

Council 10 October 2024 Written Questions and Answers

1. Councillor Hossain

To the Leader:

Protecting Our Elderly: Addressing Fuel Allowance Cuts and Housing Inequality in Kings Hedges.

As you are the leader of the council, I want to address the recent cuts to the fuel allowance that will significantly impact our elderly residents in Kings Hedges. Many of these residents live in social housing that has failed to meet CPC standard C, forcing them to burn more fuel to heat their homes.

'The Labour government' is dramatically reducing the numbers that can claim the winter fuel allowance' at the same time as fuel prices are going up. Many of those who are still eligible to claim winter fuel allowance do not have access to the internet and are not capable of applying online to receive the benefit. Many are vulnerable who are 'just managing' and have worked hard all their lives but are not now eligible.

What specific actions will you take to support these vulnerable members of our community?

How will you ensure that they are informed about the resources available to them during this challenging time?

I am raising this issue on behalf of my constituents to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met.

Response from the Executive Councillor for Communities.

The Council is using its benefits data to identify households who could be entitled to Pension Credit to make an application by 21 December 2024 as entitlement to Pension Credit means that the household would continue to receive the Winter Fuel Allowance payments. We have partnered with Cambridge CAB, who will be offering assistance in making these applications for Pension Credit.

We have also written to all of our registered housing providers, asking that they use their local knowledge to contact their pensioner households, to encourage as many people as possible to see if they can claim Pension Credit.

The benefits calculator on our webpages [Benefit calculator \(entitledto.co.uk\)](https://www.entitledto.co.uk) not only calculates entitlement to housing benefit and Council Tax Reduction but also assesses entitlement to Pension Credit.

We will also be offering everyone within our sheltered housing schemes (around 500 properties) assistance with completing the benefits calculator and applying for any benefits they may have identified. We will do the same with those we support via our visiting support service (tenure neutral service providing housing related support to those 65+ in the city).

We can also support the work being done by the benefits team, by using data held, to promote grant funding for private households to improve the energy efficiency of the property for the long term.

For residents under an income of £36,000, they could potentially access funding for insulation and clean heat.

Pension Credit is a qualifying benefit for the scheme, but the income threshold means those that are not eligible for Pension Credit, and therefore, the winter fuel payment, they can still benefit from energy efficiency support through other Government funding available through Action on Energy Cambridgeshire.

Our Winter Open Door issue (due out mid-Nov) will include articles on fuel poverty and financial aid, including using energy efficiently at home, energy grants and discounts, benefits support and advice, 1-2-1 budgeting advice and debt advice.

2. Councillor Hossain

To the Leader:

Improving Safety with Lighting at Nuns Way Recreation Ground

I want to raise urgent safety concerns regarding Nuns Way Recreation Ground. Recently, there was a fire at King's Hedges Recreation Ground, Wooden Castle, which has left residents feeling scared to walk through

parks in the area. Anti-social behaviour is rising, and residents are increasingly uneasy.

This footpath is vital for those travelling to the Science Park, Cambridge Business Park, CRC College, and the mosque. Previously, I mentioned the need for lighting in this area, but no action has been taken yet, despite raising it with our chief executive.

My question: Could the leader of the council provide an update on plans for installing street or footpath lighting along this route to ensure the safety of pedestrians, especially women and children, during darker hours?

Response from the Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing

The recent burning of the wooden castle at Nuns Way Recreation Ground was shocking, and deeply saddening. We know that this will have severely affected many local residents, and want to provide whatever support we can to help residents to feel safe.

In this particular case, lack of lighting was not a contributing factor, as the fire was started during daylight hours.

However, I do acknowledge your request for installation of new street or footpath lighting at Nuns Way Recreation Ground, to help to make it a safer and more welcoming space at night. There is no budget currently allocated for new lighting installations here, but we are happy to reconsider the need for lighting measures at Nuns Way Recreation Ground and elsewhere as part of future budget planning, within available resources.