



**Notice of a public meeting of  
Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management  
Committee**

**To:** Councillors Williams (Chair), Galvin (Vice-Chair),  
N Barnes, D'Agorne, Douglas, Fenton, Gates, Looker  
and Reid

**Date:** Monday, 11 March 2019

**Time:** 5.30 pm

**Venue:** The Thornton Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G039)

**A G E N D A**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

**2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 10)**

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2019 and the CSMC Call-in held on the 17 December 2018.

**3. Public Participation**

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered to speak can do so. The deadline for registering is **5.00pm on Friday 8 March 2019**. Members of the public can speak on agenda items or matters within the remit of the Committee. To register to speak please contact the Democracy Officer for the meeting, on the details at the foot of the agenda.

## **Filming, Recording or Webcasting Meetings**

Please note that, subject to available resources, this meeting will be filmed and webcast, or recorded, including any registered public speakers who have given their permission. The broadcast can be viewed at <http://www.york.gov.uk/webcasts> or, if recorded, this will be uploaded onto the Council's website following the meeting.

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officer (whose contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at [http://www.york.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11406/protocol\\_for\\_webcasting\\_filming\\_and\\_recording\\_of\\_council\\_meetings\\_20160809.pdf](http://www.york.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11406/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_of_council_meetings_20160809.pdf)

### **4. Schedule of Petitions (Pages 11 - 24)**

This report provides Members with details of new petitions received to date, together with those considered by the Executive or relevant Executive Member/Officer since the last report to the committee.

### **5. 2018/19 Finance and Performance Monitor 3 (Pages 25 - 46)**

This report presents the overall finance and performance position for the period covering 1 October 2018 to 31 December 2018, together with an overview of any emerging issues. This is the third report of the financial year and assesses performance against budgets, including progress in delivering the Council's savings programme.

### **6. Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review - Draft Final Report (Pages 47 - 138)**

This draft final report presents the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) with all the information gathered by the Task Group set up to review Financial Inclusion in York, together with the Task Group's conclusions and recommendations.

**7. Single Use Plastics Scrutiny Review - Draft Final Report**  
(Pages 139 - 154)

This report presents the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) with all the information gathered by the Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee appointed to investigate the use and disposal of single use plastics in York, together with the Sub-Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

**8. Scrutiny Operations and Functions Review - Draft Final Report**  
(Pages 155 - 168)

This report presents the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) with all the information gathered by the Task Group assigned to review scrutiny operations and functions at City of York Council, along with its conclusions and recommendations.

**9. Urgent Business**

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officer:

Name: Chris Elliott

Tel: (01904) 553631

E-mail: [Christopher.elliott@york.gov.uk](mailto:Christopher.elliott@york.gov.uk)

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

**This information can be provided in your own language.**

**我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)**

**এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)**

**Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim (Polish)  
własnym języku.**

**Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)**

**یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)**

**☎ (01904) 551550**

## City of York Council

## Committee Minutes

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Meeting	Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee
Date	14 January 2019
Present	Councillors Williams (Chair), Galvin (Vice-Chair), N Barnes, Douglas, Fenton, Gates and Looker
Apologies	Councillors D'Agorne and Reid

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**36. Declarations of Interest**

At this point, members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

**37. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 12 November 2018 and the minutes of the 'Calling in' meeting held on 5 November 2018 be approved and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

**38. Public Participation**

Andrea Dudding addressed the committee regarding agenda item 6, on behalf of Unison. Ms Dudding was concerned that paragraph 4 in the report suggested that waste services staff may have made incorrect overtime claims and that this was not true. She informed the committee that waste services staff work on 'task and finish' contracts and not on hourly pay, regardless of whether the day in question was a bank holiday or otherwise. Ms Dudding wanted the committee to be reviewing the correct information.

**39. Schedule of Petitions**

Members received the regular update on the Schedule of Petitions in line with the agreed responsibilities of the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure the committee carries out its requirements in relation to petitions.

#### **40. 2nd Qtr Finance and Performance Monitoring Report**

Members received the Finance and Performance Monitor covering the period 1 July 2018 to 30 September 2018.

Members requested that more detail be incorporated into certain elements of the report particularly in regard to where savings had been expected but had not yet materialised.

Under questions from members regarding the Leeds City Region Business Rates Pool, officers informed the committee that:

- The description in paragraph 9 of the report was not an overall 'direction of travel' in terms of spending the resources.
- Any decision on the allocation of this money would be a decision for Executive or for Council within the budget process.
- The recommendation to Executive would be not to assign the Business Rates Pool money to anything in particular until pressures being felt, particularly by Adult Social Care and Health and Children's Services, were better understood.

Members were keen to understand whether the financial position being reported was further adrift than in previous years. Officers informed the committee that whilst the position has improved by around £100k since Monitor 1, it would be fair to say that the financial pressures being felt by the authority were of more significance than in previous years. Officers also noted that there were delays in the realisation of certain savings and that this was also having an impact on the current financial position.

Finally, members also noted the importance of working closely with York Museums Trust to ensure that their concerns in relation to visitor numbers and the hosting of events were taken into consideration.

Resolved: That the report and budgetary position at Quarter 2 be noted.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget.

#### **41. Internal Audit Report into CYC Overtime 2017-18**

Further to the referral from Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting held on 5 December 2018, Officers presented and highlighted the key findings from the internal audit that had been undertaken into overtime within Waste Services.

Members requested some clarification and officers concurred with members that the report was not entirely clear on the issue of bank holiday pay and agreed with the earlier clarification from Andrea Dudding, raised under public participation.

Officers did note that there was significant overtime recorded within the service and that drivers were often asked to work overtime to help keep the service running. Officers also explained the concept of 'task and finish' contracts, highlighting that a round is scheduled to take slightly less than the allotted 37 hours in order to incentivise the staff to continue to work hard.

In response to Member questions, officers explained the 'tachograph' system that has recently been implemented in Waste Services, noting that one of the main reasons for its introduction was to ensure that staff take their breaks.

Resolved: That no further information be requested and the report be noted.

Reason: To enable members to consider the findings and implications of the audit.

#### **42. Update Report on Attendance and Wellbeing Project (sickness absence)**

Members received an update on the sickness absence figures and an update on progress towards the introduction of a dedicated well-being team.

Members were interested in the timescale in introducing the new centralised team to deliver the wellbeing and occupational health service. Officers explained that the re-procurement of the

Occupational Health provision was due to go to Executive on 17 January 2019 and as the wellbeing provision had been combined with occupational health, there would be developments soon.

Officers stated under further questioning from members that City of York Council's stress and mental health absence levels were roughly in line with national averages.

Members noted the importance in understanding why staff were absent, particularly in relation to stress or mental health. Members agreed that more needed to be done to understand this and that 38% of staff completing the staff survey was a low response rate.

Members agreed that they would receive a further update report and information on the staff survey at the first meeting of the next municipal year.

Resolved: That Members consider the report and agree a method of how they wish to be kept up to date with progress.

Reason: To inform Members of the sickness absence figures within the Council.

#### **43. Update Report from Scrutiny Operations and Functions Review**

Members discussed the latest update report from the Committee's Task Group reviewing Scrutiny Operations and Functions.

Resolved: That the interim report be noted, no further information be requested and the final report on this review be brought to the March meeting of the Committee.

Reason: To ensure that the committee progresses the work of it's Task Group.



**44. Work Plan 2018-19**

Officers informed the committee that in addition to the Schedule of Petitions, Members would receive an update report from the review into Single-use plastics and the final reports from the Scrutiny Task Groups looking into Financial Inclusion and Scrutiny Operations and Functions.

Resolved: That the committee's work plan be approved

Reason: To ensure that the committee has a planned programme of work in place

Councillor D Williams, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.30 pm].

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Meeting	Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (Calling In)
Date	17 December 2018
Present	Councillors Galvin (Vice-Chair), N Barnes, D'Agorne, Fenton, Gates and Reid
Apologies	Councillors Williams, Brooks and Looker

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## **6. Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the register of interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared

## **7. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had no been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

## **8. Called-in Item Post Decision: Changes to Permit Emission Charges**

Members considered a report which set out the reasons for the call-in and the role of the Committee, together with options available to it under the agreed post-decision call-in arrangements. In accordance with those arrangements Councillors D'Agorne, Kramm and Craghill had called in the above item for the following reasons:

“a) The effect of this decision is unlikely to have a beneficial impact on air quality because the residents in ‘Respark’ areas will not be able to buy an appropriate vehicle that qualifies for the discount, in the absence of on-street electric charging facilities. The proposed removal of any discount rate for ‘low emission’ smaller cars also means that there will no longer be an incentive for residents to replace vehicles with a low emission vehicle in the range 75g/km- 120g/km and thus fails to support the One Planet York principles and the Clean Air Strategy.

b) The paper on which this decision was based contradicts itself and does not accurately reflect changes to VED on which the current discount rate is based:

Paragraph 8 states ‘...however it should be noted that the tax rate changes only apply to vehicles registered after 1 April 2017’. However elsewhere it states that the proposed change is needed to ‘bring discount criteria into line with the Government changes’ when it is only the newest vehicles that are affected. Paragraph 26 states that ‘the proposed change would affect approximately 1100 households’ and 200 season ticket holders whereas Annex A shows 815 qualifying permits without explaining the discrepancy. The final paragraph of the report again wrongly states ‘If this change isn’t implemented the council would be out of step with the Government road tax policy... as this is now out of date... this change needs to be implemented as soon as possible given the lack of national policy this is now based on.’ This is despite paragraph 8 statement acknowledging that VED bands A-C still apply to all vehicles registered between 2001 and 2017. Some change may be appropriate, but the policy is still valid for most permit holders and could be adapted to continue to offer discount for the revised low emission bands.

c) The ‘reason’ given for the recommended change (paragraph 7) also contradicts the situation described above: ‘To update the council’s outdated policy ‘

d) The reason given states that the change will ‘seek to encourage ULEV car ownership’. The paper fails to substantiate how this will be the case. The only vehicles that meet the proposed criteria are in fact alternative fuelled electric or hybrid electric vehicles. Lack of provision of on-street charging was discussed at the Decision Session in response to a representation from a resident wanting an on-street charging facility to enable them to buy a ULEV car. In the absence of any policy to enable installation of such charging provision (as confirmed by officers at the meeting), it is not logical to suggest that residents who need a permit to park on the public highway outside their home will be incentivised to buy such a vehicle in order to qualify for the new discount criteria. Also, there has been no reference to any additional provision of electric charging points for season ticket holders in council car parks to enable them to switch to a ULEV vehicle.

e) Given the above, there is no evidence to support paragraph 29 that 'this meets the council's sustainable transport policy by encouraging sustainable transport usage and ULEV uptake' since there is no provision for residents to charge such ULEV vehicles within Respark areas of the city, and the absence of a discount for low emission vehicles is just as likely to lead to them being replaced with a higher emission conventional vehicle.

