



# Cabinet (Resources) Panel

## 25 April 2017

<b>Report title</b>	Support for Universal Credit claimants	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor John Reynolds City Economy	
<b>Key decision</b>	No	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Keren Jones, City Economy	
<b>Originating service</b>	Skills	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Heather Clark Tel Email	Service Development Manager 01902 555614 Heather.Clark2@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Place Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board	6 March 2017 21 March 2017

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### Recommendations for action or decision:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. Approve a revenue budget of £89,000 funded through Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) grant to deliver Universal Credit Universal Support.
2. Delegate authority to Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with the Service Director for City Economy to approve payments of grant to agreed Universal Support partners based on demand for support services.
3. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Director Finance to finalise the budget for Universal Credit Implementation Support.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To seek approvals related to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funded Universal Support package for residents claiming Universal Credit;

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel agreed on 13 January 2016 to enter into the Universal Credit Delivery Partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver Universal Support – delivered locally and delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with the Service Director City Economy to commission Universal Support – delivered locally. DWP have recently contacted us to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement to deliver Universal Support in 2017/18.

## **3.0 Universal Support**

- 3.1 Universal Credit (UC) will replace both out of work and in work benefits and will require a culture change and behavioural shift for claimants. The rollout of Universal Credit in Wolverhampton began in February 2016 targeting single non-householders. The initial rollout was live service whereby claimants claim online but can manage their claim by phone. From December 2017, Wolverhampton will move to full service rolling out to other new claimants and claimants will need to claim and manage their account on line.
- 3.2 Some residents in Wolverhampton will face challenges in the transition to Universal Credit in relation to:
  - The move to monthly payments and direct payment of housing costs will require claimants to be responsible for managing their money and paying their bills. The extent of indebtedness in Wolverhampton could impact on people's ability to manage the transition to monthly payments.
  - Claiming and managing their account online - currently many Wolverhampton residents do not have access to the internet at home and some lack the confidence or skills to use a computer independently.  
The potential impact of getting this wrong for residents – debt, homelessness, mental health issues – is significant, and could also lead to a significant increase in demand for public services.
- 3.3 DWP are working with local authorities with the aim of delivering a joined up and coherent journey between services for claimants. To support residents affected by Universal Credit, the City of Wolverhampton Council set up an information hub <http://www.universalcreditwolverhampton.co.uk/> to help people understand the changes and access support to avoid getting into financial difficulty. This tool has been successful in helping people to navigate the complex support system, provide simple accessible information and access to support. The Council also commissioned personal budgeting and assisted digital support in 2016-17 funded by DWP.

- 3.4 The Council have the opportunity to continue to delivery Universal Support in 2017-18 funded through a DWP grant including Personal Budgeting Support and Assisted Digital Support as outlined in Appendix 1. Universal Support includes advice, assistance or support provided by Universal Credit or agreed Universal Support partners such as Local Authorities; Citizens Advice; Credit Unions; social landlords or charities to a Universal Credit claimant for the purpose of assisting them with:
- **Personal budgeting support** – 1-2 hours working out monthly income and outgoings, recognising priority bills, budgeting plan, setting up post office or transactional bank account, set up direct debits.
  - **Assisted Digital Support** – 1-2 hours supporting claimants to get on line and complete a claim and subsequently manage their claim online.
- 3.5 Funding relating to Universal Credit Universal Support will fund assisted digital and personal budgeting support. We are awaiting confirmation of further funding for Universal Credit Implementation Support which will cover management support, support for complex housing cases, housing benefit stop notices and payment deduction programme. Key partners actively involved in delivery of support to Universal Credit claimants include:

Stakeholder	Role
City Economy	Overall co-ordination of the support offer including project manage Universal Support, maintain Universal Credit information hub and link to progression routes into employment such as wolves@work.
Revenue & Benefits	Processing housing benefit and local council tax relief scheme. Support UC service centre in response to UC queries.
Welfare Rights	Benefit expertise, advocates and raising awareness of Universal Credit including upskilling frontline workers.
Housing team	Providing the link with housing providers particularly private landlords
Wolverhampton Homes	Informing and targeting tenants and delivery of personal budgeting and assisted digital with progression to further support through Click Start
Citizens Advice Bureau	Delivery of personal budgeting support and wider advice together with progression to further support through Click Start
Libraries	Delivery of Assisted Digital Support
Learning Platform	Delivery of Assisted Digital Support
City Direct	Triage and delivery of Assisted Digital Support
DWP	Funder and referrer onto Personal Budgeting and Assisted Digital Support.

