



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21ST MARCH 2023

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF MOTION – FUEL POVERTY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the Notice of Motion as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report and make an appropriate recommendation to Council. In accordance with Rule 11(3) of the Constitution.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 A Notice of Motion has been received from Councillor C. Andrews and is supported by Councillors N. George, P. Leonard, E. Forehead, S. Cook, C. Morgan, J. Simmonds, E. Stenner, J. Pritchard, S. Morgan.
- 2.2 The Notice of Motion meets the criteria set out in the Council's Constitution and in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure is now referred to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee for consideration, prior to its consideration by Council.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the Notice of Motion as outlined in paragraph 5.1 and make an appropriate recommendation to Council.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 In accordance with the Council's Constitution.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Notice of Motion

In her notice of motion Councillor C. Andrews calls on the Leader of Council to write to UK Government to pass legislation to stop people who are in fuel debt automatically being put on to pre-payment metres by the utility companies. It also calls on the Leader to ask the WLGA to encourage other Local Authorities to do the

same.

5.2 Councillor Andrews provides the following information in support of her notice of motion:-

The Welsh Government has defined fuel poverty as households “having to spend more than 10 per cent of income (including housing benefit) on all household fuel used to maintain a satisfactory heating regime”.

During this current Cost of Living Crisis energy prices have surged this winter and suppliers have stepped up the use of court warrants to force their way into homes to install prepayment meters, with some magistrates approving hundreds of applications at a time. For homes with smart meters, the change can be made remotely without even needing a warrant.

Citizen’s Advice estimates 600,000 people were forced to make the switch away from credit meters after racking up debt with their energy supplier in 2022, compared with 380,000 in 2021 and it predicts that 160,000 more people could be moved onto a prepayment meter by the end of winter.

People using prepayment meters pay for their gas and electricity by topping up their meter, either through accounts or by adding credit to a card in a convenience store or post office.

Prepay meters charge for energy at a higher rate than contracts where the customer pays monthly or by direct debit, and people in debt are often left with no choice but to “self-disconnect”. For many, running out of credit is not a one-off event, leaving residents unable to cook or heat their homes. There is a fear that this will lead to “disconnection by the back door”. *Citizens Advice also found:*

- More than 2 million people are being disconnected from their energy supply once a month.
- 1 in 5 prepayment customers who have been disconnected from their energy supply in the past year said it had been for more than 24 hours at least once.
- 1 in 3 people on prepayment meters said that they had “self-disconnected” at least once in the past year because they could not afford to top up.

Ofgem rules state that energy suppliers must have effective checks and balances in place when switching the mode of a smart meter. The regulator advises customers with concerns to speak to their supplier. Under Ofgem rules they must offer payment plans you can afford, and you can ask for emergency credit if you use a prepay meter and can't top up.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 As a notice of motion is a procedural matter and must be dealt with in accordance with Council’s Constitution, no assumptions have been made.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report does not require an Integrated Impact Assessment as it relates to a procedural matter under the Councils Constitution.

7.2 The procedural rules regarding a Notice of Motion are contained within Council's Constitution as adopted in May 2002. The Council's Constitution sets out the framework for the decision-making roles and responsibilities.

7.3 However the outcome of the Notice of Motion and any subsequent reports arising from it may require an Integrated Impact Assessment.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 As this is a procedural notice of motion, there has been no consultation undertaken.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000

Author: Emma Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Appendices: Appendix 1 Signed copy of Notice of Motion.