

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD

31ST MARCH 2016

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

– DAVID REES

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

All

UNIVERSAL CREDIT – CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Purpose of report

1. To seek Member approval for the service level agreement for the funding received from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for the provision of support to Universal Credit claimants for 2016/17.

Background

2. Universal Credit was introduced in Neath Port Talbot in April 2015 and in order to facilitate this new income stream for customers an agreement was entered into with DWP for this authority to provide support and assistance to claimants and the DWP.

In March 2015 members agreed to delegate authority to the Head of Financial Services to formalise such an agreement with the DWP.

The support provided for customers is mainly related to personal budgeting support to manage their UC payments and also digital help and advice in assisting customers to claim UC.

We also provide support to the UC service centre staff in relation to housing cost matters, providing details of existing housing benefit entitlement for new UC claimants and assisting in dealing with complex UC cases(eg those in supported accommodation)

The original agreement expires March 2016 and a new agreement is in the process of being agreed.

Current Position

3. During 2015/16 there have been approximately 850 new claimants to Universal Credit. Of these only 15 to date have received specific support and advice provided on behalf of the council. This support was provided by either the relevant RSL (Housing Association) or the Credit Union by prior arrangement with the council.

It is proposed that similar arrangements to 2015/16 are replicated for 2016/17. In 2015/16 £55,496 was paid by the DWP to the authority for the support outlined in (2) above. In 2016/17 the estimated funding available is £24,000. This reduced funding takes account of the fact that set up costs incurred in 2015/16 are not replicated in 2016/17.

In 2015/16 all the work other than budget support was provided by the authority and was done so within the available budget. A small proportion of the 2016/17 funding will be paid over to partner organisations providing direct support to UC claimants. The remainder of the funding will be used by the authority to cover the costs of administration.

Financial Impact

4. All financial issues have been dealt with in the body of the report

Equality impact assessment

5. There was no requirement for an equality impact assessment on this issue

Workforce impacts

6. There are no workforce impacts

Legal impacts

7. There are no legal impacts of this report

Risk management

8. There are no risk management issues

Consultation

9. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item

Recommendations

10. (a) That Members approve the service arrangements with the Department of Work and Pensions in relation to Universal Credit work.
(b) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Financial Services to finalise the service and funding agreement with the DWP.

Reasons for proposed decisions

11. To agree the service level agreement and financial support arrangements between the council and the DWP.

Implementation of decision

12. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period

Appendices

13. None

List of background papers

14. Universal Credit Support Agreement Document

Officer Contact

Mr David Rees – Head of Financial Services

Tel. No.: 01639 763634

Email: d.rees1@npt.gov.uk

Mr Kevin Davies – Principal Benefits Officer

Tel. No.: 01639 763920

Email: k.davies1@npt.gov.uk