

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2017

TITLE: REVIEW OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN HARLOW – SCOPING REPORT

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Review Topic	The Local Impacts of Universal Credit to Harlow.
Links to the Council's priorities	This links to the Corporate Priorities of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More and Better Housing • Wellbeing and Social Inclusion
Terms of reference (to include the scope of the review)	The Council is not responsible for the introduction or the administration of Universal Credit (UC). The review will therefore examine – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The numbers of claimants that have (and will potentially) transferred to UC locally. • Payment mechanisms and waiting times. • Impacts on arrears of rent and Council tax and access to housing. • Evidence of increased demand for emergency support/loans. • Impacts on local support agencies including resources and client numbers.
Purpose and objective of the review (what the review should achieve)	The review is intended to provide information and to assist Councillors in their understanding of the impacts that the implementation of the new combined benefits under Universal Credit are having on local residents, support agencies and the rented housing market in the Harlow area. With full roll out of UC in Harlow only being effective since September 2017 planning for the review in March 2018 will give

	time for the evidence required to become available.
Methodology/approach (methods to be used for gathering evidence)	The review will be largely conducted through the use of interview/discussions with support agencies, council officers, DWP representatives and if possible local claimant(s).
Written evidence required	Some written evidence may be provided to support information discussed especially in respect of support agency demand (especially Assisted Digital Support and personal budgeting), rent arrears and demand for short term loans.
Potential witnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP (Local implementation manager) • Streets 2 Homes • Food Bank • Citizens Advice Bureau • Harlow Credit Union • UC Claimants • Council Rent Officers • Council Revenues and Benefits Officers
Potential Stakeholder involvement (who are the stakeholders and how will their views be sought)	<p>Representatives from stakeholder organisations will be involved in the scrutiny discussions.</p> <p>If possible claimants will be invited to take part at the meeting.</p>
Publicity (methods to be used)	Direct contact with agencies.
Resources (people, expenditure)	Officers Time.
Barriers/dangers/risks (any weaknesses or potential pitfalls in the review)	<p>Willingness of external bodies/individuals to engage in the review.</p> <p>The Council has no direct responsibility for the delivery of Universal Credit and therefore cannot take enact any findings or recommendations resulting from the review.</p>
Measures of success (how will the success of the review be measured)	Greater engagement with agencies involved in dealing with the implementation and the impacts of the roll out of Universal Credit.