We therefore call for the decision to be referred back to the Executive Member to consider Option 4, acknowledging that bands A-C continue to apply to vehicles registered before April 2017 and for the discount to be applicable to the new (post-2017 registration) bands below 110g/km CO2 emissions.

The effect would be that both ultra low emission vehicles (ULEV) and low emission (LEV) vehicles would continue to qualify for the discounted rate after April 2019, thereby continuing to incentivise residents to purchase lower emission vehicles appropriate to the facilities available to them where they live.

Budgetary adjustment would need to be made in the City of York Council 2019-20 budget to reflect this reduction in savings from April 2019."

Cllr Craghill spoke on behalf of the calling-in Members, to explain why this item had been called-in by the Green Group.

The Assistant Director of Transport, Highways and Environment and Head of Parking Services attended the meeting to answer Member questions. It was explained that the called-in decision related to the implementation of a policy change that had actually been decided at Full Council in February 2017.

It was also stated that the reasoning behind removing VEDB from the new permit system was simplification. Due to VEDB ratings (A,B,C etc) differing between pre and post 2017 vehicles, removing this aspect and referring only to the g/km of CO2 emissions, would ensure that all residents were easily able to see if they qualified for the discount.

Members questioned the impact of the permit discount on population purchasing behaviour and it was agreed that this was very difficult to prove one way or another. Officers explained

that the theory behind this type of policy was the 'nudge' element of behavioural change theory and was seen as good practice.

Members also questioned whether during the four year grace period (for residents who currently own a vehicle that receives a discount) the scale of Council spending on electric vehicle infrastructure would increase to match the policy. Officers stated that this would be for members to decide at Full Council.

Cllr D'Agorne moved option 6b, to refer this item back to Executive. It was not seconded and therefore the motion fell.

Cllr Galvin then moved, from the Chair, option 6a to confirm the decision made by the Executive and it was seconded by Cllr Fenton. On being put to the vote this motion was carried and it was

Resolved: That there were no grounds to make specific recommendations to the Executive in respect of the report. The original decision taken on the item by the Executive Member on 15 November 2018 would be confirmed and would take effect from the date of the CSMC (Calling-in) meeting.

Reason: To enable the called-in matter to be dealt with efficiently and in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

Cllr J Galvin, Chair in the absence of Cllr Williams  
[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.50 pm].



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## **Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee**

11 March 2019

Report of the Head of Civic & Democratic Services

### **Schedule of Petitions**

#### **Summary**

1. Members of this Committee are aware of their role in the initial consideration of petitions received by the Authority. The current petitions process was considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 2 October 2014 and endorsed by Council on 9 October 2014. This process aims to ensure scrutiny of the actions taken in relation to petitions received either by Members or Officers.

#### **Background**

2. Following agreement of the above petitions process, Members of the former Corporate and Scrutiny Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee (CSMC) had been considering a full schedule of petitions received at each meeting, commenting on actions taken by the Executive Member or Officer, or awaiting decisions to be taken at future Executive Member Decision Sessions.
3. However, in order to simplify this process Members agreed, at their June 2015 meeting, that the petitions annex should in future be provided in a reduced format in order to make the information relevant and manageable. At that meeting it was agreed that future petitions reports should include an annex of current petitions and agreed actions, but only following consideration of the petitions by the Executive or relevant Executive Member or Officer.
4. This was agreed, in the knowledge that the full petitions schedule was publicly available on the Council's website and that it was updated and republished after each meeting of the Committee.  
<http://democracy.york.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13020&path=0>

## **Current Petitions Update**

5. A copy of the reduced petitions schedule is now attached at Annex A of the report which provides a list of new petitions received to date together with details of those considered by the Executive or relevant Executive Member/Officer since the last meeting of the Committee in April. Further information relating to petitions which have been considered by the Executive Members/Officers since the last meeting are set out below:

### **Petition Number:**

#### **107. One Way System Traffic Direction Towards Lord Mayors Walk from St John Street, York.**

This 41-name petition was presented at Full Council on 19 July 2018 by Councillor Craghill. The Executive Member for Transport and Planning resolved to monitor the outcome of the works at the road narrowing and, if it appears large vehicles are continuing to use the street as a through route, consider the feasibility of implementing No Entry except for cyclists at the St John Street / High Newbiggin Street Junction and bring this back to a subsequent Decision Session meeting if necessary.

#### **113. Respark on Farrar Street. “We call on City of York Council to consult residents on introducing a residents’ parking scheme for Farrar Street, York (YO10 3BY/BZ) to prevent commuter parking in our street.”**

Councillor D’Agorne presented this 51-name petition to Full Council on 25 October 2019. The Executive Member for Transport and Planning resolved that Farrar Street be added to the residents’ parking waiting list and the possibility of widening the existing R46 to incorporate Farrar Street be investigated when the area reaches the top of the waiting list.

#### **119. Kingsway Area Improvements Needed before building works start – requesting Council to undertake improvements (access road, dropped kerbs, alternative play facilities) prior to any further building works starting in the Hob Moor Area**

This paper petition containing 37 names was presented by Cllr Waller at a Decision Session of the Executive Member for Transport and Planning on 15 November 2018. The issue was reported as a representation to the area planning sub-committee on 7 December when the relevant planning applications were considered. The applications were approved,



the requested works were not considered necessary to enable the developments to proceed.

**120. Windmill Gates requesting Residents' Priority Parking Monday to Friday 0800 – 1700 hrs**

This 52-name petition was emailed to Network Management on 17 December 2018. The Executive member for Transport and Planning resolved that Windmill Gates be added to the residents' parking waiting list.

**121. Alma Terrace (part) and Alma Grove, requesting Residents' Priority Parking**

This paper petition containing 29 names was handed to Network Management by Cllr D'Agorne on 17 December 2018. The Executive Member for Transport and Planning resolved that part of Alma Terrace (as detailed in the report) and Alma Grove be added to the residents parking waiting list, and the extent of the potential consultation area be considered when it reaches the top of the list.

**126. We call on Talk Talk to repair footpaths and verges that they damaged during their works.**

A paper petition with 277 signatures was presented at Full Council. The petition was considered by the Executive Member for Transport and Planning and a call for action by Talk Talk. As such a copy of the petition was sent to Talk Talk to consider. A response has also been sent to the organisers of the petition advising of the actions of the Council

**The Process**

6. There are a number of options available to the Committee as set out in paragraph 7 below, however these are not exhaustive. Every petition is, of course, unique, and it may be that Members feel a different course of action from the standard is necessary.

**Options**

7. Having considered the reduced Schedule attached which provides details of petitions received and considered by the Executive/Executive Member since the last meeting of the Committee; Members have a number of options in relation to those petitions:

- Request a fuller report, if applicable, for instance when a petition has received substantial support;
- Note receipt of the petition and the proposed action;
- Ask the relevant decision maker or the appropriate Executive Member to attend the Committee to answer questions in relation to it;
- Undertake a detailed scrutiny review, gathering evidence and making recommendations to the decision maker;
- Refer the matter to Full Council where its significance requires a debate;

If Members feel that appropriate action has already been taken or is planned, then no further consideration by scrutiny may be necessary.

8. Following this meeting, the lead petitioner in each case will be kept informed of this Committee's consideration of their petition, including any further action Members may decide to take.

### **Consultation**

9. All Groups were consulted on the process of considering more appropriate ways in which the Council deal with and respond to petitions, resulting in the current process. Relevant Directorates are involved and have been consulted on the handling of the petitions outlined in Annex A.

### **Implications**

10. There are no known legal, financial, human resources or other implications directly associated with the recommendations in this report. However, depending upon what, if any, further actions Members agree to there may, of course, be specific implications for resources which would need to be addressed.

### **Risk Management**

11. There are no known risk implications associated with the recommendations in this report. Members should, however, assess the reputational risk by ensuring appropriate and detailed consideration is given to petitions from the public.

## Recommendations

12. Members are asked to consider the petitions received on the attached Schedule at Annex A and as further outlined in this report, and agree an appropriate course of action in each case.

Reason: To ensure the Committee carries out its requirements in relation to petitions.

## Contact Details:

### Author:

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Scrutiny Officer  
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### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Dawn Steel,  
Head of Civic & Democratic Services.  
Tel: 01904 551030  
[dawn.steel@york.gov.uk](mailto:dawn.steel@york.gov.uk)

Report Approved



Date 1 February 2019

Wards Affected:

All



**Background Papers:** None

### Annexes:

Annex A – Extract from schedule of petitions received and action taken to date

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Petition Details	Petition Type	No of Signatures (Approx)	Responsible Officer	Decision maker (e.g. Executive Member, Director)	Date of Consideration	Action Agreed	Date of Consideration by CSMC & Outcome
<b>107. One Way System Traffic Direction Towards Lord Mayors Walk from St John Street, York</b>	Presented at Full Council 19 July 2018 by Councillor Denise Craghill	41	Alistair Briggs	<i>Executive Member for Transport and Planning</i>	17-01-19	The Executive Member approved Option 3 – to monitor the outcome of the works at the road narrowing and, if it appears large vehicles are continuing to use the street as a through route, consider the feasibility of implementing No Entry except for cyclists at the St. John Street / High Newbiggin St. Junction and bring this back to a subsequent Decision Session meeting if necessary.	
<b>111. Use of Hidden Air Raid Shelter “We the undersigned petition the council to investigate the use of the air raid shelter under the city walls opposite York Railway Station for possible uses, e,g a) a museum b) retail facilities c) a</b>	ePetition	12	John Oxley	<i>Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism</i>			

