

NOTICE OF MOTION – FUEL POVERTY

Notice of Motion standing in the name of County Borough Councillor Carol Andrews and supported 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.

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.

However, this notice of motion calls on the CCBC Leader Cllr Sean Morgan to write to the 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 him to ask the WLGA to encourage other Local Authorities to do the same.



Councillor Carol Andrews

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