

COUNCIL – 16 OCTOBER 2024

NOTICES OF MOTION

Submitted to Council in Accordance with the Council Procedural Rules

1 Winter Fuel Allowance

Proposed by Councillor A Kolker and Seconded by Councillor A Gage

This Council is dismayed at the Labour Government's recent decision, in the absence of a full impact assessment, to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only those pensioners in receipt of Pension Credit or similar benefit, with immediate effect this winter.

This means that many vulnerable Cheshire East pensioners this year, will lose between £200 and £300 that they have relied upon to keep their homes warm and hot food prepared.

Nationally, Age UK has identified that up to two million pensioners who badly need this money, will now not receive it.

In addition, as many as 800,000 pensioners who are eligible for Pension Credit, do not claim it and will therefore remain ineligible for the Winter Fuel Allowance.

As elected members, we have already received letters of concern from affected, older residents, including, for example, a petition from fifty members of the Congleton Widows Group.

Vulnerable Cheshire East Pensioners on limited means, but either not claiming Pension Credit or with incomes just above the Pension Credit threshold, will face desperate choices this winter; to "heat or eat" - decisions that pose a significant threat to health and life.

This Council therefore resolves:

- That Group Leaders write jointly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, expressing this Council's deep concerns regarding the impact of this decision on Cheshire East's most vulnerable residents and asking that the Winter Fuel Allowance is reinstated with immediate effect. This to remain in place, pending the results of a full impact assessment and the evaluation of an alternative scheme that will protect the most vulnerable and middle-income pensioners at risk during Winter months.
- To bring forward a refreshed Council-led, local awareness campaign, via digital, targeted mail and via related services and venues (for example; GP surgeries, Community facilities, places of worship), to support all those eligible, to apply for Pension Credit, before 21st December 2024. This date is critical if they are to register for Winter Fuel Allowance this Winter and so avoid fuel poverty.

- That the Leader and Deputy Leader of Council write to all Members of Parliament representing Cheshire East constituencies, explaining this Council's concerns and to request their support in raising them in Westminster, on behalf of Cheshire East's most vulnerable pensioners

[Age UK responds to the Chancellor's announcement to means test the Winter Fuel Payment.](#)

2 Council's Governance Framework

Proposer by Councillor J Clowes and Seconded by Councillor S Gardiner

This Council notes the concerns raised in the LGA Peer Challenge Report (March 2024), related to the Council's systems of governance and specifically highlighted in:

Recommendation 8: Urgently review the Council's decision-making framework: The Council needs to streamline current decision-making arrangements to avoid siloed working across committees, ensure that Committees are working through effective work programmes, and reduce confusion and lost capacity caused by the current system.

This Council recognises that changes to the committee system are necessary to address this recommendation and related issues, as highlighted in the report.

It is therefore proposed that this Council gives authority to the Constitution Working Group to:

1. Consider and recommend to Corporate Policy Committee, no later than 31 March 2025, those modifications to the committee system that will address, at pace, the issues of financial management and governance as raised in the LGA Peer Challenge Report; and
2. Consider and recommend to Corporate Policy Committee, no later than 30th September 2025, potential substantive changes to the Council's Governance Framework, that will facilitate improved capacity and effectiveness throughout the longer-term period of transformation.

[LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report 2021 \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)

3 The Council's Governance Arrangements

Proposed by Councillor N Mannion

At the Council's Annual General Meeting on 22 May 2019, Council resolved to express its commitment to implementing a change of its decision-making governance arrangements, comprising the cessation of the Leader and Cabinet model of governance, and the implementation of a full committee model of governance.

Following much preparatory work, on 19 November 2020, Council resolved amongst other things, to cease operating the Leader and Cabinet model of governance, and to implement a committee system model of governance, this to take effect from the Annual Council Meeting on 12 May 2021. Since then, the Council has operated committee system arrangements.

The committee system has now been in operation for over three years, and it is appropriate and timely for members to consider the benefits or otherwise of this system of governance.

Between 24-28 March 2024, the Local Government Association undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council, which concentrated upon a number of issues, including the Council's governance arrangements.

The LGA's report included observations and comments upon the Council's governance arrangements, together with a recommendation, which are set out in the Appendix to this Notice of Motion.

Notice of Motion

Council calls for a full report to be prepared and presented to the Corporate Policy Committee on or before 6 February 2025, which will:

- Include information from Members of their experience of the current committee system.
- Set out details of how any change in the Council's governance arrangements might be made, the implications of such a change, and the timescale within which such a change might be implemented.
- Provide details upon any other pertinent matters, such as financial implications and the potential impact of such a change upon the speed and effectiveness of decision-making.

[LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report 2021 \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

4 Broadcasting and Recording Equipment

Proposed by Councillor L Wardlaw and Seconded by Councillor R Chadwick

Will this Council commit to improving its broadcasting and recording equipment in the interest of openness, fairness and a wider access to democracy.

It is now over a year since Cheshire East Council has been made aware of the poor sound quality of its broadcasts and recordings, and yet the problem remains unresolved. The recurrent failure of its' live broadcasting and the delays in recordings being available is unacceptable. We have made a commitment to deliver this service to our residents, but we fail at every meeting held. The situation is anti-democratic, unprofessional, and unacceptable.

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Democracy is not well served when it cannot be easily accessed. The current service is inadequate. An improved offer is needed and I ask that this be considered as a priority.

5 Agreed Framework for Delivery of Services at a Local Level

Proposed by Councillor M Gorman and Seconded by Councillor K Edwards

The Council is about to embark on the devolution journey.

It is also entering a new realm of co-operation with our Parish and Town Councils, where increased co-operation and shared working needs to be explored in a planned and systematic way to secure the ongoing provision of services at local level in a co-operative partnership.

We therefore urge that as part of the Council's Transformation Programme Cheshire East Council approaches our local town and parish council partners to discuss developing an agreed framework to support the delivery of appropriate services at the local level. There are already good examples of such partnership arrangements in place in parts of Cheshire East.

Such a framework should have at its heart a balanced and equitable relationship, for the benefit of both councils and of local residents.