Petition Details	Petition Type	No of Signatures (Approx)	Responsible Officer	Decision maker (e.g. Executive Member, Director)	Date of Consideration	Action Agreed	Date of Consideration by CSMC & Outcome
cafe/waiting area for buses d) a pedestrian route to the service road outside West Offices, also to ask the citizens of York for their ideas.”							
<b>113. Respark on Farrar St.</b> “We call on City of York Council to consult residents on introducing a residents’ parking scheme for Farrar St, York (YO10 3BY/BZ) to prevent commuter parking in our street.”	Presented at Full Council on 25/10/18 by Cllr D’Agorne	51	Alistair Briggs/ Sue Gill	<i>Executive Member for Transport and Planning</i>	07-02-19	The Executive Member resolved that Farrar Street be added to the residents’ parking waiting list and the possibility of widening the existing R46 to incorporate Farrar Street be investigated when the area reaches the top of the waiting list.	
<b>114. Green Waste Collection for East Mount Road</b> “We the undersigned call upon City of York Council to look for suitable collection arrangements for green waste in East Mount Road, to provide the service paid for by council tax to all council tax payers.”	Presented at Full Council on 25/10/18 by Cllr Kramm	39	Suzanne Middleton / Russell Stone	<i>Executive Member for Environment</i>	tbc		

Petition Details	Petition Type	No of Signatures (Approx)	Responsible Officer	Decision maker (e.g. Executive Member, Director)	Date of Consideration	Action Agreed	Date of Consideration by CSMC & Outcome
<b>116. Traffic Speeds on Wetherby Road</b> <b>“We the undersigned request the York Council to consider the following action to control vehicle speeds on Wetherby Road.”</b>	<p>Emailed to Democratic Services inbox by Liberal Democrat Action on 23/10, with a note: <i>‘Please find attached petition which we have asked the Westfield Councillors to present on our behalf.’</i></p> <p>Presented by Cllr Waller at Decision Session- Exec Member for Transport and Planning- on 15 Nov 2018</p> <p>Updated Petition emailed to Democratic Services inbox by Liberal Democrat Action on 18 Nov with a</p>	19	Tony Clarke	Executive Member for Transport and Planning	14-03-19		

Petition Details	Petition Type	No of Signatures (Approx)	Responsible Officer	Decision maker (e.g. Executive Member, Director)	Date of Consideration	Action Agreed	Date of Consideration by CSMC & Outcome
	note <i>“Please find an updated copy of the Wetherby Road speeding issues petition which now includes an extra signature”</i>						
<b>119. Kingsway Area Improvements Needed before building works start – requesting Council to undertake improvements (access road, dropped kerbs, alternative play facilities) prior to any further building works starting in the Hob Moor Area</b>	Paper Petition  Presented by Cllr Waller at Decision Session, Exec Member for Transport and Planning, on 15 Nov 2018	37	TBC – handed to Tony Clarke but may also involve officers in other depts.  Copy sent to Gareth Arnold, as Cllr Waller requested that this go to planning due to upcoming planning applications coming to Area Sub committee.	Executive Member for Transport and Planning  Area Planning Cttee	07-12-18	Reported as a representation to the area planning sub-committee on 7 December when the relevant planning applications were considered. The applications were approved, the requested works were not considered necessary to enable the developments to proceed  (see item 123 refers)	
<b>120. Windmill Gates requesting Residents’ Priority Parking Mon-Fri 0800 – 1700 hrs</b>	Petition emailed to Network Management	52	Alistair Briggs	Executive Member for Transport and Planning	07-02-19	The Executive Member resolved that Windmill Gates be added to the	



Petition Details	Petition Type	No of Signatures (Approx)	Responsible Officer	Decision maker (e.g. Executive Member, Director)	Date of Consideration	Action Agreed	Date of Consideration by CSMC & Outcome
	on 17 Dec 2018					residents' parking waiting list.	
<b>121. Alma Terrace (part) and Alma Grove, requesting Residents' Priority Parking</b>	Paper Petition Handed to Network Management by Cllr D'Agorne on 17 Dec 2018	29	Alistair Briggs	Executive Member for Transport and Planning	07-02-19	The Executive Members resolved that part of Alma Terrace (as detailed in the report) and Alma Grove be added to the residents parking waiting list, and the extent of the potential consultation area be considered when it reaches the top of the list.	
<b>123. Kingsway area improvements needed before building works starts. We the undersigned request York Council to undertake the following improvements prior to any further building work starting in the Hob Moor area: Improving the access along Kingsway West/Ascot Way, removing where necessary, the grass</b>	Paper Petition presented at Full Council  (see 119 also)	23	Tony Clarke	Executive Member for Transport and Planning	14-03-19		

Petition Details	Petition Type	No of Signatures (Approx)	Responsible Officer	Decision maker (e.g. Executive Member, Director)	Date of Consideration	Action Agreed	Date of Consideration by CSMC & Outcome
verge Providing dropped kerbs of lay-by parking where this doesn't already exist Providing alternative, modern, children's play facilities before any existing provision is removed.							
<b>124. Highway repairs in the Ridgeway area</b> To take action regarding to have roads and footpaths in the Ridgeway area repaired and, where necessary, resurfaced and that grass verges be “edged” and hedges trimmed back so that the original widths of footpaths are restored	Paper Petition presented at Full Council	8	Bill Manby	Letter response only as under 10 signatures	14-03-19		
<b>125. Highway repairs in the Askham Lane area</b> To take action to have roads and footpaths (including speed cushions) at the low numbered end of Askham Lane repaired and that grass verges be “edged” and that hedges/trees are	Paper Petition presented at Full Council	13	Bill Manby	Executive Member for Transport and Planning	14-03-19		

<b>Petition Details</b>	<b>Petition Type</b>	<b>No of Signatures (Approx)</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Decision maker (e.g. Executive Member, Director)</b>	<b>Date of Consideration</b>	<b>Action Agreed</b>	<b>Date of Consideration by CSMC &amp; Outcome</b>
<b>trimmed back so that the original width of the footpath is restored</b>							
<b>126. We call on Talk Talk to repair footpaths and verges that they damaged during their works</b>	Paper Petition presented at Full Council	277	James Gilchrist	Executive Member for Transport and Planning	31/1/18	This calls on action by Talk Talk. As such a copy has been sent to Talk Talk to consider. A response has also been sent to the organisers of the petition advising of the actions of the Council.	
<b>127. To consider a full resurface of Grange Street, York, which is in a very poor state</b>	Paper petition handed in by Cllr D'Agorne	125	Bill Manby	Executive Member for Transport and Planning	14-03-19		

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Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee

11 March 2019

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Customer & Corporate Services

### **2018/19 Finance and Performance Monitor 3**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To present details of the overall finance and performance position for the period covering 1 October 2018 to 31 December 2018, together with an overview of any emerging issues. This is the third report of the financial year and assesses performance against budgets, including progress in delivering the Council's savings programme.

#### **Summary**

2. The financial pressures facing the council are projected at £525k. This is slightly higher than previous year's forecasts at this stage in the financial year. However, the council has regularly delivered an under-spend by the year end, demonstrating a successful track record of managing expenditure within budget over a number of years.
3. This report highlights a number of known pressures that need to be carefully managed throughout the year, with mitigation strategies being in place and regularly monitored across all directorates. It is expected that, as a result of ongoing monitoring and identification of mitigation, overall the council will again outturn within the approved budget. There is a contingency provision available to cover some of the projected pressures, and it is also anticipated there will be improvement in the position during the year.
4. York is maintaining both sound financial management, and delivering priority services to high standards, during a period of continued challenge for local government. In particular, key statutory services continue to perform well, having seen investment in recent years. Whilst there remain challenges in future years, the overall financial

and performance position is one that provides a sound platform to continue to be able to deal with the future challenges.

## Recommendations

5. The Committee is asked to:

- note the finance and performance information
- note the position on the overall budget and the need to retain some of the additional business rates income to cover potential cost pressures

Reason: to ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget

## Financial Analysis

6. The council's net budget is £121.9m. Following on from previous years, the challenge of delivering savings continues with £5m to be achieved in order to reach a balanced budget. Early forecasts indicate the council is facing financial pressures of £525k and an overview of this forecast, on a directorate by directorate basis, is outlined in Table 1 below. The position will continue to be monitored carefully to ensure that overall expenditure will be contained within the approved budget.
7. The following sections provide more details of the main variations and any mitigating actions that are proposed.

*Table 1: Finance overview*

2017/18 outturn		2018/19 Forecast Variation Monitor 2	2018/19 Forecast Variation Monitor 3
£'000		£'000	£'000
+147	Children, Education & Communities	+869	+943
-204	Economy & Place	+322	nil
-274	Customer & Corporate Services	-200	-250
285	Health, Housing & Adult Social	+576	+830

	Care		
-574	Central budgets	-300	-350
-620	Total	+1,267	+1,173
-761	Contingency	-648	-648
-1,381	Total including contingency	+619	+525
	Potential additional income from business rates	-2,000	-1,000

## Customer & Corporate Services

8. A net underspend of £250k is forecast and this is predominately due to additional income within bereavement services of £130k and additional grant funding secured to offset some staffing costs within business intelligence. Agreed budget savings are being delivered in line with the original plans across a number of areas. A range of other minor variations make up the directorate position. Work will continue to try and identify additional savings to help the overall position.

## Corporate Budgets

9. These budgets include treasury management and other corporately held funds. It is anticipated that a £350k underspend will be achieved, predominantly as a result of reviewing some assumptions on the cash flow position following a review of the profile of planned capital expenditure which will mean less interest being paid than previously anticipated.
10. As outlined in the monitor 2 report presented to Executive in November, it is likely that additional income will be available during the year as a result of the Council being part of the Leeds City Region business rates retention pilot. At that same meeting Executive agreed to allocate £1m of this additional income to the venture fund to support York central. Members are asked to note that the remaining funding may be required to deal with some of pressures outlined in this report.

## Contingency

11. As in previous years a contingency budget of £500k is in place. In the 2017/18 outturn report presented to Executive on 21<sup>th</sup> June the remaining balance of £250k from the 2017/18 general contingency

was added to the balance available for 2018/19. A further £10k was allocated to the WW1 commemorations (as agreed in January 2018) and £92k towards York's bid to be a host city for the rugby league world cup 2021 (agreed in November 2018) leaving a balance of £648k available. Members are asked to note that this may be required to deal with some of pressures outlined in this report. Any decisions regarding the allocation of this sum will be brought to a future meeting.

