

COMMITTEE REVIEW - UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND OTHER WELFARE BENEFIT CHANGES

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Anisha Teji, Democratic Services Officer
Papers with report	Appendix 1 - A consolidation of minutes from all the witness sessions
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The Committee is undertaking a review into Universal Credit and other welfare benefit changes and how the Council can support residents through the transition to, and future successful management of, their Universal Credit (UC) claims.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee notes and comments on the information presented in this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The agreed Terms of Reference for the review are set out below:

Terms of Reference

1. To understand the impact that the introduction of the full UC service has had in areas where it has been rolled out. To include the cumulative impact of the introduction of UC and other welfare benefit changes.
2. To understand the impact that UC, alongside other welfare benefit changes, is having and is expected to have on local residents in Hillingdon and on the income and costs of the Council, housing associations and other local organisations.
3. To examine how the Council services, housing associations and voluntary groups are supporting residents to transition to UC and manage their claims.
4. To make practical, prudent recommendations to Cabinet (and other bodies if applicable) from the Committee's findings to support residents transitioning to UC and to manage their claims.

Witness sessions

Throughout the course of its review, the Committee heard from a variety of witnesses.

Date of witness session	Witnesses attended
Witness session 1 26 September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debby Weller – Policy and Strategy Manager (Housing)• Inderpal Mudhar – Partnership Manager for The Department of Work and Pensions
Witness session 2 17 October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ellen Salkeld – Income Manager at Catalyst• Stuart Coleman – Head of Housing Management at The Barnet Group
Witness session 3 28 November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rod Smith – Tenancy Management Team - Service Manager• Mark Billings – Homelessness - Housing Manager
Member site visit 5 December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sukh – Customer Lead Manager for Hayes and Uxbridge• Inderpal Mudhar – Partnership Manager for The Department of Work and Pensions
Witness session 4 16 January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heather Brown – Director and Barbara Maccauley – Policy Manager from the Citizens Advice Hillingdon• Nigel Gee – Senior Mental Health Worker from MIND• Giles Stratchan – Uxbridge College Partnership Manager from Uxbridge College

Review update

Following witness session 4 on 16 January 2019, Members raised concerns regarding the information provided. Members sought further clarification on the points raised, particularly in relation to the support offered to claimants claiming Universal Credit who had mental health issues.

Before moving on to the recommendation discussion stage, Members wished to meet with Nigel Gee and Inderpal Mudhar once more, outside the usual Committee meetings, to discuss matters raised at the witness sessions. Having the witness session in this forum would allow more time to discuss the matters openly without any time constraints. A meeting has been arranged for 14 February 2019 at the Civic Centre.

Once Members have met with the witnesses, the Committee will then discuss potential

recommendations for the review at the next meeting on 18 March 2019.

Implications on related Council policies

While much of this topic is set nationally set, for any changes locally, the role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Policy Overview Committees directly engage residents and external partners in the work they do.

Financial Implications

These are primarily for residents claiming UC, as set out in the background papers.

Legal Implications

The primary legislation relating to Universal Credit is the Welfare Reform Act 2012, with further regulations following thereafter.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scoping Report

Previous Committee papers on the review published on the Council's website