

**Meeting:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 January 2025  
**Classification:** Part 1  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Title of Report:** Notice of Motion – Pensioners Winter Fuel Payment

**Executive Director:** Joe Chesterton  
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**Executive Councillor:** Councillor Collins  
Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides background information to update Cabinet on the motion titled: **Pensioners Winter Fuel Payment**, put before Council on 17 October 2024.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Cabinet to note the actions taken in respect of the agreed Council motion.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 During consideration of this matter put before Council on 17th October 2024, 5 resolutions were set as below:

1. It urges all pensioners to check whether they are entitled to receive Pension Credit and notes that the administration has introduced LIFT (low-income family tracker) software which has already identified over 700 pensioners (by 30th September) in Southend who are entitled to Pension Credit but not currently claiming and urges Cabinet to continue to pursue this proactive approach.
2. The Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor alongside other group leaders urging her to review the thresholds - where national finances allow - for those who would qualify for Pension Credit and those who may just miss out on those credits and the Fuel Allowance under the current rules.

3. We welcome the government's £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households from October, extending the Household Support Fund with £421 million, to ensure local authorities can support vulnerable people and families, and ensuring around 1.3 million households in England and Wales will continue to receive up to £300 in Winter Fuel Payments.
4. This motion acknowledges the administration's proactive response by ring-fencing of £250,000 of Household Support Fund for the purpose of supporting pensioners who fall just outside of Pension Credit eligibility will help thousands of pensioners in Southend this winter should they require it.
5. The remaining Household Support Fund will continue to be used to support those in need, including pensioners, in line with guidance and existing eligibility criteria.

#### **4. Outcomes and Actions to Resolutions**

- 4.1 **Resolution 1: It urges all pensioners to check whether they are entitled to receive Pension Credit and notes that the administration has introduced LIFT (low-income family tracker) software which has already identified over 700 pensioners (by 30 September) in Southend who are entitled to Pension Credit but not currently claiming and urges Cabinet to continue to pursue this proactive approach.**

The Benefits team will continue to regularly identify pensioners within their caseload through LIFT and other associated techniques and databases that are entitled to but are not claiming Pension Credit. They will contact these customers and support their application for Pension Credit. This will then re-entitle them to the Winter Fuel Payment allowance.

- 4.2 **Resolution 2: The Leader of the Council wrote to the Chancellor on 3 January, alongside other group leaders, urging her to review the thresholds - where national finances allow - for those who would qualify for Pension Credit and those who may just miss out on those credits and the Fuel Allowance under the current rules.**
- 4.3 **Resolution 3: We welcome the government's £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households from October, extending the Household Support Fund with £421 million, to ensure local authorities can support vulnerable people and families, and ensuring around 1.3 million households in England and Wales will continue to receive up to £300 in Winter Fuel Payments.**

£1,100,000 of the Household Support Fund has been put into the Councils local welfare provision, the Essential Living Fund. Of this £250,000 has been

ringfenced for pensioners. The scheme will continue to offer support with food and fuel costs and will run until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

£100,000 of the Household Support Fund was allocated to Southend Emergency Fund (SEF).

SEF operates an agile, fast and targeted grants programme. Organisations submit bids for grants of up to a set limit to support vulnerable households in the city. The grants panel (which includes a representative from the Council) meet weekly to decide on funding requests. Organisations that access the funds include local churches, community groups, charities, non-profit organisations and schools. The scheme reaches support organisations across the whole of the city and cover a lot of smaller groups of people that may not be visible in larger programmes.

Support will be targeted to people with disabilities, caring responsibilities, and pensioners, for help with food, fuel, water charges. The bids must include full details of the support to be offered and the people that support will be given to. Organisations work with the people to provide all round support, not just the offer from the grant.

£100,000 of the Household Support Fund was allocated to Citizens Advice (CA).

They will provide targeted support for food and fuel grants. The CA will do a full assessment for each case, looking to maximise their income and working with them on debt issues as well as making an award from the fund if appropriate.

In the Autumn Statement the Government confirmed that the Household Support Fund will continue for the 2025/26 year. Whilst guidance on how it will be distributed is yet to be issued, Southend-on-Sea City Council will continue to use whatever level of funding is provided by the Government to support local households most in need throughout 2025/26.

**4.4 Resolution 4: This motion acknowledges the administration's proactive response by ring-fencing of £250,000 of Household Support Fund for the purpose of supporting pensioners who fall just outside of Pension Credit eligibility will help thousands of pensioners in Southend this winter should they require it.**

As stated above, this has been ringfenced in the monies allocated to the Essential Living Fund Scheme.

To the end of December 207 pensioners were supported with a total award of £67,621.

The Benefits team are continuing to monitor and publish monthly statistics.

**4.5 Resolution 5: The remaining Household Support Fund will continue to be used to support those in need, including pensioners, in line with guidance and existing eligibility criteria**

Please see support allocation listed under Resolution 3.

To the end of December the support offered to other groups by the Household Support Fund within the Essential Living Fund was 1,869 awards totalling £621,392.

**5 Other Options**

5.1 N/A

**6 Financial Implications**

6.1 The support being offered under the Notice of Motion is with Government grant funding. There are currently no additional financial implications for the Council.

**7 Legal Implications**

7.1 N/A

**8 Policy Context**

8.1 None

**9 Carbon Impact**

9.1 None

**10 Equalities**

10.1 None

**11 Consultation**

11.1 None

**12 Appendices**

12.1 None

**13. Report Authorisation**

<b>This report has been approved for publication by:</b>		
	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Executive Director(s)	Joe Chesterton	31 December 2024
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	31 December 2024
Acting Monitoring Officer	Jayne Middleton	2 January 2025
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Paul Collins	2 January 2025