

LABOUR AMENDMENT TO THE ADMINISTRATION MOTION FOR DEBATE ON WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS REDRESS

Proposer: Cllr Marc Francis

Seconder: Cllr Amina Ali

Additions in Red and Underline
Deletions in Red and Struckthrough

Council notes:

- The difficult position that many residents – especially pensioners – find themselves in when paying bills around wintertime.
- That many residents in Tower Hamlets could have to make the choice between eating and heating this winter.
- That the Council continues to do all it can to support residents through the ongoing cost of living crisis.
- That through schemes such as the Warm Hubs and Warm Packs, pensioners will be able to go somewhere warm for a hot drink and receive hats, gloves, socks, hot water bottles and other amenities to help keep them warm and save money on their bills.
- 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;

Council believes:

- The new Government has inherited a dire economic situation, which will require it to make difficult decisions;
- That while these measures and the forthcoming investment into universal free homecare in February will go some way to alleviating these pressures, a cold winter could see vulnerable, elderly residents choosing between heating and eating.
- That around 9,000 pension-age residents who would have been eligible for a winter fuel payment will now not be receiving one.
- That there are also 4,304 residents who are eligible for pension credit who appear to not be claiming.
- That no pensioner or household should have to choose between eating and heating.
- That the Council must therefore provide support for elderly and vulnerable residents in the months to come, to offset any financial strain that will impact those already among the 40% currently living in fuel poverty in Tower Hamlets.

Council resolves:

- ~~• To request the creation a *Mayor's Winter Emergency Fund*, to provide those pensioners without pension credit but struggling to make ends meet with financial support with their bills.~~
- To call on the Executive Mayor to instruct officers to establish a local 'Tower Hamlets Winter Fuel Payment' scheme offering sums of £300 to those over-80 and £200 to those under-80, who are not in receipt of Pension Credit and write to local pensioners inviting them to apply;
- To provide pensioners in a precarious financial position with a payment towards their winter fuel bills. This would see residents of pension age but ineligible for the scrapped *Winter Fuel Allowance* payments receive a payment.
- To launch this scheme at the earliest available Cabinet, with details of how to apply and eligibility in place by then.
- To write to the government requesting the reinstatement of the *Winter Fuel Allowance*.
- To back the public campaign by Age UK and other charities and the trade union movement to try to persuade the Government to reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment.
- To actively promote through a borough-wide campaign how to access pension credit, so those 4,304 residents eligible for pension credit but not claiming it can understand how to do so.