

Council
18 September 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL held on Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors F.Marsh (Chair)
L.Chesterman, M.Hobbs, A.Skottowe, I.Walsh,
S.Asare, K.Bonkur, K.Gardner, S.Khan, L.Gilbert,
A.Bardett, J.Otumunye, M.Short, S.Bonfante, J.Broach,
J.Cragg, L.Crofton, R.Grewal, M.Holloway, D.Jones,
T.Kingsbury, R.Lass, G.Michaelides, T.Mitchinson,
L.Musk, A.Nix, R.Platt, J.Quinton, T.Rowse, B.Sarson,
A.Scott, M.Siewniak, J.Skoczylas, S.Thusu, K.Thorpe,
R.Trigg, C.Watson, J.Weston, P.Zukowskyj,
A.Chesterman and B.Fitzsimon

OFFICIALS K.Ng, Chief Executive
PRESENT: R.Baker, Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)
S.McDaid, Executive Director (Resident Services and Climate Change)
C.Cade, Governance Services Manager
S.Saunders, Legal Services Manager

111. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17th July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

112. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S.Goldwater, H.Goldwater, D.Panter, P.Shah, M.Birelson, J.Boulton and G.Moore.

113. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

114. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions from the public were received.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

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Councillors Kingsbury, Zukowskyj and Thusu declared an interest as Hertfordshire County Councillors.

The following members raised a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in Motion 2: Councilor Jones, A.Chesterman, L.Chesterman, Skottowe, Nix, Weston, Mitchinson, Watson, Fitzsimon, Cragg, Trigg, Rowse, Mitchinson and Michaelides.

116. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor

"Thanks to those who attended my Afternoon Tea in August where we raised just shy of £800 for my chosen charity, Herts Young Homeless. I sincerely hope you will all be able to come along to my next fundraising event my Italian Night at the Terranova Restaurant on Wednesday 9th October starting at 7pm. Please also note in your diaries my Quiz Night, more details to follow, which will be held at Campus West on Friday 15 November.

Before we start our meeting, on behalf of Cabinet Members, Councillors, the Deputy Mayor and all of us at Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to local resident, Louise Fiddes, on her outstanding success at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris. Louise, who is a member of Hatfield Swimming Club, won Gold in the women's 100m breaststroke, one of incredible 49 gold medals won by Team GB. She also won bronze in the 200m freestyle. Louise is an example to us all of how hard work and dedication to her sport paid off. I would also like to extend our congratulations to Jodie Williams who is originally from Welwyn Garden City. Jodie won a bronze medal as part of the women's 4x400m relay, playing a crucial role running in the heats. Finally, many congratulations to all of Team GB who finished second in the Paralympics medal table, winning a whopping 124 medals overall. Can I ask everyone to please show their appreciation for Louise, Jodie and all of Team GB for everything that they achieved at the 2024 Paralympics."

Executive Member of Resources

"In advance of the conclusion of the Government's spending Review and the upcoming Autumn Budget Statement, the Leader Deputy Leader, and I have this week written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to highlights to continued financial pressure on local government.

In the letter we've outlined that substantial level of funding cuts that we've faced under the previous governments which, for this Council is equivalent to over 7 million pounds per annum. We also highlighted the additional burdens that have been placed on local government and the additional financial pressures being caused by previous government policy. We have called on the chancellor to reaffirm the government's commitment to a longer term financial settlements and have asked that consideration is given to the pressures that we face such as committing to the continuation of homelessness funding, which we hope will enable us to support residents facing these challenges.

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In the letter we took the opportunity to thank the chancellor for the lifting of the restriction on how we utilise Right to Buy receipts per our Affordable Housing Programme and the commitment that has been made to resolving the audits backlog in local government. Whilst we expect a single year settlement for the upcoming year, I hope to be able to provide a positive updates regarding a multi-year settlement at a later meeting, which will provide the Council with some much-needed certainty in the medium term, following years successive funding cuts and single year settlements.”

Executive Member for Environment

“I would like to inform everyone that has been our most successful year in Anglia in Bloom, finishing first in four categories: best business Improvement district category for Welwyn Garden City, best sustainable planting category for Anniversary Gardens, best Local Authority floral display category for Howardsgate/Parkway Welwyn Garden City and best public open space category for Howardsgate/Parkway. We also received the bronze award for cemeteries and Crematoria category for Oak Hill cemetery.

