

## **Cost of Living Motion**

**This Council notes that families and individuals in our district face a cost-of-living crisis.**

Households across the UK are facing the highest pressure on household budgets in 70 years, and the typical family will be £2,800 a year worse off through a combination of tax rises and soaring energy prices according to the Resolution Foundation. In contrast, the richest 1% of earners in the UK have seen unprecedented tax cuts based on the myth that making the rich richer benefits everyone. Next year tax cuts will see someone earning £200,000 gain £5,220 a year, rising to £55,220 for a £1 million earner. Those on £20,000 will gain just £157.

People are facing rising inflation, especially food prices, and interest rate increases that affect their mortgage payments due to the weakness of the pound which could reach a two hundred year low on investor concerns about the British economy following Brexit.

People living in rural areas, like ours, are disproportionately affected by fuel price increases because of the lack of public transport and longer distances to reach work, education, and health services.

In March 2021, a typical North Norfolk household paid on average £892 per year for energy. Ofgem increased the energy price cap by 54 per cent in April this year and the Prime Minister recently announced that a typical household will pay no more than £2,500 per year for each of the next two years. This sees an increase for North Norfolk households of £1,608 on their energy bills since 2021.

However, there is no price cap on solid fuel bottled gas or heating oil which many of our residents rely on to heat their homes. The £100 grant recently announced by the Prime Minister, will not offset the fact that off-grid energy remains uncapped.

North Norfolk has the oldest population in the country which means a larger number of people who are on fixed income pensions, are being specifically affected.

The Government broke their manifesto promise and suspended the pensions 'triple lock' for 2022/3, meaning that North Norfolk's 27,472 pensioners will see a rise of 3.1 per cent this year (instead of 8.3 per cent under the triple lock formula).

**Council thanks our officers for the additional work already being done to support residents amid this crisis, including:**

- Processing the £150 Council Tax rebates promptly and well before the government's deadline
- A successful bid for the Warm Homes Grant as part of the Norfolk Warm Homes Consortium
- Appointing an Energy Officer to improve the energy efficiency of homes on the district
- Establishing processes to enable access to the Household Support Fund

- Expanding the support, supplies and signposting available from our Social Prescribing Team through the height of COVID and beyond
- Extremely successful homelessness prevention work which includes the temporary accommodation project
- Managing partnership grants with non-for-profit organisations to provide financial and other advice across the district
- Signposting of benefits and other support.

**But there is much more to do both nationally and locally. Therefore, Council resolves to hold a Cost-of-Living Summit:**

- To listen to residents and businesses
- To invite organisations from the private sector and voluntary sector in a joint pledge to support North Norfolk through this cost-of-living crisis
- To develop a robust plan with a wide range of partners, to help the most vulnerable people in our community in both the short and long term.
- Within three weeks of this meeting, to be led by the Cabinet.
- Submitting recommendations from the summit to go to the next Cabinet meeting following the summit.

**Council resolves to ask the Leader and Chief Executive to explore:**

- Expanding our Council Tax Reduction Scheme to reduce the tax burden for lower income households & over sixty-five
- Ways to protect funding for partnership grants delivering advice services to residents in next year's budget and future years as far as possible
- Ways to continue and widen the remit of the social prescribing team to support residents
- Collaborating with partners to improve access to affordable food across our district
- Ways to improve energy efficiency in local homes beyond the current officer post
- Working with local communities to create warm spaces for people to go to

**Council asks the leader to write to relevant government ministers and our local MPs to ask for urgent action to relieve the cost-of-living crisis through such measures as:**

- Provide proper and immediate financial support for consumers of heating oil, Bottled gas, solid fuels, those reliant on generators for electricity and those on prepayment meters.
- Increase Rural Fuel Duty Rate Relief and expand the number of rural areas covered
- Consider reducing VAT to 17.5% putting money back into the pockets of average families, boosting the economy and helping to support local retailers
- Deliver a real and immediate increase in investment in UK renewables and an energy plan for the UK which immediately reduces costs for the end user and leads to the decarbonisation of the UK energy network in the long term.
- Immediately re-introduce the pensions triple lock to support North Norfolk's pensioners.