



Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at: Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone

Date: Tuesday, 12 June 2018

Present: Councillors Miss Susan Carey, Peter Gane (Chairman), Clive Goddard, Ms Janet Holben, Mrs Claire Jeffrey (Vice-Chair), Mrs Mary Lawes, Michael Lyons, Ian Meyers, Russell Tillson and Mrs Rodica Wheeler

Apologies for Absence

Officers Present: Leigh Hall (Group Accountant), Andrew Hatcher (Revenues and Benefits Strategic Manager), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Tim Madden (Corporate Director - Customer, Support and Specialist Services), Charlotte Spendley (Head of Finance) and Lee Walker (Group Accountant)

Others Present:

109. Minutes

Proposed by Councillor Ms Susan Carey
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Rodica Wheeler

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2018 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

(Voting: For 9; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

110. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

111. Universal Credit

Andrew Hatcher, Revenues and Benefits Strategic Manager presented members with an update on the position of Universal Credit, a copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes for information.

He explained the background to Universal Credit in that it will replace 6 existing benefits and merge them into one, as shown in the attached papers, it will not have any impact on the pensionable age group.

He informed that Universal Credit live was initially introduced to Folkestone in 2016 for new claimants, this service ended in December 2017 and no new claims have been made in Folkestone since this date.

The full service was rolled out in the Folkestone job centre from May 2018 for all new applications and this will have an impact on all new claims but will not include those households with 3 or more children, those in temporary accommodation or supported and exempt accommodation.

Resource implications for the change are shown with particular attention paid to the current workload and how applications are manually processed on a two-week run of payments to help administer the housing benefit payments.

Members noted that the Council had a responsibility to support the DWP with two key services; assisted digital support and personal budgeting support.

Members paid particular attention to the following:

- The delay in rollout has been due to a number of issues, particularly around the DWP not liaising with experts and changing/ reviewing its processes. They are now working more closely with officers but it is anticipated that changes will continue to develop.
- Due to the two-weekly payment run it is not anticipated there will not be as many arrears to be paid and help is there in the form of job coaches who will be appointed to each applicant.
- The Kent Welfare Assistance service are also on hand to offer help and support.
- Payment directly to landlords is not the usual practice through Universal Credit unless a particular vulnerable person requires this facility.

It was made clear to members that those residents who need additional help and support can get this through the DWP, job coaches and officers of the Council.

Further updates will come forward to the Committee as the system is rolled out.

Proposed by Councillor Peter Gane
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Claire Jeffrey and

Resolved: To receive a yearly update on progress of Universal Credit.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

112. **General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2017/18**

The report summarised the 2017/18 final outturn position (subject to audit) for the General Fund capital programme compared to the latest approved budget and the quarter 4 budget monitoring position reported to Cabinet on 28 March 2018. The report also summarised the outturn position for the approved prudential indicators for capital expenditure in 2017/18.

Lee Walker, Group Accountant presented the report highlighting the following:

- Section 2 - Variance of £610,000 less than previously reported with further details for variances in 2.2 of the report.
- Section 3 – informs of the Capital Funding showing slippage and reprofiling of capital expenditure with resources ring-fenced to fund this being outlined in section 2 of the report.
- Section 4 – Prudential Indicators outturn all complied with.

Members asked for further information on the following:

- Princes Parade Planning costs – this is to reflect the delay in the application being taken to planning.
- Lifeline units savings – due to an underspend on the scheme.
- Slippage/reprofiling – due to the nature of the programme items come forward but delays in delivering, resources and funding can then have an impact, the Council has a five year programme which allows for this and it was noted that all projects are delivered.

Proposed by Councillor Ms Susan Carey
Seconded by Councillor Michael Lyons and

Resolved: To receive and note Report C/18/09.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

113. **General Fund Revenue 17/18 provisional outturn**

The report summarised the 2017/18 final outturn position (subject to audit) for the General Fund revenue expenditure compared to both the latest approved budget and quarter 4 projections.

Leigh Hall, Group Accountant presented the report highlighting the following:

- The outturn for the General Fund Revenue in 2017/18 shows a final surplus of £2.151m more than budgeted.
- The total variance against projected outturn at 3.2 of the report lists the significant movements.

Members paid particular attention to the following:

- Car parking income and expenditure – further information was requested on this and the data be provided directly to members of the committee.

- Coast Protection – further information was requested in respect of the works to the beach railings and again this information will be provided to members of the committee following the meeting.
- Housing Benefits – changes in market conditions relate to an increase in demand from homeless people for Bed and Breakfast, together with a delay in Universal Credit coming forward and housing benefits increasing.

Proposed by Councillor Michael Lyons
Seconded by Councillor Russell Tillson and

Resolved: To receive and note Report C/18/08.

