

## Area Board Briefing Note – Cost of Living

<b>Service:</b>	<b>Cost of Living</b>
<b>Date prepared:</b>	<b>13 November 2024</b>
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### Cost of Living

The Council is continuing to work with partners to deliver interventions that provide advice and support to our communities, including:

- Wiltshire libraries are continuing as warm spaces and as source of advice.
- We have contacted community providers and updated our [interactive guide](#) to help people find key support to combat fuel and food poverty. In addition, we are creating a page on the directory that gives an interactive advent calendar view of provision/opportunities over the Christmas period.
- Wiltshire bus users can continue to travel on most routes in the county for just £2 or less for a single fare until the end of December 2024. The cap will increase in 2025 and single bus fares will then be capped at £3 until at least 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025<sup>1</sup>.
- In September the Government announcement to extend the Household Support Fund by 6 months till the end of April 2025<sup>2</sup>. Officers analysed the impact of schemes delivered under the programme to further develop our approach to ensure that those households most in need are targeted for support. This includes working with Foodbanks and Community Food Providers to apply for funding to support their work.
- Additionally, it was announced in the Budget Statement, that an additional £1bn of funding had been allocated to extend the household support fund and discretionary housing payment to 2025/2026<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [National bus fare cap - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Government support extended to help struggling households with bills and essential costs over winter - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Household support fund extended | Local Government Chronicle \(LGC\)](#)

- [Our website](#) and media channels offer a range of online support and sign-posting information on topics including council tax/benefits, energy advice and mental health support.
- A dedicated Wiltshire Wellbeing support line to provide advice and guidance, and officers are working with to improve processes to ensure people are directed to right support. Contact details on the phone are: 0300 003 4576, and email is: [wellbeinghub@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:wellbeinghub@wiltshire.gov.uk)

## Winter Fuel Payments and Pensions Credit

The Council has been actively supporting the campaign to raise awareness of the link between the winter fuel payment and pension credit. We are encouraging people to check if they're eligible for pension credit as that could help unlock getting the winter fuel payment (the deadline for that being 21 December).

Our activity includes:

- Promoting the messages on social media
- Sharing on residents' newsletter and business newsletter
- Sharing resources with Adult care team and community engagement team to share in their local networks
- Information to all members and town and parishes – including digital resources and example content for them to use on their own platforms.

The Government has written to all pensioners who are in receipt of Housing Benefit but are not claiming Pension Credit which include 707 in Wiltshire. In addition, our Revenue & Benefits team has also issued a letter to all 579 pensioners who are not claiming pension credit and could be eligible.

## FUEL

The Council is pleased to say that, following a successful summer programme Wiltshire Council's Holiday Activity and Food programme (FUEL) will be back during the Christmas school holidays. It is funded by the Department for Education and provides children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals with free access to activity, food and nutritional education during school holidays. Eligible families will be able to sign up later in the year and details will be promoted through all schools in Wiltshire in due course. More information about FUEL can be found at [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/fuel-programme](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/fuel-programme).