

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 7 October 2024  
**Report of:** Head of Law and Governance  
**Title of Report:** **Motions and amendments received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18**

Councillors are asked to debate and reach conclusions on the motions and amendment listed below in accordance with the Council's rules for debate.

The Constitution permits an hour for debate of these motions.

## Introduction

This document sets out motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18 by the deadline of 1.00pm on 25 September 2024, as amended by the proposers.

All substantive amendments sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by publication of the briefing note are also included below.

Unfamiliar terms are explained in the glossary or in footnotes.

**Motions will be taken in turn from the Liberal Democrat, Green, Independent Oxford Alliance, Oxford Community Independents, Oxford Independent Group, Real Independent, Labour groups in that order.**

### Introduction

- a) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Chris Smowton, Seconded by Cllr. Lawrence Fouweather) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman] [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Simon Ottino, seconded by Anna Railton]
- b) Keep Campsfield Closed (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Hosnieh Djarafi Marbini)
- c) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)
- d) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif)
- e) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Hollingsworth, Seconded by Cllr. Ed Turner)

- f) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr. Theo Jupp) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Naomi Waite]
- g) Bus travel for asylum seekers in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dianne Regisford)

**a) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Chris Smowton, Seconded by Cllr. Lawrence Fouweather) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman] [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Simon Ottino, seconded by Anna Railton]**

### Liberal Democrats Group Motion

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes will now not receive the payments.

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.<sup>12</sup>

Council believes that a better, and cost-neutral, way to recover the cost of the universal payment would be to levy an appropriately sized tax on pensioners who either receive the highest incomes, have the greatest wealth, or both. This would mean the benefit is in effect withdrawn where there is positive evidence that they have the means to pay, rather than negative evidence drawn from non-registration for Pension Credit or other benefits.

Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.<sup>3</sup> Council recognises the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

*Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table

“Pension Credit - Data from May 2018”

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
  - both Oxford MPs requesting their support regarding the same.
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### Independent Oxford Alliance Group Amendment

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

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In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.<sup>45</sup>

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Council is also concerned by the low ~~take-up~~ **up-take** of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.<sup>6</sup> Council recognizes the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined ~~by change to~~ **with** the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
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### If amended the Motion would read

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table "Pension Credit - Data from May 2018"

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

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In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.<sup>78</sup>

Council is also concerned by the low take-up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.<sup>9</sup> Council recognizes the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

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### Labour Group Amendment

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

**Council notes the commitments of the Labour Government including to the triple lock mean:**

- That the full state pension is set to rise by 4% - £460 a year in April 2025
- The state pension is due to increase by more than a £1000 a year over this Parliament
- Plans for clean homegrown energy will cut bills for good
- Millions of homes will be upgraded with insulation and low-carbon heating

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes, **but not in receipt of Pension Credit**, will now not receive the payments.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table

“Pension Credit - Data from May 2018”

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.<sup>1011</sup>

~~Council believes that a better, and cost-neutral, way to recover the cost of the universal payment would be to levy an appropriately sized tax on pensioners who either receive the highest incomes, have the greatest wealth, or both. This would mean the benefit is in effect withdrawn where there is positive evidence that they have the means to pay, rather than negative evidence drawn from non-registration for Pension Credit or other benefits.~~

Council believes that the basis for the receipt of all benefits should in general be related to the individual's need and the payments of all taxes should in general be related to the individual's ability to pay.

Council further believes that the threshold for the receipt of any benefit should be staggered rather than immediate, so that any individual with means just above the threshold should not be relatively worse off.

Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.<sup>12</sup> Council recognises the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, (though noting this is from a cap of £1524, a far cry from the Jan 2023 peak of £4279) which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council notes the good work already done by City Council officers to promote the take up of Pension Credit and calls on all Members to actively promote the take up of Pension Credit with any vulnerable constituents.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
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If agreed, the motion would read

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table "Pension Credit - Data from May 2018"

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Council believes that the basis for the receipt of all benefits should in general be related to the individual's need and the payments of all taxes should in general be related to the individual's ability to pay.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table "Pension Credit - Data from May 2018"

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

## **b) Keep Campsfield Closed (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Hosnieh Djarafi Marbini)**

### Green Group Motion

#### **Council Notes:**

1. In November 2022, this council debated and passed a motion in response to reports that the then government was seeking to re-open Campsfield House for use as an immigration removal centre.<sup>16</sup>
2. The motion passed in 2022 condemned the proposed re-opening of the centre and called for the city to be a safe space for refugees.
3. On 21 August 2024, the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper confirmed the current government's plans to re-open Campsfield House.<sup>17</sup>
4. Cooper's announcement has been heavily criticised by numerous migrants' rights groups including Asylum Welcome,<sup>18</sup> Detention Action,<sup>19</sup> The Refugee Council,<sup>20</sup> and Amnesty International UK.<sup>21</sup>
5. Summer 2024 saw violence and intimidation from far-right activists, some of which targeted - or threatened to target - organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers - including those within Oxford.
6. Both Oxford City Council<sup>22</sup> and Oxfordshire County Council<sup>23</sup> have committed themselves to the values of the City of Sanctuary programme, pledging to work for the creation of a safe and welcoming environment for those seeking sanctuary.

