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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>21 March 2023</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Legal &amp; Democratic Services</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>LS/027/23</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Colin MacDonald</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712113</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Energy Bills – Notice of Motion by Councillor Reynolds</b>		

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## 1.0 PURPOSE AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to advise the Policy & Resources Committee of the receipt of a Notice of Motion by Councillor Reynolds relative to energy bills.
- 1.3 The terms of the Notice of Motion are set out in appendix 1 to the report.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Policy & Resources Committee is asked to consider the Notice of Motion by Councillor Reynolds.

**Iain Strachan**  
**Head of Legal & Democratic Services**

In recent weeks we have seen fuel and energy companies, including British Gas, Shell, Centrica, EON, National Grid, announce obscene profits at a time when many families are struggling to make ends meet. Together, these companies in 2022 made a total of almost £64 billion in profit, over £15 Billion more than the entire Scottish Government's 2021/22 budget.

Most aspects of energy policy are reserved to Westminster and after plans for the energy cap to rise yet again on April 1<sup>st</sup>, it is now expected the Chancellor will at least freeze the Energy Price Guarantee in the Budget, for the next 3 months.

It is the UK government who have the power to provide substantial support to consumers to help reduce their energy bills or to cap how much households are charged. They have chosen not to do so, but instead decided to subsidise the energy supply companies by paying a relatively small amount towards our energy bills, which goes straight back into these companies' coffers (while playing at imposing windfall taxes which does nothing to directly help to pay these bills in the short term, while families are choosing between heating and eating). The support provided to households and businesses by the UK government falls far short of what is needed.

Meanwhile, to try to mitigate the rising costs of energy, The Scottish Government and Scottish Local Authorities, including Inverclyde, have provided funds, but given our finite budgets we cannot continue to do so. The New Annual Scottish Government Winter Heating Payment is now being rolled out which will automatically help 400,00 people towards paying their heating bills.

Our MP and MSP have held Cost of Living Advice Days in Inverclyde in the past couple of months which included Energy Advice available from Home Energy Scotland, a Scottish Government initiative where vouchers are also available for eligible households.

We believe the UK government should require energy companies to lower their present high standing charges which hit consumers hard, even when economising to save energy. This would be a small step towards ensuring that no one is forced to choose between heating and eating. It is abhorrent in an energy rich country like Scotland, with a vast renewable energy potential, that people are finding themselves unable to pay soaring energy bills.

Recently, some of the most vulnerable households have been converted to prepayment meters by these fuel and energy companies who are making record profits. Ofgem has now stated that this needs to stop, but we believe further action needs to be taken to stop energy companies sending debt collection companies to the homes of vulnerable people, demanding money.

Committee is asked to instruct the appropriate Officer to write to the Secretary of State for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to outline how much of an impact, rising energy costs are placing on Inverclyde residents and businesses, and demand that the UK Government uses its powers to reduce the prices energy companies are charging their customers, and suspend debt collection actions related to energy bills.

Proposed by: Cllr Sandra Reynolds