

NOTICE OF MOTION – FUEL POVERTY

Notice of Motion standing in the name County Brough Councillor Carol Andrews and support by the Councillors listed below: -

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.

In response to public and media pressure Ofgem, the energy Regulator for Great Britain, has put in place a temporary ban on pre-payment meters, initially until the 31 March 2023. This has now been extended until energy companies sign up to the Ofgem Code of Practice which requires suppliers to have effective checks and balances in place when switching people to a smart meter. Under Ofgem rules companies must also offer payment plans people can afford and offer emergency credit for people who use a prepay meter and can't top up.

This notice of motion calls on the CCBC Leader Cllr Sean Morgan to write to the UK Government to pass legislation to prevent energy companies entering people’s homes and fitting prepayments, unless asked to do so by the householder concerned. In addition, people should be given the right to have pre-payment meters removed from their home.



Councillor Carol Andrews

Supported by: - Councillors S. Morgan, J. Pritchard, C. Morgan, E. Stenner, N. George, P. Leonard, E. Forehead, J. Simmonds, S. Cook.