#### **Council Believes:**

1. Oxford and this council have a proud history of supporting and welcoming refugees and opposing detention. Maintaining our opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield House is an important part of this.
2. The recent steps to end the cruel Rwanda Plan and stop the state of permanent limbo<sup>24</sup> created by the Illegal Migration Act 2023 are to be welcomed,<sup>25</sup> but do not go far enough in restoring the legal right to asylum.
3. Expanding detention and increasing deportations represents a worrying indication as to the government's intended direction of travel, one which is incompatible with the promise this city has made to stand up for the rights of those seeking sanctuary.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/g7379/Public%20minutes%20Monday%2028-Nov-2022%2017.00%20Council.pdf?T=11>

<sup>17</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/immigration-detention-centres-to-re-open-in-removals-drive-13200380>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.asylum-welcome.org/labour-campsfield/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-immigration-detention-migrant-b2599540.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-immigration-detention-migrant-b2599540.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/james-cleverly-yvette-cooper-home-secretary-government-amnesty-international-b1177697.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/183/oxford-city-council-makes-commitment-to-city-of-sanctuary-status>

<sup>23</sup> <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-is-a-county-of-sanctuary/#:~:text=Migrants%2C%20including%20refugees%20and%20asylum,as%20a%20place%20of%20sanctuary>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/home-office-chaos-leaves-up-to-55-500-asylum-seekers-stuck-in-perma-backlog>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/815/made>

4. The UK's asylum system needs major overhaul, including through the opening of safe and legal routes for people to claim asylum.
5. It has been extensively documented that immigration removal centers are sites of violence which have no place in a democratic, rights respecting, society.<sup>26</sup>
6. As such, Campsfield House should not be re-opened, and the government should be moving to shrink, not expand, the UK's detention estate.
7. Rhetoric and policies that demonise and stigmatise asylum seekers have a contributory role in driving division in our society and fuel the far-right.

**Council Resolves:**

1. To reiterate this council's opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield House.
2. To request that the Leader of the Council write to the Home Secretary calling on her to:
3. Abandon plans to re-open Campsfield House.
4. Outline plans to reduce, rather than increase, the number of people held in detention.
5. Begin to introduce a more humane migration policy - including through the establishment of safe and legal routes for people to claim asylum.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/04-05-2022-immigration-detention-is-harmful-to-health---alternatives-to-detention-should-be-used>; <https://www.rainbowmigration.org.uk/news/lgbtqi-people-still-at-serious-risk-of-harm-in-immigration-detention/>



### c) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)

#### Independent Oxford Alliance Group Motion

In February 2024, Oxfordshire County Council committed to spending £5.2m<sup>27</sup> developing plans to expand Oxford's existing Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ). Although previously agreed in principle as part of the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan<sup>28</sup>, Oxfordshire County Council has not yet committed to proceeding with the ZEZ expansion.<sup>29</sup>

Each year, Oxford City Council produces an Air Quality Annual Status Report (AQASR)<sup>30</sup>. The report includes a detailed account of NO<sub>2</sub> pollution levels, across numerous monitoring stations in Oxford and surrounding areas in the preceding year. The report also includes a commentary and analysis of themes relating to NO<sub>2</sub> pollution in Oxford, such as the impact of the current ZEZ and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods on NO<sub>2</sub> pollution levels.

Given the current development work taking place by Oxfordshire County Council in relation to the planned ZEZ expansion, it could be useful to draw on the insights collected as part of the AQASR publication process to produce an in-depth analysis of NO<sub>2</sub> pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone.

Oxford City Council's policy on NO<sub>2</sub> pollution is that the local annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> target for Oxford should be 30 µg/m<sup>3</sup> by 2025<sup>31</sup>, which reflects "step two" of the WHO's updated interim target for NO<sub>2</sub>.

Oxford City Council notes that Oxford is currently in the process of taking delivery of numerous new electric buses, which have the potential to significantly reduce pollution in and around Oxford city centre<sup>32</sup>.