## **Loans**

12. Further to a scrutiny review, it was agreed that these quarterly monitoring reports would include a review of any outstanding loans over £100k. There are 2 loans in this category. Both loans are for £1m and made to Yorwaste, a company part owned by the Council. The first was made in June 2012 with a further loan made in June 2017 as agreed by Executive in November 2016. Interest is charged on both loans at 4% plus base rate meaning currently interest of 4.75% is being charged. All repayments are up to date.

## **Performance – Service Delivery**

13. The Performance Framework surrounding the Council Plan for 2015-19 launched in July 2016 and is built around three priorities that put residents and businesses at the heart of all Council services.



Performance – Overview			2017/18	2018/19 Q1	2018/19 Q2	2018/19 Q3	DoT	Frequency	Benchmarks
Service Delivery	A Focus on Frontline Services	Number of days taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events (DWP measure)	3.2	2.97	3.51	3.61 (Nov 18)	➡	Quarterly	National 18/19 Q1: 8.23 days
	A Council That Listens to Residents	% of panel who agree that they can influence decisions in their local area	26.87%	25.68%	Not collected this quarter	28.95%	➡	Quarterly	National Community Life Survey 17/18: 26%
		% of panel satisfied with their local area as a place to live	89.94%	88.09%	Not collected this quarter	88.61%	➡	Quarterly	National Community Life Survey 17/18: 77%
		% of panel satisfied with the way the Council runs things	62.13%	60.29%	Not collected this quarter	57.33%	⬇ Bad	Quarterly	National LG Inform 17/18: 72.50%
		Overall Customer Centre Satisfaction (%) - CYC	93.13%	93.16%	Not available	93.47%	➡	Quarterly	Not Available
	A Prosperous City for All	Median earnings of residents – Gross Weekly Pay (£)	£519.3	Collected annually	£512.6	Collected annually	➡	Annual	National 18/19: £571.1 Regional 18/19: £520.9
		Business Rates - Rateable Value	£254,662,152	£254,045,397	£253,954,041	£254,937,091	➡	Quarterly	NC
		% of panel who give unpaid help to any group, club or organisation	66.22%	67.83%	Not collected this quarter	64.72%	➡	Quarterly	National Community Life Survey 17/18: 64%
Organisational Health Check	Performance	Red rated Major Projects - CYC	1	0	0	0	➡	Quarterly	NC
		Amber rated Major Projects - CYC	6	9	9	10	➡	Quarterly	NC
		Overall Council Forecast Budget Outturn (£000's Overspent / - Underspent)	-£620	£1,545 (excluding contingency)	£1,267 (excluding contingency)	£1,173 (excluding contingency)	➡	Quarterly	NC
	Employees	PDR Completion (%) - CYC - (YTD)	90.40%	36.70%	77.77%	82.36% (Nov 18)	⬆ Good	Quarterly	NC
		Staff FTE - CYC Total (Excluding Schools) - (Snapshot)	1,972.2	1,994.8	2071.4	2,094.8 (Nov 18)	➡	Quarterly	NC
		Average sickness days lost per FTE - CYC (Excluding Schools) - (Rolling 12 Month)	11.5	11.8	11.8	11.9 (Nov 18)	⬆ Bad	Quarterly	CIPD (Public Sector) 16/17: 8.5 days
		Voluntary Turnover (%) - CYC Total (Excluding Schools) - (Rolling 12 Month)	7.55%	6.84%	7.46%	7.89% (Nov 18)	➡	Quarterly	NC
		% of staff who would recommend the council as a good place to work	NC	71.12%	75.00%	68.00%	➡	Quarterly	NC
		% of staff who believe action will be taken following this survey	NC	30.70%	37.00%	30.00%	➡	Quarterly	NC
		% of external calls answered within 20 seconds - CYC	89.75%	87.70%	(Avail end Feb 19)	(Avail Mar 19)	➡	Quarterly	SSAC Industry Standard 17/18: 80%
	Customers	% of complaints responded to within 5 days	58.76%	39.60%	49.44%	50.10%	➡	Quarterly	NC
		FOI & EIR - % In time - (YTD)	89.20%	92.80%	92.24%	87.61%	➡	Quarterly	NC
		Digital Services Transactions / Channel Shift					➡	Quarterly	NC
							➡	Quarterly	NC

NC = Not due to be collected during that period

The DoT (Direction of Travel) is calculated on the latest three results whether they are annual, quarterly or monthly.

## A Council That Listens to Residents

- The council carries out a number of consultation and research activities throughout the year, including: annual surveys, statutory research, one-off pieces of research and using Talkabout, our citizens' panel, which is comprised of a representative sample of around 1,000 York residents who are invited to complete a bi-annual survey to capture a variety of resident satisfaction measures across all areas of council business. Details of all other public consultations are available on the consultations page of the Council's website.

**% of residents who agree that they can influence decisions in their local area - this measure gives an understanding of residents' recognition about how we are listening and reacting to residents views**

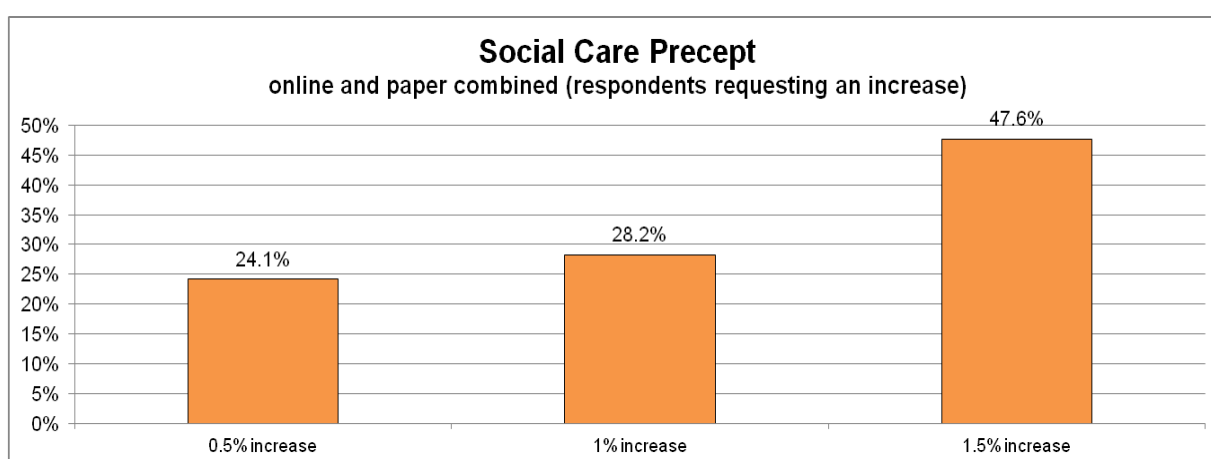
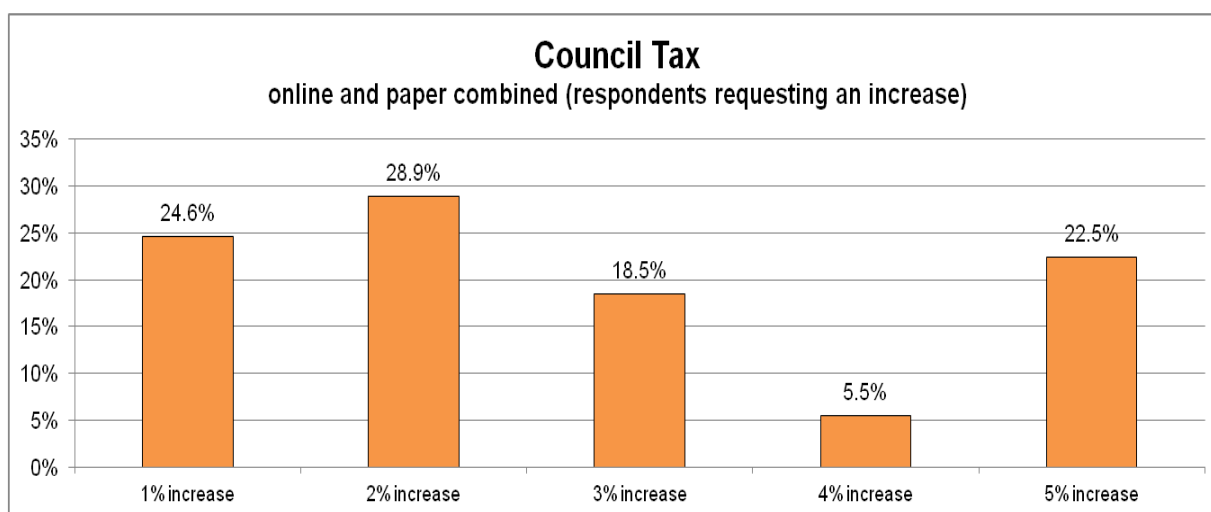
15. The Q3 Talkabout survey found that 29% of panellists agreed that they could influence decisions in their local area which is higher than the latest national figure of 26% (Community Life Survey 2017/18). 92% of respondents think it's important that residents can influence decisions in their local area.

**Tenant Satisfaction Survey**

16. City of York Council's Housing Services are committed to working with their tenants to improve services and sent out an annual survey to a sample of tenants asking them how satisfied they are with their home and the landlord services provided by the council. The survey was conducted between September and November 2018 and there were a total of 595 responses received. Of the questions that are nationally benchmarked with other local authorities (Housemark 2017/18 median figures), satisfaction with:
  - Repairs and maintenance improved by 1.1% compared to last year's survey (79.9% were satisfied) which is comparable to the median of 79%.
  - Overall quality of the home saw a small improvement of 0.7% compared to last year (81.6% were satisfied) which is below the median of 85%.
  - Neighbourhood as a place to live remains virtually the same as last year (81.8% were satisfied) which is below the median of 85%.
  - Landlord listens to views and acts upon them decreased by 4.7% compared to last year (68.8% were satisfied) which is comparable to the median of 69%.
17. The Survey also showed notable declines in satisfaction in a number of issues relating to complaints and how they are handled. Officers have started working with tenants and the Customer Complaints and Feedback team to understand more fully why satisfaction has declined in this area. Initial research has shown that there is a difference in what customers perceive as a complaint and what is classed as a formal complaint and therefore logged through the complaints process. Further research will be conducted on data from formal complaints and comparing it with the data on complaints gathered through the survey to see if there are any notable patterns.

