

Motions

Motion A – Councillor Wildey has submitted the following:

Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting pensioners from fuel poverty

The Council notes:

- 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.
- Both Councillor Edwards MP and Councillor Osborne MP voted to remove winter fuel payments in the House of Commons on Tuesday 10th September 2024.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Medway and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- 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.
- 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.

The Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Medway sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- 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.
- 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.

The Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Ahead of the Autumn Statement, request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Request that the Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Council, sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all Members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- 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 Medway are supported in claiming their entitlement.

Motion B – Councillor Shokar has submitted the following:

Council is saddened by the tragic killings in Southport on July 29th. Our thoughts are with the families of those affected, the wider community and all those whose lives are impacted by violent crime.

Council is angered by the subsequent outbreaks of racist and Islamophobic thuggery which led to violent protests and intimidation in parts of the United Kingdom.

Council welcomes the clear and unified message from government, police, councils, faith groups, charities, pressure groups and individuals that unlawful acts by a minority will not detract from their important work of developing and maintaining cohesive communities.

Council applauds the work of volunteers and tradespeople who turned out in force to deliver clean-up operations throughout the country in order to mend the damage caused by rioters.

Council welcomes the respectful and joined up approach taken by key stakeholders to strengthen communities before, during and after the threat of riots across the country. This has strongly been the case here in Medway with Kent Police working closely with Medway Council, our local MPs and other key Medway stakeholders taking a one Medway approach.

Council also recognises the swift, strong response from Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Prime Minister Keir Starmer whose rapid, well-publicised measures served to deter further violence.

Council re-commits to the unique leadership role it has in the ongoing building of positive communities. As the elected body closest to communities across our region, Medway Council will continue to be at the heart of delivering positive changes for all those they serve, grounded in respectful partnership and meaningful communication.

Council reaffirms that no form of racism is ever acceptable, including racism directed at the Gypsy Roma Traveller community.

Motion C – Councillor Pearce has submitted the following:

Wednesday 11th September 2024 marked the 200th anniversary of Thomas Aveling's birth - a pioneering Victorian engineer who grew up in Hoo and later established the world famous Aveling and Porter Company (with Richard Porter) at the Invicta Works in Strood.

Mr Aveling served as Mayor of Rochester between 1868 and 1869. During this time, he introduced many improvements, including allowing public access to the gardens at Rochester Castle and redesigning the layout. He also spearheaded the construction of both the New Corn Exchange, a public swimming bath and implemented improvements at Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School. Mr Aveling represented Strood and Frindsbury Ward on the City of Rochester Corporation and was, politically, an advanced Liberal.

Mr Aveling received the Knighthood of the Imperial Order of Franz Joseph (from Austria) and the Chevalier of the National Order of the Legion of Honour (from France). On 7th March 1882, he passed away aged 57 at Boley Hill House in Rochester. This followed a short illness from catching a chill/infection whilst on board his 28-ton yacht 'Sally'. He was a keen local yachtsman and sailing barge enthusiast and is laid to rest at St. Werburgh Church in Hoo.

This Council commemorates the life, the achievements, and the legacy of Thomas Aveling and pays tribute to him.