#### **The Council:**

- Believes it would be useful for Oxford City Council to publish a (non-statutory) supplement to its already-published 2023 AQASR. This supplement would help provide the public with the council's baseline analysis of NO<sub>2</sub> pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone, reusing existing data.
- Further believes that subsequent AQASRs should also include an in-depth analysis of NO<sub>2</sub> pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone.
- Collectively, these analyses would assist Oxford City Council in deciding whether – in the council's view – the ZEZ expansion remains objectively justified as a policy that the City Council should continue to endorse.

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<sup>27</sup>

<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s70023/Section%205.4%20Capital%20Programme%20Council%20Feb%2024.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=26981>

<sup>29</sup> [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/city-centre-zez#:~:text=A%20small%20pilot%20ZEZ%20became,assessments%2C%20engagement%20and%20formal%20consultation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/city-centre-zez#:~:text=A%20small%20pilot%20ZEZ%20became,assessments%2C%20engagement%20and%20formal%20consultation)

<sup>30</sup> [www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-data/air-quality-annual-status-reports](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-data/air-quality-annual-status-reports)

<sup>31</sup> [www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-management/air-quality-action-plan](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-management/air-quality-action-plan)

<sup>32</sup> [www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1394/oxford-launches-major-all-electric-city-bus-fleet](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1394/oxford-launches-major-all-electric-city-bus-fleet)

**The Council therefore request that Cabinet ask** those officers responsible for producing the Oxford City Council's AQASR to:

- Publish a supplement to 2023 AQASR (within three months of the date of this motion), which includes a detailed data table setting out the verified average NO<sub>2</sub> pollution levels between 2019 and 2023, for each pollution monitoring station within the proposed ZEZ expansion zone.
- To provide equivalent data in the 2024 AQASR, and in future years.
- To ensure this data is accompanied by a detailed analysis of recent NO<sub>2</sub> pollution trends within the planned ZEZ expansion zone, where reasonably possible, including an analysis of whether NO<sub>2</sub> pollution within the proposed ZEZ expansion zone have yet fallen to Oxford City Council's 30µg/m<sup>3</sup> by 2025 target.

Council also asks Cabinet to consider not taking any decision about revenue and cost sharing arrangements with Oxfordshire County Council beyond the one agreed for the pilot (should they come forward) until the initial ZEZ pollution analysis has been completed.

**d) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif)**

Oxford Independent Group Motion

This council is shocked and angered a Labour government would even contemplate a financial attack on pensioners just as we approach winter. The cost-of-living payments also ending this will have a devastating on some of most vulnerable in our society. Those who have given service their whole lives to this country, are being abandoned at the time of need.

This council writes to the Prime minister and Home secretary requesting the winter fuel payment to be re instated.

**e) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Hollingsworth, Seconded by Cllr. Ed Turner)**

Labour Group Motion

The last fourteen years of Conservative Government, with chronic underinvestment in affordable and social housing and retreat in the face of opposition to housebuilding have left this country in the grip of a housing crisis.

Across the UK the shortage of housing and uncontrolled increases in private sector rents have led to ballooning costs for temporary accommodation. Those costs are so large that they are not just a threat to other council services, which will have to be cut to meet the bill, but they are putting the very existence of some local authorities in doubt.

In Oxford, despite the best efforts of our officers, costs for temporary accommodation have risen five-fold to over £4m, out of a total Council budget of £28.6m.

The watering down of Local Plan housing targets by Rishi Sunak, under pressure from wealthy NIMBY interest groups, means that far too many councils have been able to dodge their responsibility both to those in need now and to future generations by failing to plan for the homes that are so desperately needed.

Pressures on the budgets of housing associations and cuts to housing budgets in the name of 'austerity' mean that developers are finding it increasingly difficult to find buyers for the affordable homes they are supposed to build, meaning the developments simply aren't starting.

- This Council therefore asks that the Leader of the Council writes to the Government to convey that:
- This Council believes that decent and affordable housing for all, where you want to live, is a right and not a privilege.
- This Council therefore applauds the new Government for its immediate reversal of cuts to housing numbers in Local Plans, and welcomes the return of strategic level planning to ensure that those Plans are delivered, particularly in Oxfordshire
- This Council welcomes the Government's approval of the long-overdue reservoir near Abingdon, something necessary to support the provision of new homes.
- This Council further welcomes the Government's commitment to the ending of Section 21 'no fault' evictions, which are a primary cause of the current levels of homelessness.
- This Council calls on the Government to implement as soon as possible powers to control and regulate the short-term let sector to prevent the shift of landlords from the private rented sector to the short term let sector
- This Council calls on the Government to continue to take action to ensure that investment in power, water and sewerage that has already been paid for by customers is delivered with immediate effect
- This Council calls on the Government to review the funding and borrowing rules as they apply to social housing, to ensure that this city, and this country, sees the expansion of social housing construction as soon as possible

**f) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr. Theo Jupp) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Naomi Waite]**

Liberal Democrats Group Motion

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.<sup>33</sup> Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.<sup>34</sup> Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.<sup>35</sup>

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.<sup>36</sup> For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. A Care England study<sup>37</sup> found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages."<sup>38</sup>

Council believes the following steps should be taken to improve migrant carers' situation.