We are rightly proud of our green open spaces and heritage in Welwyn Hatfield and have worked hard to increase the more sustainable planting and make environmental improvements. I would like to thank the Anglia in Bloom judges for their dedication and time to the competition, and also thank our contracted staff, partners and volunteers who have made such successful year.

I would also like to provide an update on the next stage of our response to fly tipping. One of the key priorities for the joint administration has been tackling the blight of fly tipping and littering in our borough. We know that is also a priority for residents. Clearing fly tipping and clean-up littering in our streets costs the Council's thousands each year and negatively impact on the visual amenity of our borough.

During the first year of the joint administration we focus our resources on enforcement of rubbish being dumped as a result we issued over 100 fixed penalty notices, which was the highest number we have issued and also was the highest in Hertfordshire, as well as being five times more than the previous year.

Our robust approach to fly tipping enforcement has been further enhanced with the introduction of a contract with District Enforcement Limited (DEL) which commenced on the 24th of this month. DEL will proactively be patrolling all of our borough, especially fly tipping hotspot, searching for evidence of waste offences and issuing of fixed penalty notices. They will also undertake patrols to observe littering by people. Those who do not pay their fixed penalty notices will be subject to prosecution. I am happy to confirm that this new service will be at no cost to the Council.

We will also be running a communications campaign alongside this enhanced enforcement to inform residents about proper waste disposal, waste reduction and recycling and enforcement actions taken.

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Once we get things up and running, DEL will also be happy to do walk along with ward councillors to get a better idea of problem areas as well as participate in any litter picks. I am looking forward to work together with DEL and for our residents to see positive changes this partnership will make.”

117. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

1. Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Thusu

“Not the last Full Council, but the one before I proposed a motion whereby the Borough Council as the lead planning authority played an active role in ensuring the future residents were protected from leasehold or as some have termed fleasehold. After much debate there seemed to be common consensus that the council would be willing to undertake a cross party working group to look at what can be done to protect our future home owners. Would the relevant portfolio holder be willing to update myself and other councillors on how they propose this to be taken forward?”

Answer from Councillor Holloway

“Thank you for your question Cllr Thusu.

Members will recall that at that Full Council meeting, both the original motion and the amended motion were withdrawn on the basis that a Task and Finish Scrutiny would look at the issue of excessive and unfair charges to householders in the new Municipal year.

Cllr Zukowskyj also extended the offer of working with Cllr Thusu to take up the issue with Cllr Richard Roberts at Hertfordshire County Council to explore whether further engagement could be held with the developers through the Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter - and I understand that you both had a conversation after the meeting and resolved to engage with Councillor Roberts. Cllr Zukowskyj has had that conversation with Cllr Roberts and that there was agreement that this would be looked into.

Officers did bring up the topic in the first workshop with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, however the topic was not chosen to be on the O&S work programme.

Notwithstanding this, I’m happy to ask our Executive Member for Planning, Cllr Rose Grewal, as well as Cllr Russ Platt, who is the Lib Dem lead on Planning issues to meet with you and consider what we could collectively do.

As I understand it the new Labour government has a strong focus on the sector and is committed to publishing a draft Leasehold and Commonhold Reform bill in the 24/25 Parliamentary session.

Again, as I understand it, the draft legislation is intended to implement new protections for freehold homeowners who contribute towards estate costs and will include a consultation on the best way to address the injustices of fleecehold estates and unfair maintenance costs.

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This will hopefully go much further than the measures included in the Leasehold and Reform Act 24, which received Royal Assent before the General Election this year - and we will continue to monitor this, and input to any consultation to this effect when the opportunity presents itself.

I will however pick up on the conversations had by Cllr Zukowskyj with Cllr Roberts at the next meeting of the Hertfordshire Growth Board to follow up on progress."

Supplementary question

"Thank you very much, Councillor Holloway, that's immensely detailed, and I also appreciate Councillor Zukowskyj speaking to Richard Roberts, I also had a conversation along those lines.

As you mentioned that there is some talk of some consultation, or rather something coming through 2024/25, which may well actually mean that it won't be until after 2025, we will have some idea. I appreciate that whatever we come up with as a council may be superseded by what comes from that. Is it of your opinion or perhaps your administration's opinion is we get ahead of the game slightly and try and see what we think is the best practice for residents and see how that fills in with whatever government legislation comes through, or are you more minded wait until you understand what happens and then go from there?"

Supplementary answer

"No absolutely, I think we should do that. I think ultimately, if we're going to be inputting in a consultation in any way let's at least have some ideas that we want to input into that consultation

Let's look to organise that meeting between ourselves and we can start to kick something off."