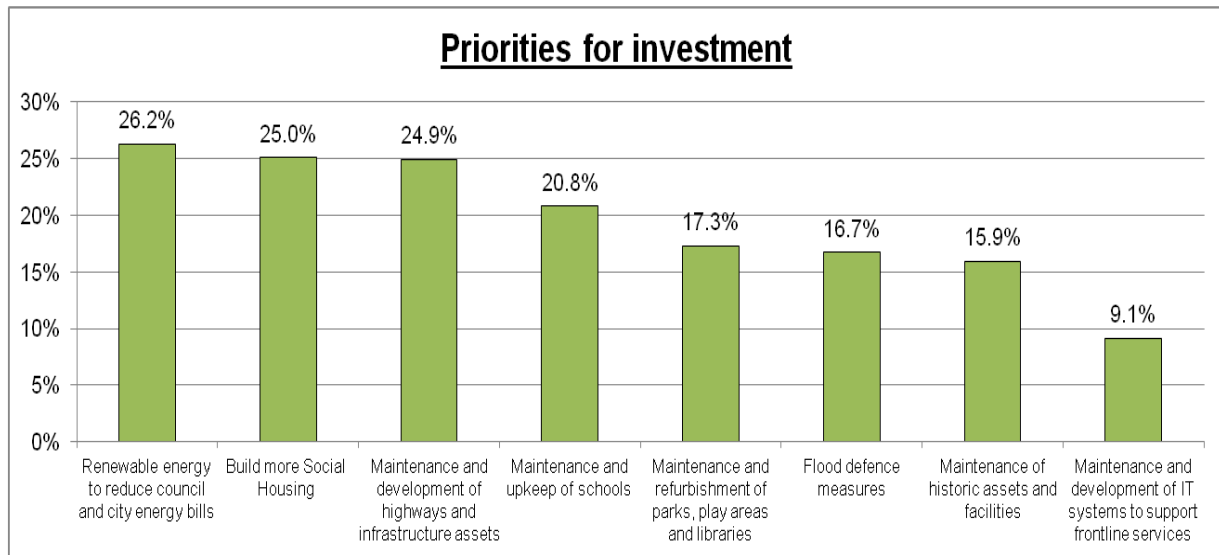
## Budget Consultation

18. The council budget consultation opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> October and ran until the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Residents were invited to give their views on taxes and service budgets by using an online budget simulator or by completing a paper survey featured in 'Our City'. A total of 366 respondents participated, 155 by paper and 211 online. Some of the headline results are shown below. The Council will consider the responses to the budget consultation in the financial planning cycle for the 2019/20 budget setting process.
19. The following two graphs show the percentages of respondents who agreed with varying increases in council tax and a social care precept.



20. Car parking charges were thought to be fair by 43% of respondents and 30% were in favour of an increase, predominantly to reduce traffic pollution in the city but 27% were opposed to any increase, mainly due to concerns about deterring shoppers from the city centre.

21. Other fees and charges were thought to be at acceptable levels by 59% but there were suggestions for the opportunity for donations to be made at free sites and the introduction of a tourist tax.
22. The following graph shows their views on the areas identified for investment.



### **School Admission Arrangements Consultation**

23. The annual school admission arrangements consultation took place between October and December 2018 and relates to how admissions applications and decisions will be made for the 2020/21 school year. The consultation is a joint exercise between all admissions authorities in York including: City of York Council on behalf of community and voluntary controlled schools, the governing bodies of voluntary aided schools, the academy trusts of single academies and the trust board, and local governing committees, of multi-academy trusts. Following the consultation, all admission authorities will determine their admission arrangements by the end of February 2019 in line with the School Admissions Code.
24. Examples of other consultations active during Q3 include;
- Redevelopments in Fossgate
  - Haxby and Wigginton Library Proposal
  - Statement of Licensing Policy and Impact Assessment
  - Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy
  - Bootham Park Site

**% of residents who have been actively involved in redesigning and delivering services - this measure gives an understanding of**

## **residents' recognition about how they are involved in service redesign**

### **Future Focus**

25. The Adult Social Care community led support model continues to develop. Talking Points are community locations that offer residents the opportunity to have a face to face conversation with social care staff. Talking Point appointments have been increasing and over 100 customers have now been seen. As a result of offering this option, these customers have been seen more quickly with a waiting time just over 8 days as opposed to 9 weeks. The quick response reduces the risk of customers experiencing a crisis situation and enables the social care team to provide a more proportionate response earlier on in the social care process.
26. A number of very positive outcomes for the project have been identified. In particular:
  - The percentage of customers going on to receive paid for services was 47% (compared with 78%) in Q2 2017/18) with 33% of those seen being given advice, information and support meaning they needed no ongoing services.
  - More than 95% of people invited to the hub have said they were satisfied with the experience and, most importantly their outcomes from attending a Talking Point. 97% of residents seen said they would recommend the Talking Point option to others.

### **Voice of the Children**

27. York Youth Council (YYC) supported the national UK Youth parliament 'Make Your Mark' ballot of 11-18 year olds. 'Make Your Mark' is a central part of the British Youth Councils mission and it guides campaign ideas for local Youth Councils. The YYC facilitated the ballot in 35 separate schools and organisations including primary and secondary schools, colleges and youth groups. Over 4,500 young people in York voted and the top three topics were Mental Health, ending knife crime and tackling homelessness which now form the YYC priorities for this year. The YYC are gathering information by speaking to relevant services and professionals to better understand the current situation.
  - Mental Health: The YYC are working with colleagues from the North Yorkshire Youth Executive (Youth Council) and the North Yorkshire Police Youth Commission to create an awareness

campaign signposting young people to existing mental health services available across York and North Yorkshire.

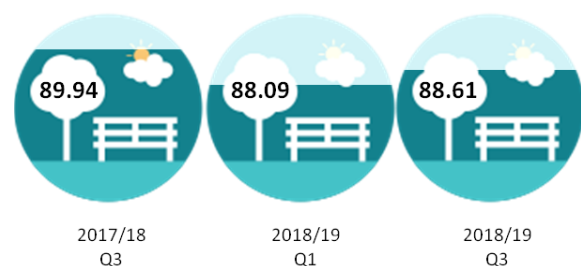
- Homelessness: They have spoken with officers in the Housing team and other services in relation to homelessness and will continue to gather information before deciding how to progress the campaigns. The launch of the 2018-2023 “Preventing homelessness together” strategy will build upon the achievements delivered through previous homelessness strategies. The core focus will be on early intervention and the prevention of homelessness, backed up by high quality joined up support to get people back on their feet when things do go wrong.
- Knife Crime: They will be working with York Youth Offending Team, North Yorkshire Police Youth Commission, North York Police and other partners in relation to the issue of knife crime.

28. Participation opportunities for young people in care and care leavers continue to be delivered via the Children in Care Council (CiCC). This includes monthly Show Me That I Matter panel meetings (13-17 yrs), monthly meetings of the Care Leavers Forum, I Still Matter (17-21 yrs) and fortnightly Speak Up Youthclub sessions (10-16yrs). Activity has included taking part in a consultation conducted by TACT (The Adolescent and Children’s Trust) on the language used regarding children in care, meeting with representatives from fostering to look at how to better involve young people in the recruitment and training of foster carers, designing and accommodation leaflet for the Pathway team and attending the Corporate Parenting Board to help present the Local Offer for Care Leavers. The CiCC and Care leavers Forum have also met with the Director, Assistant Director, Service Manager for Pathway and Elected Members to feedback on the work they have been doing.

**% of residents satisfied with their local area as a place to live - this measure gives an understanding of residents’ views about the area and the quality of their ward / neighbourhood**

29. The results from the Q3 18/19 Talkabout survey showed that 90% of the panel were satisfied **with York** as a place to live and 89% **with their local area**. Satisfaction levels for the local area continue to be significantly higher than the latest national

% of panel satisfied with their local area as a place to live



figures of 77% (Community Life Survey 2017/18) and 78% (Local Government Association Poll October 18).

30. Where residents indicated that they were dissatisfied **with York** as a place to live, the most common reasons were crime and anti-social behaviour (mainly city centre drinking), economy and transport (largely traffic issues), value for money and residents not being at the heart of decision making. Where residents were dissatisfied **with their local area** as a place to live, the most common reasons were crime and anti-social behaviour, public realm and highways. Specifically these concerns were about: intimidating and noisy groups of hen and stag parties; the lack of a police presence; the standards of street cleansing (including littering levels) and the poor quality of road surfacing.
31. 78% of respondents thought that their local area was a good place for children and young people to grow up. Where residents disagreed that their local area was a good place for children to grow up, the main reasons were safety, available activities or services and available green spaces.
32. 92% of respondents to the Q3 18/19 Talkabout survey agreed that it was important to feel part of their local area with 80% agreeing that they did belong. These results have both increased from the previous survey and the latter is higher than the National benchmark scores of 62% in the Community Life Survey 2017/18 and 78% from LG Inform.
33. When asked if they agree their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together a decrease can be seen from 75% in Q1 to 68% in Q3. This is below the national figure of 82% from the Community Life Survey 2017/18.

**% of residents satisfied with the way the Council runs things - this measure gives an understanding of residents' satisfaction with frontline service delivery and the Council's responsiveness to residents' views**

34. The Q3 18/19 Talkabout survey showed that 57% of respondents were satisfied with the way the Council runs things which is a further reduction compared to previous survey results. Satisfaction levels continue to be similar to the LG Inform benchmark figure of 60% for October 2018. Where residents indicated that they were dissatisfied with the way the council runs things, the most common reasons were public realm and highways.

35. The Council aims to deliver financial sustainability whilst improving services and outcomes for York residents and 43% of respondents agree that the Council provides value for money which is similar to the LG Inform benchmark figure of 44% for October 2018.

**Overall Customer Centre Satisfaction (%) - CYC - (being replaced with Digital service satisfaction 2017) - this measure gives an understanding of the quality of our face to face, phone and front office customer services (and in future our digital services through the CYC website)**

36. The Customer Centre offers advice and information on many services including benefits, council tax, housing, environmental, transport, educational, social care and planning. At the end of phone enquiries customers have the opportunity to complete a short phone based customer satisfaction survey or, when visiting West Offices, rate their experience via a feedback terminal. Customer Satisfaction remains high at the end of Q3, with over 90% of people rating the service as either good or very good.