- 3.6 Although yet to be confirmed, funding for Universal Credit Implementation Support may also be available to fund management support, support for complex housing cases, housing benefit stop notices and payment deduction programme. We anticipate this to be as follows. Delegated authority is requested to set this up once funding has been confirmed.

	£000	Description	Responsible Service
Management Support (Full & Live Service)	35	This is to support Universal Credit Implementation	City Economy
Support for complex housing cases (Full Service)	10	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of providing further information for complex housing costs to Universal Credit.	Revenue & Benefits
Housing Benefit Stop Notices	47	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of closing down a Housing benefit claim that has since migrated to Universal Credit	Revenue & Benefits
Payment Deduction Programme	18	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process attached to claimants with historical debt (similar to MGP1) who have migrated to Universal Credit.	Revenue & Benefits

#### 4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 Approval is sought for a revenue budget up to £89,000 in 2017/18 based on the offer of grant from DWP to enable the Council to provide Assisted Digital Support (ADS) and Personal Budgeting Support (PBS). Payments will be made on a quarterly basis based on anticipated demand for these support services. DWP have confirmed CWC will receive at least 80% of this fund even if demand is lower than anticipated.
- 4.2 This report also seeks approval to delegate authority to Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with the Service Director for City Economy to approve payments of grant to agreed Universal Support partners based on demand for support services. Universal Support partners include Citizens Advice Bureau and Learning Platforms.
- 4.3 Although yet to be confirmed, funding for UC Implementation Support may also be available to fund management support, support for complex housing cases, housing benefit stop notices and payment deduction programme. Delegated authority is requested for the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Director Finance to approve revenue budgets for Universal Credit Implementation Support once funding has been confirmed. Indicative budgets are as follows:

Purpose of anticipated funding	£000	Service Area
Management Support (Full & Live Service)	35	City Development
Support for complex housing cases (Full Service)	10	Revenue & Benefits
Housing Benefit Stop Notices	47	Revenue & Benefits
Payment Deduction Programme	18	Revenue & Benefits
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	

[CN/07042017/Q]

## **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 A grant funding agreement will need to be entered into between the DWP and City of Wolverhampton Council in relation to delivery of the universal support for Universal Credit. Agreements relating to commissioned activity will include a requirement to provide the management information required by DWP.  
[RB/28032017/Y]

## **6.0 Equalities implications**

- 6.1 Some equalities group experience particular challenges relating to digital and financial inclusion therefore the availability of personal budgeting and assisted digital support will have positive equalities implications.

## **7.0 Environmental implications**

- 7.1 Digital inclusion has positive environmental implications since it allows transactions to be undertaken online.

## **8.0 Human resources implications**

- 8.1 There are no human resource implications.

## **9.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

## **iiiAppendix 1 Universal Support**

### **Personal Budgeting Support**

The objective of the Universal Credit Personal Budgeting Support is to support Claimants transitioning into UC with budget management to enable them to manage their money and pay their bills on time, prioritising rent payments.

The Outcomes of PBS should include but not be restricted to the Claimant being capable of undertaking the following activities:

- a. Work out monthly income and outgoings
- b. Recognise priority bills, such as rent
- c. Identify and cut back on non-essentials
- d. Complete and maintain a budgeting plan
- e. Convert from a Post Office card account/Simple payments to more appropriate banking products
- f. Have a transactional bank account
- g. Set up a direct debit for prioritised payments

### **Assisted Digital Support**

The objectives of the Universal Credit Assisted Digital Support is to:

- a. provide support for Claimants who are capable of transacting with the UC website, with help.
- b. ensure that those who cannot self-serve are helped to access UC through appropriate channels.
- c. Identify need to access more intensive digital up-skilling to use the internet.
- d. Support digital inclusion

The outcomes of ADS will include but not be restricted to the Claimant being capable of undertaking the following activities on the UC website:

- a. Security awareness: to ensure claimant keeps (log-in) credentials safe
- b. Set and manage their own email account
- c. Access, navigate and understand the information required to gather data and complete online UC claims
- d. Navigate and update online, diaries, 'to do' lists, and Journals
- e. Upload documents, including curriculum vitae (CVs), medical certificates, and Jobsearch evidence
- f. Notify change of circumstances
- g. Use online account for enquiries
- h. Print Documents