**1. Simplify visa applications:** The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor.

**2. Grant access to public funds:** Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds.

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<sup>33</sup> CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

<sup>34</sup> Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

<sup>35</sup> Citizens Advice 2024

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

**3. Provide flexible work visas:** Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform.

Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to drive these actions forward promptly.

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### Labour Group Amendment

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.<sup>39</sup> Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.<sup>40</sup> Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.<sup>41</sup>

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.<sup>42</sup> For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. A Care England study<sup>43</sup> found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

<sup>40</sup> Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

<sup>41</sup> Citizens Advice 2024

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

Council believes the following steps should be ~~taken~~ **considered** to improve migrant carers' situation. 1. Simplify visa applications: The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor. 2. Grant access to public funds: Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds. 3. Provide flexible work visas: Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform. Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to ~~drive these actions forward~~ **consider these actions** promptly.

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If agreed, the motion would read:

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.<sup>45</sup> Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.<sup>46</sup> Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.<sup>47</sup>

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.<sup>48</sup> For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. [A Care](#)

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<sup>45</sup> CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

<sup>46</sup> Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

<sup>47</sup> Citizens Advice 2024

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

England study<sup>49</sup> found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages.”<sup>50</sup>

Council believes the following steps should be considered to improve migrant carers' situation. 1. Simplify visa applications: The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor. 2. Grant access to public funds: Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds. 3. Provide flexible work visas: Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform. Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to consider these actions promptly.

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>



**g) Bus travel for asylum seekers in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dianne Regisford)**

Green Group Motion

1. There are an increasing number of asylum seekers being accommodated within the city, particularly in a hotel near to the Kassam Stadium.<sup>51</sup>
2. Those asylum claimants who are in receipt of statutory support according to section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 receive average weekly financial support equating to just £8.86 per week for those in accommodation.<sup>52</sup>
3. Oxford City Council has signed up to the values of the City of Sanctuary scheme undertaking a commitment to ensure that Oxford is a safe and supportive environment for sanctuary seekers.<sup>53</sup>
4. Oxfordshire County Council has also signalled its intention to become a County of Sanctuary, showcasing its own commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for people seeking sanctuary.<sup>54</sup>
5. Numerous charities and organisations have drawn attention to the harms that hotel accommodation poses for asylum seekers: such as isolation from communities and resources.<sup>55</sup> This makes it even more important that support is accessible.
6. That the financial costs of travel within Oxford City make it more difficult for asylum seekers to access and engage with available sources of support.
7. That asylum seekers have recently made representations regarding the need for free bus passes to Oxfordshire County Council.<sup>56</sup>

**Council Believes:**

1. That Local Authorities, at both District and County Council level, have a moral and ethical duty, to the extent to which the law allows, to advocate for and protect all residents residing within their territorial area regardless of immigration status.
2. That access to support services should be open to all asylum seekers and should not be prohibited by transport costs.
3. As a City of Sanctuary, Oxford City Council has a responsibility to act in a manner that promotes the safety, security and well-being of sanctuary seekers.

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/23116955.kassam-stadium-hotel-used-house-refugee-sparking-row/>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/section/95>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/183/oxford-city-council-makes-commitment-to-city-of-sanctuary-status>

<sup>54</sup> <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-is-a-county-of-sanctuary/#:~:text=Migrants%2C%20including%20refugees%20and%20asylum,as%20a%20place%20of%20sanctuary>

<sup>55</sup> [https://helenbamber.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Suffering%20and%20squalor\\_Final\\_June%202024.pdf](https://helenbamber.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Suffering%20and%20squalor_Final_June%202024.pdf); <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Hostile-Accommodation-Refugee-Action-report.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx77z1d57ydo>

4. As an aspiring County of Sanctuary, Oxfordshire County Council has a responsibility to act in a manner that promotes the safety, security and well-being of sanctuary seekers.

**Council Resolves:**

1. To request that the Leader of Oxford City Council write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council asking for them to facilitate the use of all buses within the Oxford City area without cost for those seeking asylum.
2. To request that the Leader of Oxford City Council issue a public statement supporting the provision of free bus travel to all asylum seekers residing within the City limits.
3. To publicly record the Council's support for the provision of free bus travel to all asylum seekers within Oxford City.
4. To request that the Leader of Oxford City Council write to the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Secretary of State for Transport for the United Kingdom requesting the provision of free bus passes be provided for all asylum seekers resident in England, noting that transport for other parts of the UK is a devolved matter.