

UNIVERSAL CREDIT INDEPTH SCRUTINY BOARD - UPDATE

SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE – 3 APRIL 2012

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of Effective Management of Council Resources

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Ramsay

Head of Service Group Manager – Financial Services – Adrian Rowbotham

Recommendation to Services Select Committee: That the report be noted.

Introduction

- 1 At the Services Select Committee meeting on 31 January 2012 it was agreed that a Scrutiny Board would carry out an indepth scrutiny of Universal Credit.
- 2 The Scrutiny Board consists of the following Members: Cllrs. Firth (Chairman), Horwood (Vice-Chairman), Ball, Hogarth and Raikes.
- 3 This report contains the Key Lines of Enquiry agreed by the board and the schedule of meetings.

Key Lines of Enquiry

- 4 The key lines of enquiry agreed by the Scrutiny Board are:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How is the new system of universal credit expected to work and what will its impact be on local authorities?2. What are the key challenges for this Council in adjusting to the new system of universal credit, especially during the transitional phase:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What departments/services will be affected?b. What impact will the changes have on demand for the Council's services? |
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- c. How can the current benefits service, including the staff currently operating in this area, best be protected given the uncertainty surrounding the service and its effect on staff numbers/morale?
3. What other organisations will also be affected?
 4. How should the Council best prepare for these changes?
 - a. What role should the Council play, if any, in helping other affected organisations prepare for the changes?
 - b. How might the Council ensure full accessibility to the new service especially by those who have difficulty accessing computer based services or have no access to a computer?
 - c. What opportunities are there to lobby DWP/play a part in how the new system is implemented? (E.g. Could Sevenoaks become a pilot Council for implementing the new scheme?)

- 5 The Scrutiny Board has received evidence from officers of this Council and visitors from other organisations to gain a wider understanding of how Universal Credit will operate and how it will affect the various parties.
- 6 Progress against the key lines of enquiry will be presented by members of the Scrutiny Board at the meeting, however it can be noted that particular progress has been made in items 1-3.

Schedule of Meetings

- 7 The meetings of the Scrutiny Board are:

Scrutiny Stage	Meeting Date	Comments
1. Scoping and identifying key lines of enquiry (KLOE)	17 February 2012	KLOE agreed by group
2. Familiarisation with subject area	1 March 2012	Further information on how the current benefits service operates

Background Papers:

Report to Services Select Committee 31 January
2012 – Item 6 – Universal Credit Indepth Scrutiny
Briefing Note

Report to Services Select Committee 8 November
2011 – Benefits Service update

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