

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 18 MARCH 2014**

REPORT BY: **HEAD OF FINANCE**

SUBJECT: **UNIVERSAL CREDIT DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP
AGREEMENT**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To advise Cabinet members as to progress of the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) to Shotton Job Centre.
- 1.02 To advise members of the proposed Delivery Partnership Agreement (DPA)
- 1.03 To request that the Head of Finance in conjunction with the Head of Housing and the Cabinet members for Housing and Corporate Services be granted delegated authority to authorise the DPA on behalf of the Council.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 As part of the implementation of UC which is being phased in by the Department for Work and Pensions, 6 Job Centre Plus sites including Shotton were chosen to pilot the introduction of UC.
- 2.02 From Spring 2014, UC will start to be rolled out within Flintshire and some single unemployed people served by Shotton Jobcentre will be required to make claims for universal credit claims instead of jobseekers allowance. The (DWP) have projected that Shotton Jobcentre will process around 50 universal credit claims per month from single claimants. Due to the profile of the initial claimant group, being younger, with I.T skills and more likely to be living with family the DWP have predicted that they will need less assistance than the claimant groups that will follow later. As such there is expected to be a low demand for initial assistance from Flintshire.
- 2.03 During Summer and Autumn of 2014, the DWP propose to extend new claims for UC to include unemployed claimants who have a partner and to claimants who have dependent children. This will increase the numbers of claimants per month.

- 2.04 As the DWP do not have a support network in place their wish is to work in partnership with the Councils in the pilot areas to ensure that there is a coordinated network of support provision available to assist vulnerable claimants to make and sustain their UC claim.
- 2.05 In support of the pilot of UC to Shotton Flintshire is working with the DWP in 2 areas of support.
- 2.5.1 The support of claimants for on line access and personal budgeting support.
- 2.5.2 The requirement for the Housing Benefit Department to support the DWP in complex Housing Benefit cases and for confirmation of occupancy.
- 2.06 The DWP wish to formalise the agreement and will produce a Delivery Partnership agreement (DPA) for a 12 month period commencing 1st April 2014, by the middle of March detailing responsibilities and service levels.
- 2.07 To support this agreement, the DWP have agreed to provide funding to Flintshire County Council, however this funding is subject to negotiation.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 As the first site in Wales, this pilot will be high profile which will attract interest from National and Local Government.
- 3.02 The DPA will formalise agreed actions by Flintshire in support of the roll out of UC. With Flintshire supporting people to apply electronically for UC by providing access points and technical support as required, and providing budgeting advice to claimants who have been identified by the DWP. This support will be provided by Departments from the Finance and Housing Services.
- 3.03 In addition to claimant support, the DWP also require administrative support from the Housing Benefit (HB) department with contact points to advise on complex HB issues such as exempt accommodation, and tenancy confirmations.
- 3.04 The DWP have agreed to fund the cost of providing support of UC; however negotiations are ongoing with the DWP who require a funding bid which reflects potential additional workloads to current service provision on an incremental basis which remains within their financial constraints.

The funding under the DPA will also include a new administrative burden which has been identified by the DWP, to enable the administration of Council Tax Support (CTS) in that the current electronic access to DWP records will be restricted and future CTS claims will be required to be by separate application. This funding would have previously been paid to Flintshire within the HB Administration grant.

- 3.05 The proposed partnership agreement is still being prepared by the DWP with an expected signing date by mid March.
- 3.06 To comply with the time line for agreeing funding and signing the agreement it is unlikely that the agreement could be considered by Cabinet and so delegated arrangements will need to be put in place.
- 3.07 Once the DPA and funding has been agreed there will be a requirement to negotiate delivery with the 3rd sector.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That Members note the report and impacts.
- 4.02 That delegated authority is given to the Head of Finance in conjunction with the Head of Housing and the Cabinet members for Housing and corporate Services to agree funding and to authorise the DPA on behalf of the Council.
- 4.03 That reports are provided to Cabinet on the finalisation of the DPA and funding, and regular progress reports on the pilot.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The increased services provision pressures on the Finance and Housing Services will be funded by the DWP.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 The proposed digital by default implementation of UC will have a negative impact in instances of Claimants without access to I.T or with limited I.T skills these impacts will be mitigated by the support of Claimants.
- 6.02 As UC (including Housing Benefit) is to be paid monthly in arrears it is expected that some claimant may have budgeting problems which may affect rent payments. The intention is to offer personal budgeting support to claimants who are identified by the DWP to support them in managing their budgets.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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