### **A Focus on Frontline Services**

**Number of days taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events - this measure gives an understanding of the efficiency and effectiveness of a key front-line service**

37. Due to improvements in digital processes, performance in this area remains consistently strong in York with the average number of days taken to process a new Housing Benefit claim or a change in circumstance less than 4 days during November 2018. York performance is also the best out of all other local authorities that we are benchmarked against (North and East Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the Humber) and much higher than the national average of 7.6 days (2017-18).

### **A Prosperous City for All**

**Median earnings of residents – Gross Weekly Pay (£) - this measure gives an understanding if wage levels have risen within the city, a key corner-stone in the cities economic strategy**



38. In April 2018, the median gross weekly earnings for full-time resident employees in York were £512.60, a decrease of 1.4% (before inflation) from £519.30 in 2017. Since the economic downturn of 2008 to 2009, growth (before inflation), has been fairly steady, averaging approximately 1.1% per year up to 2017. Nationally the

Median earnings of residents  
Gross Weekly Pay (£)



increase was 1.5% and regionally, 1.3% over the same period. To improve wages, the big challenge is to make more high quality jobs - those that contribute more to the economy - available to people living in York and during 2017 there were 5,000 additional jobs created. The majority of these jobs were in the professional, scientific, technical businesses and food and drink sectors.

### **Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) Claimants**

39. The JSA figures should be viewed in the context of the number of people receiving Universal Credit in York increasing from 4,599 in October to 4,795 in November. Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that;
- There were 180 JSA claimants in York in November 2018 which is the same as in the previous month but a decrease of 130 from November 2017.
  - The claimant count for York represents 0.1% of the working population, which is lower than both the regional and national figures of 1.1% and 0.8% respectively in November 2018.
  - Recent figures also highlight a fall of 15 in the youth unemployment count since November 2017. The youth unemployment figure of 0% is lower than both the regional and national figures of 1% and 0.6% respectively.

### **Low-income families**

40. The HMRC defines the proportion of children living in low-income families as the proportion of dependent children, aged under 20, living in families either in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income which is less than 60 per cent of median income.

41. The latest figures are from August 2016 where, in York, there was a 0.3% increase (to 10% or around 3,500 children) but this is still considerably less than the peak in 2009 (13.3% or around 4,700 children). In England, the overall proportion of children in low-income families increased by 0.4% (to 17.0%) and, of the regions, Yorkshire and the Humber had the largest increase of 0.9 per cent (to 19.5%).

### **Department of Work and Pensions**

42. Data released by the Department of Work and Pensions is published 6 months in arrears and the latest data relates to May 2018. The total number of claimants for either Income Support or Employment Support Allowance in York is 5,170, which is a decrease of 200 from February 2018. The claimant count represents 3.7% of the working population which is lower than both the regional and national figures of 7.7% and 6.9% respectively. Although these figures are the lowest in the region, due to the changes in the benefits system some of the data is transitional. The introduction of Universal Credit, for example, means that some people are still in the process of transitioning over. The Council provides a dedicated Universal Credit support service offering assistance with making a claim, managing a claim, support relating to monthly budgeting and any concerns over money resulting from a claim. Up to November 2018, 4,795 residents have moved onto Universal Credit.

### **UK employer skills survey 2017**

43. The Department for Education conducted their fourth UK wide employer skills survey in 2017. The survey asked over 87,000 employer establishments about:
- Recruitment difficulties and skills lacking from applicants
  - Skills lacking from existing employees
  - Underutilisation of employees' skills
  - Anticipated needs for skill development in the next 12 months
  - The nature and scale of training, including employers' monetary investment
  - The relationship between working practices, business strategy skill development and skill demand

**Business Rates - Rateable Value - this measure gives an understanding of how much money the Council is likely to receive to spend on public services**

44. Business rates are based on the property's 'rateable value' which is the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) estimate, as at 1st April 2015, of the property's open market rental value. The government's aim to increase the level of business rates retained by local government from the current 50% to 75% in April 2020 means that York may start to receive an increased level of income especially as higher rated development schemes (e.g. hotels and offices) are completed and then assessed.

### **Council Tax Collection**

45. The collection rate for Council Tax at the end of December was 83.9% which is a very similar rate to the corresponding period in 2017/18. The collection rate for Business Rates at the end of December was 83.07% compared with 83.74% in the corresponding period in 2017/18.

### **% of residents who give unpaid help to any group, club or organisation - this measure gives an understanding of how much volunteering is currently being undertaken within the city**

46. The results of the Q3 18/19 Talkabout survey showed that 65% of the respondents give unpaid help to a group, club or organisation which is comparable with the government's Community Life Survey 2017/18 which found that 64% of respondents reported any volunteering in the past 12 months.

### **Other Performance**

#### **Major Projects - this measure gives an understanding of the performance of the large projects the Council is currently working to deliver**

47. There are currently 14 major projects in progress during December which is the same as in September 2018. Each project is given a status to give an overview of significant risks and provide assurance as to how individual projects are being managed. 9 projects are rated "Amber" (one more than last quarter) and 5 are rated "Green" (one less than last quarter). The Housing ICT Programme is now rated as 'Amber' due to risks around supplier availability for system demonstrations and internal resources.

### **Performance – Employees**

**Staffing PDR Completion Rates - this measure gives an understanding of how we making sure that the organisations strategic aims, goals and values are being passed to all employees**

48. City of York Council is committed to developing confident, capable people working positively for York. As part of that commitment, all colleagues are entitled and encouraged to reflect on their performance and discuss future aspirations and work goals through regular one to ones and an annual Performance and development Review (PDR) appraisal. The annual PDR process starts in May and, by the end of November 2018, 82.4% of PDRs had been undertaken, an improvement on the 68% at the same point last year.

**Staff Total - this measure gives an understanding of total numbers of staff, and our staffing delivery structure**

49. At the end of November 2018 there were 2,569 employees (2,095 FTEs) working at City of York Council (excluding schools), an increase of 35 individuals (42 FTEs) from the Quarter 2 monitor. In part, this is due to the transfer of the Social Enterprise Community Interest Company 'belIndependant' and its employees in to City of York council.

**Average sickness days lost per FTE (12 Month rolling) - this measure gives an understanding of the productivity of the organisations employees**

50. At the end of November 2018/19 the rolling 12 month sickness days per FTE has increased slightly to 11.9 days (from 11.8 in Q2). After improving over spring/summer, monthly sickness rates have increased and days lost so far in the autumn/winter period are higher than the same point in 2017/18. October showed a particular increase with 2,023 days lost compared to 1,855 in October 2017. Feedback from other Local Authorities suggests that while high, absence at the Council is roughly in line with other LAs.
51. Proposals for tackling absence were agreed to Executive in Autumn 2018 on the future use of a dedicated external team to focus on attendance and work with managers and employees on a timely return to work. Work to procure this service is underway.

**Staffing Turnover - this measure gives an understanding of the number of staff entering and leaving the organisation**

52. Total staff turnover has decreased to 12.4% (from 14.9%) over the rolling 12 months to November 2018 while voluntary leavers have increased to 7.9% (from 7.5% in the Q2 Monitor). This level of staffing turnover is expected and in line with the council's changing service delivery models.

**Staff Satisfaction - this measure gives an understanding of employee health and their satisfaction with the Council and a place to work and its leadership, management and practices**

53. Throughout 2018/19, employees will be invited to complete six short surveys covering a range of topics including 'values and behaviours' and 'leadership and management', with feedback helping to shape and improve the organisation and make CYC an even better place to work. A report summing up wider organisation action will be created at the end of the survey process.

**Performance – Customers**

**External Calls answered within 20 seconds - this measure gives an understanding of speed of reaction to customer contact**

54. The latest available data (Q1) shows that the percentage of all external calls answered within 20 seconds was 88% which is well above the industry benchmark of 80%.

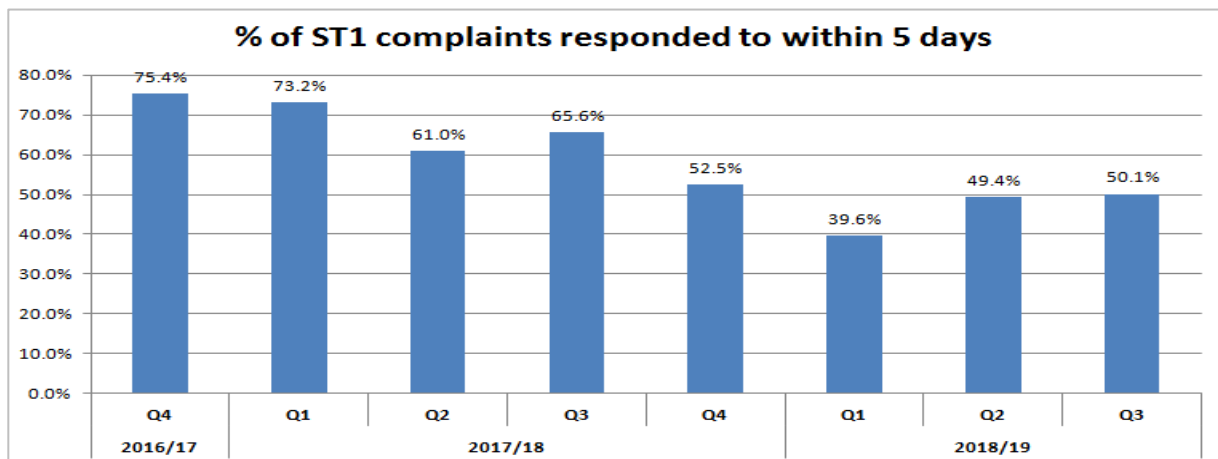
**Customer Centre**

55. Our Customer Centre is the main point of contact for residents and business visitors. During Q3, the number of calls received decreased to 54,912 (62,529 in Q2), with 95% answered (52,143) and 71.3% answered within 20 seconds. The drop in demand is seasonal and expected. During peak periods customers may experience increased waiting times and, although calls are typically not held in a queue for more than 44 seconds, customers can make use of the call back facility.

