



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Council Agenda

6.00 pm, Thursday, 26 September 2024

Central Hall, Dolphin Centre, Horsemarket, Darlington, DL1 5RP

Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions / Attendance at Meeting.
2. Minutes - To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Council held on 18 July 2024 (Pages 7 - 10)
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. Sealing.
5. Announcements.
6. Questions - To answer questions (where appropriate notice has been given from):-
 - (a) The Public; (Pages 11 - 14)
 - (b) Members to Cabinet/Chairs;
7. Council Reports.
 - (a) Review of Political Balance - Changes to Committee Membership – Report of the Group Director of Operations (Pages 15 - 22)
8. Cabinet Reports.
 - (a) Revision to the Council's Senior Management Structure – Report of the Chief Executive

(Pages 23 - 32)

- (b) Proposed Amendments to the Schedule of Charges 2024/25 – Report of the Group Director of Services (Pages 33 - 36)
 - (c) Climate Change Progress – Report of the Chief Executive (Pages 37 - 56)
 - (d) Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2023/24 – Report of the Group Director of Operations (Pages 57 - 76)
 - (e) Overview Report of the Leader of the Council; (Pages 77 - 80)
 - (f) Overview Report of the Economy Portfolio; (Pages 81 - 86)
 - (g) Overview Report of the Adults Portfolio; (Pages 87 - 90)
 - (h) Overview Report of the Children and Young People Portfolio; (Pages 91 - 98)
 - (i) Overview Report of the Health and Housing Portfolio; (Pages 99 - 102)
 - (j) Overview Report of the Local Services Portfolio; (Pages 103 - 108)
 - (k) Overview Report of the Resources Portfolio; and (Pages 109 - 112)
 - (l) Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio; (Pages 113 - 118)
9. Scrutiny Reports - To consider Scrutiny Overview Reports:-
- (a) Adults Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 119 - 122)
 - (b) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 123 - 124)
 - (c) Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee; (Pages 125 - 126)
 - (d) Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; and (Pages 127 - 130)
 - (e) Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 131 - 134)

10. Notice of Motion

- (a) To consider a Motion submitted by Councillor Dulston and seconded by Councillor Mrs. Scott –

Winter Fuel Payment

This Council notes:

- 1. 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 and voted for by Darlington's Labour MP Lola McEvoy;

2. the significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Darlington and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health;
3. 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;
4. 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 and health and well-being;
5. 16,341 pensioners will be severely impacted by the removal of this vital support;
6. that the Labour Government failed to carry out an impact assessment and has refused to supply the information pertaining to the fictitious £20 billion blackhole; and
7. latest figures show that more than £4,000,000 in Pension Credit is unclaimed in Darlington each year.

This Council believes:

1. that the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many pensioners across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship;
2. while some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Darlington sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance, indeed the Council's own data suggests the maximum number of new Pension credit claimants could be below five hundred;
3. 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. It will put additional strain on the NHS, Council resources and impact the wider Darlington economy; and
4. 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 therefore resolves to:

1. undertake an immediate review of data held by the Council on Pensioners in the Borough and bring forward, with urgency, a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit, which in some respects, will

help access for those most in need to the Winter Fuel Payment;

2. request the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging them to reverse the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment due to the inherent risk previously outlined. Also to ask the Government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty;
 3. directs the Leader of the Council to write to Lola McEvoy MP expressing this Council's significant concern at her vote in support of the removal of Winter Fuel Payment;
 4. directs the Leader of the Council to write to Matt Vickers MP expressing the Council's thanks for standing up for pensioners;
 5. 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 Darlington are supported in claiming their entitlement; and
 6. instructs Officers to carry out an impact assessment of the Government's decision on Council services, partners including the NHS and the wider Darlington economy.
11. Membership Changes - To consider any membership changes to Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies.



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 18 September 2024

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bartch, Beckett, Coe, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Dillon, Dulston, Durham, Garner, Harker, Haszeldine, Henderson, Holroyd, Johnson, Kane, Keir, Laing, Lawley, Layton, Lee, Mahmud, Mammolotti, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, McGill, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Pease, Porter, Ray, Renton, Dr. Riley, Robinson, Roche, Mrs Scott, Snedker, Storr, Toms, Tostevin, Wallis and Walters.

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Paul Dalton, Democratic and Elections Officer, Operations Group, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays Email: paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk or Telephone 01325 405805