payment if it is affordable.

This Council resolves:

- To ~~call on~~ support the Executive Mayor in his instruction to ~~instruct~~ officers to establish a local '~~Tower Hamlets Winter Fuel Payment~~ Mayor's Winter Emergency Fund' scheme ~~offering sums of £300 to those over 80 and £200 to those under 80 to plug the gap left by the government's decision to remove this support for those~~ who are not in receipt of Pension Credit and write to local pensioners inviting them to apply;
- To back the public campaign by Age UK and other charities and the trade union movement to try to persuade the Labour Government to reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment.

Amendment to 12.3 Motion to Full Council on Violence, Abuse and Intimidation in Political Campaigning

Proposed by: Cllr

Seconded by: Cllr

Additions in red and underlined

Deletions in red and struckthrough

This council notes:

1. That in the recent UK General Election campaign, parliamentary candidates reported an increase in abuse, intimidation, and harassment.
2. In Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 that everyone has the right to freedom of expression.
3. Those targeted in our borough were disproportionately women of colour, with Member of Parliament for Poplar and Limehouse Apsana Begum – herself a victim of domestic violence and an outspoken campaigner against the political apathy and treatment she received from mainstream political parties concerning this issue – and Liberal Democrat candidate in Bethnal Green & Stepney Rabina Khan, receiving intimidation, harassment and abuse whilst campaigning.
4. MP for Bethnal Green and Stepney Rushanara Ali received death threats, intimidation and harassment during the campaign which resulted in her needing police protection when in public in her constituency.
5. In the last eight years, two MPs have been murdered in the United Kingdom, Jo Cox and Sir David Amess.
6. That political violence continues to rise with all politicians facing increasing levels of violence, harassment and abuse.
7. Research from Amnesty International^a found that women in politics are 27 times more likely to face online abuse compared to male counterparts.
8. On Tuesday 9th July 2023, LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the safety of Women during election campaigns during item 9: 'Women's Safety Action Plan Response Progress'.
9. The Chair and members of LBTH Overview and Scrutiny Committee condemned the intimidation of Women during the general election campaign.

This council believes:

10. That the intimidation, harassment and threats against candidates in the recent UK General Election must be condemned.
11. That whilst we may disagree with individuals' political beliefs and stances, political violence of all types should not be tolerated or excused.
12. That the ability to freely debate and challenge each other's political views and opinions is a cornerstone of democracy.
13. That abuse, harassment and intimidation can act as a precursor to physical violence and leads to disenfranchisement and is therefore anti-democratic.
14. That Black, Asian and ethnically minority women in politics receive a disproportionate amount of online and public abuse.

15. Violence against women in politics discourages many women from entering the political arena.
16. As local leaders, council members have a responsibility to lead by example in our own behaviour as well as call out all forms of abuse and intimidation.
17. That social media companies should be doing more to curb the online abuse and harassment of political figures on their platforms.

This council resolves:

18. To provide bystander training to members and officers to strengthen their ability to call out abusive behaviour.
19. To sign up to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign and adopt the toolkit to create a culture of safety and respect.
20. To continue to support the ongoing work and measures being taken by the Council's Women's Commission to promote and protect women's voices in the political arena.
21. To continue to work closely with the Metropolitan Police; it's Tension Monitoring Group; and to deploy the additional Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers [THEOs] to protect and promote women in politics during election campaigns.
22. To examine whether the council and its partners ~~have robust enough processes~~ can strengthen its processes to protect women from violence, intimidation and harassment during election campaigns.

Amendment to 12.4 Motion on Support the campaign to move the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) to an ethical investment model.

Proposed by: Cllr

Seconded by: Cllr

Additions in red and underlined

Deletions in red and struckthrough

This Council notes:

- The ongoing international legal cases regarding the occupation of Palestine; the war between the State of Israel and Hamas; and the ongoing conflict in Gaza; the illegal Russian Invasion of Ukraine; and the ever-growing climate emergency has thrown a spotlight on how local authorities invest their pensions funds.
- Across the UK campaigns are building to press councils to divest millions of pounds from companies that are complicit in/profit from military occupation and the violation of human rights; invest in weaponry and surveillance technology and/or are involved in the exploration/processing of fossil fuels. Some councils, such as Waltham Forest and Islington, have already made concrete divestment commitments - demonstrating that where there is the will, there is a way.
- The threat posed by fossil fuelled climate change is real and urgent. Investments in fossil fuels are not only harmful to the environment but put the sustainable future of pensions at risk. Investing local government pension funds in fossil fuels is fuelling climate change and toxic air pollution, entrenching failing energy systems, fuelling repressive regimes, and contradicting political commitments to tackle climate change.
- The Tower Hamlets LGPS has millions of pounds of assets in a variety of investments. Council staff and those working for admitted employers providing local public services pay into the LGPS over the lifetime of their employment. Employers also pay in contributions. This pot of money is invested by the council with oversight from the Pensions Committee who act as Trustees. On retirement workers draw their pension from the Fund.
- Most of the Fund is handed over to the London Common Investment Vehicle (CIV) who act as investment managers for the 32 London boroughs.

This Council believes:

- It is time for our council to disclose and divest its Pension Fund and ensure that the assets are ethically invested.
- That we all want to have a comfortable retirement at the end of a long working life – but retirement funds should not be being used to create a more unstable and damaged planet.
- That the TH LGPS fund (which is made up of public money and the deferred wages of public sector workers) should not be used to fund, prop up or profit from human rights violations, occupation, death and destruction.
- Properly planned ethical investment over time can ensure that the scheme is healthy and that its financial obligations are met.

This council resolves:

- To support and commend the local community campaign that has recently formed to press the council to disclose its LGPS fund investments and for the Pension Committee to bring forward a concrete roadmap to ensure that LGPS funds are being invested in an ethical investment scheme.