

UNIVERSAL CREDIT INDEPTH SCRUTINY BOARD - UPDATE

SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE – 19 JUNE 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 in-depth scrutiny of Universal Credit.
- 2 The Scrutiny Board consists of the following Members: Cllrs. Firth (Chairman), Horwood (Vice-Chairman), Ball, Hogarth and Raikes.
- 3 An update report was presented to Services Select Committee on 3 April 2012. Cllr Horwood also gave a presentation updating the committee on the effects of Universal Credit and progress made by the Scrutiny Board.
- 4 The findings of the Scrutiny Board will be presented to this committee on 18 September 2012.

Key Lines of Enquiry

- 5 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?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?)

6 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.

7 Progress has now been made on all of the key lines of enquiry. An update will be presented by members of the Scrutiny Board at the meeting.

Schedule of Meetings

8 The meetings of the Scrutiny Board:

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

3. Submission of evidence	2 March 2012 16 March 2012	Visitors: WKHA WKHA Tenant Rep. National Landlords Association Sevenoaks MIND Sevenoaks CAB Job Centre Plus DWP – Customer Insight Team District Council Network (DCN) Lead for Welfare Reform Sevenoaks DC Housing Service
4. Deliberation / consideration of options	17 April 2012 11 May 2012	Review of progress to date and planning the final report Visitor: Cllr Fleming – update on Welfare reform. Updates on pilot schemes and future staffing & budget requirements
5. Formulation of recommendations and reporting	26 June 2012	

Key Implications

Financial

The findings of the Scrutiny Board should highlight the financial implications.

Community Impact and Outcomes

The findings of the Scrutiny Board should highlight the community impact and outcomes.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

There are no legal or human rights implications arising from this report..

Risk Assessment Statement

The findings of the Scrutiny Board should highlight the risks.

Background Papers:

Report to Services Select Committee 3 April 2012 –
Item 6 – Universal Credit Indepth Scrutiny Update

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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