

SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW PLAN

Overview and Scrutiny



SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Raised by -

Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date -

1 November 2017

Purpose of Review

Universal Credit is a means tested benefit for people of working age who are on low income. It will replace six existing benefits Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. Universal Credit is intended to be simpler than the current system of benefits and tax credits. Universal Credit Full Service has been rolled out in three phases across the City (11 October 2017, 22 November 2017 and 17 January 2018).

At the meeting of the Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 1 November 2017, the Committee considered the impact of Universal Credit (Housing Element) and recommended that a Select Committee Review was held to consider the following key areas –

- clarity and understanding of the impact of Universal Credit on different groups;
- impact of Universal Credit on other Council services which are not commissioned by the Department of Work and Pensions;
- exchange of information mechanisms which were currently in place between the Department of Work and Pensions and the Council and whether these were fit for purpose to help aid ongoing monitoring of Universal Credit;
- the ability of social housing landlords to provide ongoing community support and if able to continue this practice the impact on their house building plans;
- the willingness of private landlords to take on Universal Credit claimants due to the risk of arrears or to accept rent up to six weeks in arrears;
- the implications on the private rented sector homelessness prevention, if tenants were evicted or refused tenancies;
- the impact of the length of time it takes to process Universal Credit claims (six weeks) on rent arrears and potential eviction;
- the support being offered to tenants to sustain tenancies and minimise arrears;
- the impact on landlords both social and private from the introduction of Universal Credit;
- the impact on services provided by charities, foodbanks and community groups.

Select Committee Membership

Joint Committee Membership with Wellbeing (Homelessness and Housing) sit under the responsibilities of Wellbeing - nine Councillors (five conservatives/four labour councillors).

Process

Methodology/Approach

Single Select Committee session to be held in the Council House with invited witnesses, presentation from officers and relevant paperwork.

Sources of Information/Evidence	<p>Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Minutes November 2017</p> <p>http://democracy.plymouth.gov.uk/documents/g7582/Printed%20minutes%20Wednesday%201-Nov-2017%2013.00%20Place%20and%20Corporate%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=1</p> <p>Plymouth City Council Report to Place and Corporate OSC Agenda November 2017</p> <p>http://democracy.plymouth.gov.uk/documents/b18617/Supplement%20Pack%20Wednesday%201-Nov-2017%2013.00%20Place%20and%20Corporate%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=9</p> <p>Child Poverty Action Group Shelter</p>
Consultation Exercises	Not applicable
Witness/Expert Participation	<p>Witnesses will be sought from –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Work and Pensions • Social Landlords • Private Landlords • Advice Plymouth • Local Charities • Community Groups • Foodbanks • Credit Union • MPs • Plymouth City Council Cabinet Member and Officer(s) • National Level – Shelter and Child Poverty Action Group
Site Visits	None identified.
Resource Requirements	Will be met through existing scrutiny resources.

Post Review	
Reporting Process	The Select Committee will make direct recommendations to Cabinet
Anticipated Completion Date	Single session 14 March 2018
Draft Report Deadline	Minutes/Recommendations 28 March 2018.
Meeting Frequency	Single session
Date of Meeting	14 March 2018
Further Information	N/A