(Voting: For 10; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

114. Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Financial Outturn 2017/18

The report summarised the 2017/18 final outturn position (subject to audit) for the HRA revenue expenditure and HRA capital programme compared to both the latest approved budget and quarter 4 projections.

Leigh Hall, Group Accountant presented members with the report highlighting the following:

- Housing Revenue outturn position compared to latest approved budget at 2.1 in the report, informing £511,000 less than previously recorded.
- Final Capital outturn position compared to latest approved budget at 2.3 in the report, with a carry forward request totalling £5.099m for current schemes.

Members requested that further information is provided by the Housing team in respect of Thermal Insulations and this will be sent directly to them once the information has been sought.

Proposed by Councillor Clive Goddard
Seconded by Councillor Michael Lyons and

Resolved: To receive and note Report C/18/07.

(Voting: For 9; Against 0; Abstentions 1)

Universal Credit update: Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Andrew Hatcher

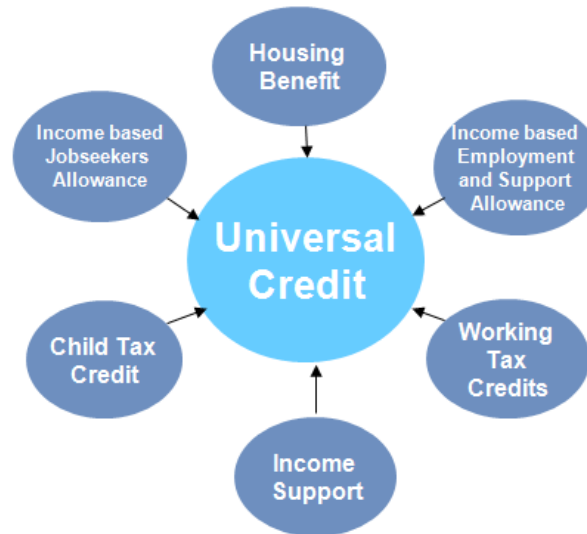
Revenues and Benefits Strategic Manager

Introduction

- What is Universal Credit?
- Universal Credit in the Folkestone & Hythe area
- Impact in the Folkestone & Hythe area
- The future

What is Universal Credit?

- Universal Credit is being rolled out across the United Kingdom and will replace 6 existing (legacy) benefits and merge them into one payment will be paid monthly in arrears.



- Universal Credit is for working age people only.

Universal Credit in Folkestone & Hythe DC

- UC live service was initially introduced to Folkestone on 25 January 2016 for new claimants that would have previously applied for JobSeekers Allowance.
- UC live service ended 31 December 2017 and no new claims have been made in Folkestone since this date.
- Once a customer is in receipt of UC they remain on the benefit.

Universal Credit Full Service



- Full service rolls out in the Folkestone JobCentre from 30 May 2018 for all new applications
- The Council cannot accept new claims for Housing Benefit from this date unless exempt from UC:
 - Temporary Accommodation
 - Specified (Supported) Accommodation
 - Households with 3 or more children
 - Pensionable age

Resource implications

Residents who claim benefits from the Council

- New claims for Housing Benefit will cease except for exempt cases.
- All Supported and Exempt Accommodation claims, Temporary Accommodation and 3+ child households for Housing Benefit will still be made to the Council.
- All residents will continue to apply for Council Tax Reduction from the Council.
- Universal Credit has monthly changes that need to be processed for CTR cases, this will increase significantly. No automation currently available from DWP.
- Manual processing of two-week run on payments of HB to be administered by the Council.

Resource implications

Current caseload:

	Housing Benefit	Council Tax Reduction
Working age	5,367	4,891
Pension age	2,646	4,057
Total caseload	8,013	8.948

- New claims overall will still be received as CTR applications will be encouraged.
- Change in circumstances expected to increase with monthly UC change notifications
- Number of Folkestone JC residents in receipt of Universal Credit: 578*

*Figures as of February 2018

LA support for UC

- The Council have a responsibility to offer two key services to support DWP in UC implementation
 - Assisted Digital Support (ADS)
 - Personal Budgeting Support (PBS)
- The Welfare Reform Officer to focus attention on the projected take up of the services offered on DWPs behalf.

Category	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
ADS Claimant Take – Up	19	63	52	64	198
PBS Claimant Take – Up	31	106	88	106	331

- Funding received from DWP to carry out duties

The future

- After the rollout process has completed, DWP will then begin moving all remaining existing benefit claimants to the full Universal Credit service
- Managed migration to be completed by 2022 (latest target)
- No plans for a similar scheme for Pensioners

Summary

- What is Universal Credit?
- Universal Credit in Folkestone & Hythe area
- Impact in Folkestone & Hythe area
- The future
- **Any questions?**
- www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk
- www.youtube.com/channel/UC7Km4IXfVJB1n8SQUmkJD0Q