

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE: 22 MARCH 2018

TITLE: REFERRAL FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
REVIEW OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN HARLOW

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This is not a Key Decision

The decision is not subject to Call-in Procedures for the following reason:

The decision is for noting only.

This decision will affect no ward specifically.

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** Cabinet notes the specific comments and concerns raised by the Committee as detailed in paragraphs 4 – 8 of the report.
- B** Cabinet notes the specific issues and concerns raised by external support organisations and contained within their written responses provided to the Scrutiny Committee and contained within the appendices to the original report attached.
- C** Cabinet notes that the Committee will be undertaking another review in six months.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A** The Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the review of Universal Credit in Harlow at its meeting on 13 March 2018. The Committee has asked Cabinet to note some specific comments.

BACKGROUND

1. At its meeting on 13 March, the Scrutiny Committee received a report on the review of Universal Credit in Harlow.
2. The committee noted the written and verbal responses received from claimants, support organisations and the DWP.
3. The Committee has made a recommendation to note the specific comments as detailed in paragraphs 4 – 8.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

4. The online applications process can be complex, and maintaining an online journal can be difficult, especially for particularly vulnerable claimants and those who do not have immediate access to a computer.
5. Additional help is needed to assist certain claimants manage their monthly finances. Monthly payments have caused issues with arrears for some claimants. Allowing more claimants to receive fortnightly payments would help alleviate some of these problems.
6. There had been a significant increase in demand for support services, as well as a sharp increase in the usage of food banks. This included an increase in the number of young families using food banks.
7. Residents in temporary accommodation were particularly vulnerable in instances where one week's arrears on rent could see eviction.
8. It was still too early to have gained any conclusive evidence with regard to rent arrears and evictions. Therefore it is proposed that a further review be carried out by the Committee in six months' time.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications of the recommended decision are outlined in the 'Implications' section of the original report, which is attached as Appendix 1.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Original report to the Scrutiny Committee, 'Review of Universal Credit in Harlow – Interviews with DWP and Claimants'

Background Papers

All original reports to the Scrutiny Committee can be viewed from

<http://moderngov.harlow.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=119&MIId=933&Ver=4>

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.