2. Question to the Deputy Leader from Councillor Fitzsimon

"I am a frequent visitor to Stanborough Lakes over the last five years and a lot of people come from some distances to go there. I have been concerned recently by the lack of maintenance in some areas which can be Health and Safety issues. The wooden decking area next to the hut on the south Lake has some large holes in it and one of the surrounding steel bars to prevent access has become very loose. There are three areas as you come out of the underpass to access the North Lake of brick paving that are broken and are a trip hazard. Can I ask if the Cabinet Member for the Environment aware of these issues?"

Answer - Councillor Quinton:

"Good evening Cllr Fitzsimon and thank you for your question. I'm glad that you and an increasing number of people are enjoying visiting Stanborough Park. It has certainly become much more popular since Splashlands opened in 2020.

We have looked into the issues you have raised, which lie within the remit of our Leisure contractor, GLL. They have confirmed that interim works to ensure the safety of visitors will be conducted. Work on the decking and railings are planned

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as part of the winter maintenance program so will be repaired fully at that stage.

The paving in the underpass is a more complex issue. It has been repaired before, but the high river levels have caused erosion under the path and GLL working with other agencies are seeking a more permanent solution.

Lastly, I would encourage members to address casework enquiries such as this to our Members Enquiry system in the first instance. Alternatively members can direct relevant queries to myself as the Cabinet member responsible for leisure.”

3. Question to the Executive Member for Planning from Councillor Kingsbury

“Given the new Labour government’s push to increase development and the pending local plan review in Welwyn Hatfield, can the portfolio holder clarify the government’s references to ‘Grey Belt’ and provide examples of Grey Belt land within the Borough?”

Answer - Concillor Grewal:

“Thank you for the question.

As councillors will know, the government is currently consulting on a raft of proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, as part of measures to help address the housing and economic growth challenges facing the country. This Council will be submitting its comments to that consultation, following the discussion at last night’s Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel meeting.

The government has made clear that previously developed brownfield land will continue to be prioritised for redevelopment. However, the consultation also proposes the introduction of a definition of grey belt land, within the wider designated green belt.

In summary, grey belt is defined as “land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and any other parcels and/or areas of the Green Belt that make a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes, as set out in national policy”. It is important to note that this would exclude areas such as SSSIs, designated heritage assets, designated Local Green Space and other designated sites.

The NPPF consultation recognises that authorities will need support in judging whether land makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes. The consultation proposes a series of criteria for land to be considered grey belt. To be considered Grey Belt land will not strongly perform against any Green Belt purpose; and have at least one of the following features.

- Land containing substantial built development or which is fully enclosed by built form*
- Land which makes no or very little contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another*
- Land which is dominated by urban land uses, including physical*

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developments

- *Land which contributes little to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns*

This definition is subject to a live consultation and so could be subject to further change.

For Welwyn Hatfield, there may be sites within our Green Belt areas which would fall within the proposed definition of grey belt. We already know from previous analysis of the borough's Green Belt, undertaken to support the current Local Plan, that areas of Green Belt contribute to the Green Belt purposes to different degrees, some less than others.

Further Green Belt assessment work to support the Local Plan Review will be necessary and will assist in identifying whether there are areas of the Green Belt that could be considered Grey Belt.

The Council's Green Belt assessment work and any future updates will be considered at examination, by an Inspector, as a whole. It should be noted that currently, the Council's Green Belt assessment work has not identified any parcels of land, that were the subject of assessment, as not strongly performing against any Green Belt purpose.

Finally, the government consultation makes clear a desire to protect land which makes a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes, while allowing authorities to consider a range of Green Belt land based on its merits for potential development.

Planning applications on sites which come within the grey belt definition will still be subject to all of the other usual material planning policies and considerations."

Supplementary question

"That question was written before CPPP that I was at last night. The term "green belt" seemed to some ways to be a way of justifying conversion of more green belt land for development. Just very simple question would you agree that in general it's essential to preserve as much of the green belt was possible?"

Supplementary answer

"I think that one of the things that is a requirement within the consultation is a review of green belt. I think most boroughs are going to be asked to do that and I think that we won't know what we are going to be asked to be do within the new NPPF. The final real definition of whether we are going to be asked to do a review of the whole of the green belt, or whether we will have to define grey belt areas will be know better when we actually see the final MPPF. I think that you know that Councillor Kingsbury at the CPPP last night, the officers in their response to the consultation did say that we do need more clarity, so I really to accept that in terms of the terms associated with grey belt and how this will work in practice that we've asked for that clarity so that's the situation with that."

4. Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Jones

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“The Liberal Democrat Party noted the recent announcement by the Labour Government to restrict eligibility of Winter Fuel Payments to only those in receipt of Pension Credits (and other benefits) and believe this criteria is too restrictive. Many people affected by this change have also been given insufficient time to budget for the winter ahead.

With the Energy Price Cap due to rise by 10% in October as well, many pensioners in Welwyn Hatfield could potentially fall into fuel poverty. The low take up of pension credit is deeply concerning and this Council has a role to play in increasing awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Could the Joint Administration assure residents that an awareness campaign to maximise uptake of pension credits can be initiated to help as many of those affected as possible?”

Answer – Councillor Holloway:

“Thank you for your question Cllr Jones.

When faced with a £22 billion black hole in public finances left by the previous government, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have very little choice but to make some very tough and painful decisions.

The Joint Administration is committed to support an awareness campaign to maximise the uptake of pension credits. I’m aware that officers are working on the following activities:

- The next issue of the One Magazine, which is distributed to all households in the borough, will contain an article to promote pension credit*
- Running an awareness campaign through Social media*
- Running an awareness campaign through our communications with our tenants*
- Working with voluntary organisations including Citizens Advice to promote the uptake of pension credit*
- Raising the awareness of pension credit through the council’s engagement activities/events*

The campaign will run between now and throughout winter.”

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118. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CABINET

The Council considered the following recommendation from Cabinet:

118.1. Licensing Act Policy Review

The Council were asked to consider the recommendation from the Cabinet meeting held on the 3rd September 2024.

The Council in its capacity as licensing authority for the purposes of the Licensing Act 2003 was obliged by law to have a statement of licensing policy. Originally such a statement had to be reviewed every 3 years, but along with a number of other changes to the Licensing Act 2003 and the statutory guidance this frequency has been increased to 5 years.

The policy had been updated and new sections introduced where appropriate to reflect the current guidance and this revised policy represents an update to previous policies and reflects the current situation and practice in Welwyn Hatfield.

Councillors Thorpe and Weston moved and seconded the proposal.

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RESOLVED:

The Licensing Act Policy was approved.

119. REFERAL FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE

The Council were asked to consider the following recommendation from the Licensing Committee:

119.1. Pavement Licences Policy and Fee Approval

The Council considered the recommendation of the Licensing Committee held on the 22nd August 2024 regarding the Pavement Licences Policy and Fee Approval.

The report sought to clarify the changes to the temporary pavement licensing regime under the Business and Planning Act 2020 (which were implemented as a temporary measure during the Covid pandemic) and the impact of the changes to this regime made by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

The Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023 became law in 2023, but the provisions to make the temporary pavement licence scheme permanent were not immediately commenced but had come into force on 31st March 2024. The provisions have introduced changes including a new capped level fee structure for new and renewal applications.

It was highlighted during the discussion that a cap on costs could not be considered currently.

Councillor Thorpe and Councillor Weston moved and seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED:

The Council approved the maxima fees of £500 for a new two-year pavement licence and £350 for a renewal pavement licence.

120. CONSTITUTION REVIEW

The Council considered the proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution.

The Constitution is a core document in the Council's governance procedures and sets out how the Council works. There is a legal duty to ensure our constitution remains up to date and appropriate.

This update considered included the key changes required to realign management responsibility and delegations following changes in the

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management structure this year, along with changes to the external appointments and other minor amendments.

There were proposed updates to the contract procedure rules, which are required to ensure the council meets the requirements of the new Procurement Act. The government announced on 12 September 2024, which as after the publication of these papers, a postponement to the implementation of the Procurement Act, from 28 October 2024 to 24 February 2025.

It was noted that the Welwyn Hatfield Community & Voluntary Service would remain on the Council's outside bodies list.

These changes have been considered and unanimously agreed by the Constitution Review Group, for recommendation to Council.

RESOLVED

The Council approved the updates to the Constitution , and noted the postponement of the implementation date for the contract procedure rules to align to the date of implementation of the procurement act.

121. NOTICES OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 16

Motion 1

The following motion had been moved by Councillor Siewniak and was seconded by Councillor Musk:

"The Elections Act 2022 was a major piece of national legislation with local implications for the residents of this local authority, including the use of mandatory photographic voter ID at the polling station, changes to overseas voting and voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens.