**% of complaints responded to within 5 days**

56. In 2018/19 Q3 the council received 473 stage 1 corporate complaints and responded to 50.1% of them within the 5 day timescale. This is a further improvement following on from the significant improvement made in the number of stage 1 corporate complaints responded to in time in the previous quarter. Where timescales were not met, this was due to resource pressures in some service areas. The following

graph shows the percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within the 5 day target over the previous few quarters:



57. Additional resources have been provided to deal with and monitor complaints with work ongoing to;

- Ensure that complaints performance is monitored. Managers now have access to a dashboard of live reports relating to real time complaints and customer performance information;
- Refresh the corporate complaints policy and procedures along with the complaints IT system

### **FOI & EIR - % In time - this measure gives an understanding of our speed of reaction to FOIs**

58. In 2018/19 Q3, the council received 515 FOIs, EIRs and SARs. CYC achieved 85.5% in-time compliance for FOIs (Freedom of Information requests), 80.0% in-time compliance for EIRs (Environmental Information Regulations requests) and 71.1% in-time compliance for SARs (Subject Access to records requests). There has been a small decrease in the total number of FOIs, EIRs and SARs requests received in this quarter compared to Q2. There has been an improvement in the number of SAR requests responded to in time this quarter, which is promising given that the timescale for a response has reduced from 40 days to one month. However, CYC has not maintained previous performance in responding to FOIs and EIRs and will work with management teams and service areas to continue to improve response times. We are continuing to look for ways to improve the reporting in this area based on feedback from service areas, management teams, councillors and committees and aim to include this in the end of year report. This will include, where possible, benchmarking information, data breaches, ICO cases and outcomes.

## Digital Services Transactions/Channel Shift

59. The number of residents who came to West Offices during Q3 decreased to 10,656 (11,529 in Q2). The average wait time was 6 minutes and 82% of residents were seen within the target wait time of 10 minutes. 12,557 business visitors came to West Offices during Q3 (12,879 in Q2). In addition to speaking with customers over the phone and face to face, the customer service team also responded to 8,904 emails.
60. Customers are also opting to access services using alternative ways;
- 2,520 made payments using the auto payments facility,
  - 19,604 people used the auto operator (transfers to individuals and teams without speaking with a customer service team member),
  - 56% of street lighting and street cleansing issues were reported by customers on-line
  - 210 customers used the self serve option in the customer centre to access services
  - Circa 6,500,000 pages of our website were reviewed (If a visitor visits a page more than once during the same session or in the relevant period, it is re-counted).

## Procurement

61. The tables below summarises the quarter 3 position.

Size of business	2018/19 Q3 spend		Of which in Yorkshire & Humber	Of which in a YO postcode
	£'000	% of total	£'000	£'000
Micro (less than 10 employees)	3,889	8	2,451	2,069
Small (11 to 49 employees)	13,528	27	10,308	7,712
Medium (50 to 249 employees)	9,000	18	5,413	2,567
<b>Sub total SME's</b>	<b>26,417</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>18,171</b>	<b>12,348</b>
Large (250 or more employees)	23,592	47	7,881	3,241
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>50,009</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>26,053</b>	<b>15,589</b>

62. Spend to the end of December shows 53% of the total spend was with SME's, compared to 60% in a full year for 2017/18. Local spend has also reduced to 52% of the total compared to 60% in 2017/18. This reduction continues to be predominantly due to the ongoing expenditure on the Community Stadium with a large supplier. If this spend is removed, both figures would be 60%, which is comparable to previous years.

## **Annexes**

63. All performance data (and approximately 1000 further datasets) within this document is made available in machine-readable format through the Council's open data platform at [www.yorkopendata.org](http://www.yorkopendata.org) under the "performance scorecards" section.

## **Consultation**

64. Not applicable.

## **Options**

65. Not applicable.

## **Council Plan**

66. The information and issues included in this report demonstrate progress on achieving the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

## **Implications**

67. The implications are:
- **Financial** are contained throughout the main body of the report.
  - **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications.
  - **One Planet Council / Equalities** There are no One Planet Council or equalities implications.
  - **Legal** There are no legal implications.
  - **Crime and Disorder** There are no crime and disorder implications.
  - **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications.
  - **Property** There are no property implications.



- **Other** There are no other implications.

### Risk Management

68. An assessment of risks is completed as part of the annual budget setting exercise. These risks are managed effectively through regular reporting and corrective action being taken where necessary and appropriate.

### Contact Details

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Wards Affected: All				✓
For further information please contact the authors of the report				

### Glossary of Abbreviations used in the report:

CYC	City of York Council	JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
EIR	Environmental Information Regulations	PDR	Performance and Development Review
FOI	Freedom of Information	SAR	Subject Access to Records requests
FTE	Full Time Equivalent	TACT	The Adolescent and Children's Trust
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	VOA	Valuation Office Agency
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office	WWI	World War 1
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	YYC	York Youth Council

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**Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee****11 March 2019**

Report of Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review Task Group

**Financial Inclusion Draft Final Report****Summary**

1. This draft final report presents the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) with all the information gathered by the Task Group set up to review Financial Inclusion in York, together with the Task Group's conclusions and recommendations.

**Review proposal**

2. At a meeting of CSMC in June 2018 Cllr Neil Barnes proposed a scrutiny review into Financial Inclusion. This followed a decision session by the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health which considered Welfare Benefits Update and Financial Inclusion Outturn Report 2017/18.
3. The Executive Member resolved that the impact of Universal Credit (UC) to date, and the welfare support provided by the council to residents in 2017/18, be noted and that the council continue to work proactively with third sector partners on the wide range of support, early intervention and advice through the activity of the Financial Inclusion Steering Group.
4. Four strands within the Welfare Benefits Update and Financial Inclusion Outturn Report 2017/18 were identified as having the potential for further scrutiny:
  - i. The growing impact of Universal Credit is starting to be felt (and reported by Citizens Advice York). Are processes ready and resilient enough?
  - ii. The low take up of council tax discretionary reduction scheme is a concern. How is this being advertised / signposted to potential customers?
  - iii. There is an increased demand on discretionary housing payments.

- iv. The various activities initiatives aimed at addressing the cause of financial inclusion being funded by Financial Inclusion Steering Group. How are these awarded and how are we measuring the benefits?

## **Remit**

- 5. The Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee discussed the Financial Inclusion Scoping Report at their meeting in early September 2018 and agreed this was a topic worthy of review. The Committee appointed a Task Group comprising Cllrs N Barnes, Brooks and Fenton to carry out this work on the Committee's behalf.
- 6. The Committee also agreed the following remit for the review.

- 7. Aim:

To understand the impact of Universal Credit on the citizens of York and the activities being run to promote Financial Inclusion.

- 8. Objectives:

- i. To ensure processes are ready and resilient enough to deal with the growing impact of Universal Credit;
  - ii. To examine the low take up of the Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Scheme and how this is being signposted to potential customers;
  - iii. To determine the drivers behind the increased demand on Discretionary Housing Payments and look at whether Financial Inclusion activities and resources can mitigate any causes;
  - iv. To understand how the various initiatives aimed at addressing the cause of financial exclusion funded by the Financial Inclusion Steering Group are awarded and measured.
  - v. To look at the impact of Universal Credit on families with uncertain employment patterns within a volatile employment market.
- 9. The Task Group met for the first time in early October 2018 when a way forward was agreed. This included gathering detailed information on the current process, assessing what is available, analysing how various services are signposted and considering the customer journey from their arrival at CYC (Annex A).

10. In November 2018 CSMC considered an update report which requested that a 19 July Motion to Council on Food Poverty be added to the review remit. This was agreed by the Committee so the following objective was included in the review:

vi. To understand how the above issues are linked to apparently increasing levels of food poverty in York, including work on the following:

- the background to food poverty in York including any available local statistics and how local measurement might be improved;
- the current role of crisis support in York in mitigating food poverty;
- a range of options for the Council and its partners to improve the city wide response to food poverty in York.

## **General background**

### Financial Inclusion

11. The council provides a broad range of support to welfare benefit customers through the York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS), Council Tax Support (CTS) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). In addition the council provides digital support and personal budgetary advice in respect of Universal Credit (UC) claimants.
12. The council also has welfare benefit advisors at West Offices who provide support to all residents, in their homes, at York District Hospital and in the Budgeting Cafes at Sanderson Court & Foxwood Community centre. Welfare Benefit customers in receipt of CTS benefit from a lighter touch recovery process that does not include the use of Enforcement Agents (bailiffs) and minimum court costs to apply for liability orders.
13. All customers including welfare benefit customers have the opportunity to arrange their own payment arrangements digitally without having to talk to council officers.

## **Background to the specific areas of the review**

### Impact of Universal Credit

14. The initial rollout of 'live' UC services in York occurred in February 2015. This had little additional impact on the demand for welfare support provision as the initial 'live' service only affected single people.
15. The rollout of the UC 'Full Service' in York started in September 2017 affecting all working age customers with some exemptions (e.g. customers in 'exempt' accommodation, families with more than 3 children). Pension age residents are not affected by UC. At this time only new welfare benefit claimants and some existing Housing Benefit (HB) customers with certain prescribed change of circumstances are claiming Full Service UC.
16. The gradual transition of customers to UC along with buoyant employment levels in York has meant that any detrimental impact on residents has been slow in materialising in respect of our welfare benefit support. However, CAY and other agencies are reporting an increase in queries relating to UC.

### **Third Sector Partners**

17. Citizens Advice York and other agencies are seeing an increase in queries relating to UC. From their experience there are many residents who need help navigating the system, for instance:
  - knowing who should claim UC, some people are incorrectly being told they should claim UC instead of other benefits such as contributory benefits e.g. job seekers (contribution based) or employment support allowance (contribution based);
  - knowing when to claim, if people claim UC before receiving their final pay from a previous employer this is taken as income during their assessment period and deducted from their UC payment;
  - knowing what's included in UC and what isn't, making sure people include their housing costs in their UC claim and making a separate application to the council for Council Tax Support;
  - knowing how much they should receive and when; there have been a number of errors where additional elements have not been included in UC awards.

18. Currently agencies are seeing people who are worried about changes in their circumstances and the impacts of UC on them and their families. Food bank statistics also show a 49.4% increase in demand from those customers moving to UC from April 2017 to March 2018.

