

## **BRIEFING NOTE**

### **MOTION ON NOTICE – ENERGY COSTS**

This council recognises that households are facing increased energy costs due to the recent increase of the energy price cap and its imminent extension in April 2022.

With bills set to increase as much as 57%, we understand that many residents may find it extremely difficult to meet their energy costs. For those on the lowest incomes, this may lead to a choice between heating and eating.

To demonstrate what is already happening, on 12th January 2022, the Morecambe Bay Foodbank received two calls in a single morning from distressed residents who were unable to pay their bills, and were seeking help with emergency food as a result. Charities in our area including Citizens Advice, Eggcup, The Morecambe Bay Foodbank and the Morecambe Bay Credit Union are all seriously concerned about how vulnerable people will be able to manage their money in the coming months, especially due to the recent cut to Universal Credit and the impending end of the Household Support Grant in March 2022.

This Council calls on the government to take action to help those who are likely to suffer as a result of these price rises. Specifically this council will write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Levelling Up to ask, along with Citizens Advice, that

- An "Energy Support Grant" should be delivered through the benefits system to provide a much needed £300 (as recommended by the Resolution Foundation) to help with fuel costs, paid to all Universal Credit and Legacy Benefit and pension credit claimants in April 2022.
- The benefits increase due in April 2022 is based on the IFS (Institute of Fiscal Studies) recommendation of 6% rather than the planned rise of 3.1% to more accurately reflect the cost of living
- The Warm Homes Discount should be extended to channel money directly to those that need it most, enabling them to heat their homes in Winter 2022, when prices are due to soar further
- The cost of supplier failures should be spread over two or three years to reduce the cost and provide relief to consumers in the short term

#### **PROPOSERS:**

Proposed by Councillor J Young  
Seconded by Councillor F Penny

#### **OFFICER BRIEFING NOTE**

Below is direct information that the Council has on this subject.

During the pandemic, the Community Hub has administered three grants to support residents with gas/electric: Emergency Assistance Grant, Winter Grants Scheme, and currently the Household Support Fund.

To date, £92, 773 has been allocated. Please see the breakdown below:

**Household Support Fund – November 2021 – Present**

£21,536 Gas

£23,951 Electricity

**Winter Grants Scheme – April 2021**

Gas and Electric: £8,605

**Emergency Assistance grants – October – March 2021**

Gas £18,290

Electricity £20,391

This year the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) has enhanced its services to include free energy advice and minor energy improvements to the homes of vulnerable residents. The HIA has also recently appointed a dedicated energy officer to assist residents who require disabled adaptations, to also improve the energy efficiency of their homes through government funding. Since April the HIA have provided energy advice to over 70 residents in the private and owner occupier sector and completed minor improvements to the homes of 22 vulnerable residents.

In addition, Council Housing Service also employ a dedicated Energy Support Officer supporting Council Housing tenants around home heating and energy use. To date the Energy Support Officer has supported 200 Council tenants with direct interventions / advice and helped 89 eligible tenants apply for the warm home grant.

The Council provides over 3800 homes in the District. This also provides a useful insight.

The Income Management Team continue to support our Council Housing residents around their finances more generally, including benefit applications or challenges, requesting backdates and referrals for debt advice. Between April – Sept 2021 the team assisted 56 of our residents to increase their annual income by £143,487.19. Last year the team assisted 204 of our residents to increase their annual income by £334,863.40.

A significant element of the housing capital programme is allocated to energy efficiency improvements.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The s151 Officer has been consulted and ....

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and ....