The Act adds complexity to voter eligibility in the UK and excludes more residents from democracy. EU citizens who enter the UK from the 1st of January 2021 and are not covered by bilateral voting rights treaties (currently only active with Poland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, and Denmark) will not have voting and candidacy rights in local elections. Over 170,000 EU citizens in England and Northern Ireland will be removed from the electoral register as a consequence of the Elections Act.

According to the 2021 census, one in six usual residents of England and Wales were born outside the UK. However, under this act, over 1 million residents across England and Northern Ireland do not have a right to vote in any election. According to the ONS 2021 Census data for Welwyn Hatfield, a total of 9,701 EU citizens reside in the area and have local voting rights. A further 1,299 residents are from nationalities with no eligibility to vote in any election.

Scotland and Wales introduced residence-based voting rights where all residents with lawful immigration status have the right to vote in local and devolved

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national elections. Over 50% of people agree that every resident, no matter where they are from, should have the right to vote at least in local elections.

Since many of Welwyn Hatfield residents come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, regard Welwyn Hatfield as their home and bring significant value to our area, their voices should be heard in our local democracy

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council commits to:

- *Writing to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government requesting that the franchise for local elections be extended to all qualifying foreign nationals in England and Northern Ireland in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales.*
- *Writing to the Welwyn Hatfield MP, Andrew Lewin asking that he lend his support to the request for local election eligibility to be extended to all qualifying foreign nationals in England and Northern Ireland in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales.*

In addition, Welwyn Hatfield Council will:

- *Continue to work collaboratively with voluntary sector organisations in our local authority to inform residents about their democratic rights*
- *Continue to promote Voter registration and photo ID requirements”*

RESOLVED

The motion was agreed.

Motion 2

The following motion had been moved by Councillor Kingsbury and was seconded by Councillor Short:

“Council Notes:

- The Labour Government’s recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Welwyn Hatfield and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

Council believes:

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- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Welwyn Hatfield sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Conduct a local impact assessment to provide insights into possible actions the Council can take to mitigate the effects of fuel poverty. This should include budget considerations for any support that could be offered in future years.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Welwyn Hatfield are supported in claiming their entitlement.”

The following amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Holloway and seconded by Councillor Quinton:

“Council Notes:

- The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves, as part of a range of urgent measures the Government is taking in response to a £22b budget gap left by the previous Government.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Welwyn Hatfield and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.

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- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

Council believes:

- Since its introduction by a Labour Government in 1997 at a cost of nearly £2Bn per annum, the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Welwyn Hatfield sit just above the cutoff for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.
- In seeking to close the identified £22b black hole in the nation's finances inherited from the previous Government, other options should be considered such as a potential 'wealth tax' on the country's richest 1% and the implementation of an effective windfall tax on energy companies which addresses the loopholes the previous government included in its previous iteration.

Council resolves to:

- Work with all relevant agencies, including the Government, to bring forward a local awareness campaign to alert those eligible for Pension Credit, which will help those most in need access the Winter Fuel Payment.
- Through the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and ask the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty; to accelerate much needed rationalisation of energy pricing, and introduce widespread social tariffs for all those on low income.
- Encourage all efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Welwyn Hatfield are supported in claiming their entitlement and ensure this support is continued to be offered in future years.
- Request that the County Council explores ways to use the recently extended Household Support Fund, which has now been extended to April 2025, to mitigate impacts of fuel poverty this winter.
- Work with other agencies and partnerships such as the Home Energy Retrofit Offer (HERO) scheme and others to identify and explore what further actions the Council can take to mitigate fuel poverty."

RESOLVED

(For 29, Against, 11, Abstain 1)

The amendment to the motion be carried

(For 29, Against, 11, Abstain 1)

The amended motion was agreed.

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122. UPDATES TO NON-EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

Councillor Thorpe, and Councillor Quinton, moved and seconded the updates to the Non-Executive Committees.

Councillors Kingsbury and Holloway took the opportunity to thank Councillors Gardener and Boulton for their work on the Committees.

RESOLVED

The Council agreed the following changes to the Non-Executive Committees:

1. Councillor P.Shah to replace Councillor K.Gardner as vice-chair of the Development Management Committee.
2. Councillor T.Mitchinson to replace Councillor J.Boulton on the Constitution Review Group.

123. URGENT MATTERS

There were no items of urgent business.