### **Council Tax Support**

19. The 'council tax discretionary reduction scheme' can provide financial help to any council tax payer who find themselves in difficulty with paying their council tax, subject to scheme criteria.
20. Reductions are made on hardship grounds with each application considered on its own individual merits and based on their net council tax liability after any discounts, exemptions, reductions for disabilities or CTS have been applied. The council have worked hard along with CAY to promote this support making it as accessible as possible. The awards for the last three years show that the value is continuing to fall despite this work:
- 2015/16 - £26,745
  - 2016/17 - £23,957
  - 2017/18 - £18,557

### **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)**

21. Tenants on Housing Benefit (HB) or receiving the housing element of UC can claim DHP from the council if the amount they get is less than their rent and they are struggling to pay their landlord the difference. It is largely intended to be a short term award.
22. The council receives a direct grant from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to fund DHP payments and this can be increased from local resources up to a maximum of 2.5 times the DWP grant. In 2017/18 the council made 543 awards totalling £206,798 which was within the DWP grant of £256,596. This was an increased spend compared to 2016/17 where a total of £180,842 was awarded to 512 residents.

### **Financial Inclusion Steering Group**

23. York's Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG) comprising Council directorate representatives, Citizens Advice York (CAY), Advice York (AY), South Yorkshire Credit Union (SYCU) and the Executive Members for Adult Social Care and Health, and Finance & Performance, was set

up in January 2013 with the aim of addressing the root cause of financial inequality. The group's purpose is:

*'To ensure that local people have the knowledge of and access to appropriate services, allowing them to make more informed choices to achieve and maintain financial stability'.*

24. The FISG is responsible for overseeing the delivery of financial inclusion work including the allocation of funds to projects delivered by partners that meet the group's objectives (see paragraph 8). It has an agreed and ongoing base budget of £100k per year from 2017/18. In February 2017 Council agreed an additional £50k per year for 2017/18 & 2018/19 to be allocated to projects and a further £25k per year to fund specific debt advice related support work across the same two year period.
25. The group aims to:
  - Ensure that residents have the knowledge to manage their finances effectively
  - Better coordination of advice services across the city
  - Advice givers and those 'sign posting' better understand the welfare benefits system
  - Explore opportunities to reduce general living expenses.
26. To target resources effectively to those who most need support, bids are invited from partners for projects that promote financial inclusion. These are subject to panel selection at which bidders make a presentation on their proposals. Rigorous selection is made against a range of criteria.

### **Information gathered**

27. In early December 2018 the Task Group met the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice York and the Chief Executive of York Welfare Benefits Unit.

#### Citizens Advice York

28. CAY told the Task Group that the impact of the migration to UC in York has already been great. York has been one of the first cities to experience a large roll out and figures provided by DWP show that by the end of September 2018, York had 4,454 claimants of UC (out of approx. 9,000 people claiming benefits). More than 900 client issues related to UC being presented to Citizens Advice from April to November 2018.



National Citizens Advice (using evidence from 150,000 CAB clients nationwide, including York) has lobbied to inform the DWP of the many and various problems associated with UC applications. These are detailed in the attached Citizens Advice report (Annex B).

29. The Task Group heard that in recognition of the problems, DWP has introduced a number of changes to the application and support process but many issues remain, particularly cash-flow problems presented to many claimants who are least likely to have savings to fall back on. The UC system changes benefits payments to be monthly in arrears and to include housing benefit payments previously paid directly to landlords. This has led to an increase in indebtedness amongst a group of people already struggling with debts issues and most unlikely to be able to secure reasonably priced credit.
30. CAY considered that a key factor in delayed payments to claimants is the application process itself which is complicated and made online (in most cases). It demands that claimants must set up online UC journals and provide evidence of ID, of changes in circumstances and of costs to be taken into account such as childcare or housing costs. Any mistake or failure to fill in the details correctly will result in the UC application being delayed – which leads to delays in commencing payments to the client – often of several weeks. During this period the client will often build up large debts – housing arrears or high cost credit.
31. One way of helping deal with this was the introduction by the DWP of Universal Support to claimants – a service offering ‘Assisted Digital Support’ (ADS), to help with the online application process and digital skills, and ‘Personal Budget Support’ (PBS) to help people manage the new payment patterns and cash flow issues and also to help people plan and manage their budgets. These two forms of support (ADS and PBS) were outsourced to local authorities and in York are currently offered in the customer centre at West Offices.
32. The Task Group learned that in October 2018 DWP and National Citizens Advice announced that they had reached agreement to transfer this contract to Citizens Advice and that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 this service will be undertaken by local CA organisations, such as Citizens Advice York. CAY is engaged in a planning process for this transfer of support services.

33. Members heard that the new CAY Universal Support Service will aim to be as accessible as possible. The aim is to offer support in communities of greatest need – further utilising our Advice and Information Cafes currently funded by FISG in Sanderson Court, Bell Farm, Travellers Trust in Clifton and St Luke's.
34. To plan the new service CAY intends to establish a project group to include: CYC housing, public health, the main social housing providers, and DWP staff. If resources allow it will look at carrying out further outreach directly with housing associations and possibly also basing universal support staff directly in the DWP office at Monkgate.
35. CAY told the Task Group that projects funded by FISG carried out by CAY are monitored FISG through regular meetings with CYC officials and submission of quarterly project reports. This shows a high degree of effectiveness and value for money. In the last quarter for which reports were circulated, the cost of the 4 CAY projects funded by FISG – GP Surgeries Outreach; Advice & Information Cafes; CAY Debt. Service and the Advice York Co-ordination Project – totalled £24,201. The returns on this investment –income gain or debts managed – totalled £155,226 for 112 residents, mostly in the most deprived parts of the city. The cost per client is £216 but the financial gain is £63,274 in direct income and £80,067 in the management of debts.
36. However, CAY stressed that the development of an enhanced and more effective Universal Support service will require not only the specific Universal Support funding from DWP, but also continued resourcing and the financial stability of CAY's current funding streams. In particular, CAY will have to recruit and train more volunteers and it hopes that continued funding will be available for FISG-funded Advice & Information Cafes.

#### Welfare Benefits Unit

37. The Welfare Benefits Unit (WBU) provides a specialist welfare benefits advice service to advisers and others who work with members of the public. A team of experienced advisers provide independent support through an advice line, publications, training and consultancy.
38. Call levels to the WBU have risen by 50% over the past year and UC accounts for approximately a third of calls. Increasingly the WBU is getting asked for advice from people who don't understand the system. From April to September 2018 the WBU received 303 calls from the York area from:

Calls by organisation

	Number of calls	%
City of York Council	60	20
Carers	2	1
Citizens Advice Bureau	42	14
Housing	61	20
Other Organisations <sup>1</sup>	83	27
Health	24	8
Other (public, details not taken)	16	5
Education	15	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100</b>

39. From July 2017 to July 2018 the WBU carried out a Universal Credit Survey (see Annex C) to highlight emerging trends and common experiences of UC claimants in the York area. The three main issues that emerged were difficulties due to the initial wait for the first payment of UC, administrative barriers to making and maintaining UC claims and problems identifying eligibility for Council Tax Support.
40. In a written submission, Annex D, the WBU states that UC has impacted on claimant's income in many ways, in general the main issues relate to:
- Lower amounts for disabled people, including disabled workers and families with a disabled child.
  - Deductions to third parties (e.g. for utility debts or rent arrears) are higher.
  - Payment patterns for earnings can skew UC payments, making it difficult to budget and, in some cases, reducing overall entitlement.
  - The Minimum Income Floor for self employed people means that some are treated as having income they 'should' have rather than actually have.
41. The WBU's main concern about the UC system is the support for the most vulnerable. UC Support through CYC appears effective but the

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<sup>1</sup> Other Organisations: Age UK, North Yorkshire Aids Awareness, Citizens Advice, Carers Centre, Older Citizens Advocacy York (OCAY), Changing Lives, Community Links, Grocery Aid, IDAS, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, Peasholme Charity, Safe and Sound Homes – Preventing Youth Homelessness (SASH), St Leonard's Hospice, York Advocacy, York College, University of York.

government is only financing help with initial claims rather than ongoing maintenance of claims. Claimants are expected to check their online journals daily despite many not having access to computers or other gadgets. Many advisers are worried that the most vulnerable will not be able to maintain their claims due to complexity, frustration at continued administrative errors by the DWP and difficulties understanding Claimant Commitment responsibilities.

42. The WBU also expressed concern over funding streams. The WBU has a current 4 year Service Level Agreement with CYC and receives an annual payment in April each year with the current arrangement scheduled to run until the end of March 2022. In relation to other temporary annual grants awarded by FISG the WBU feels support could be strengthened by increasing the length of awards offered. Annual funding can be problematic as any project involves planning, implementation and then scaling back if funding may end. This can cause difficulties if expectations are raised and recruitment may be an issue for limited periods.

#### Financial Inclusion Steering Group

43. In late January 2019 the Task Group met CYC's Strategic Manager, Corporate Strategy and City Partnerships, and the Area-Based Financial Inclusion Project Manager to learn more about the effectiveness of initiatives funded by the Financial Inclusion Steering Group.
44. As stated in paragraph 22, the FISG is responsible for overseeing the delivery of financial inclusion work including the award of grants to partners to deliver projects that meet the group's objectives.
45. The FISG invites written bids for projects which are measured against the objectives of the group. Applicants are asked to provide evidence of need and they are scored on the basis of the evidence provided. Last year the group made awards to nine projects out of 15 bids with the grants to the successful applications totalling £166k.
46. One disadvantage is that the assistance is short-term and people have to come back 'cap in hand'. The FISG is restricted by annual budget constraints but if it had a multi-year budget it could fund multi-year projects.
47. The Task Group was told that successful efforts continue to actively encourage partners to become more visible in delivering services

although Officers accepted CYC could be more proactive and so could its partners. The group takes a coordinated approach to supporting residents but there needs to be a whole system to encourage connectivity within communities.

48. The Task Group noted that there has been increased demand for Discretionary Housing Payment as the gap between the help that people can get to pay their rent and the rent they have to pay has grown wider as a result of private rents rising.

### Food Poverty

49. Members then questioned food poverty in the city and learned that much of the work in this area in York was co-ordinated through York Food Poverty Alliance (Annex E), which works with groups, organisations and individuals in the city to strengthen the ability to reduce food poverty and tackle its causes.
50. The alliance recognises that food poverty is the result of a complex set of structural issues relating but not restricted to problems of insecure, inadequate and expensive housing, insecure and low paid employment, insufficient social welfare provision, poor health, and an environmentally unsustainable food production and distribution system. Its aims include identifying and raising awareness about the systemic drivers of food poverty, improving access to advice services and ensuring those eligible for financial support are in receipt of it.
51. Both Foodbank use and informal community food aid usage are rising in York and there are more than 30 organisations providing variations of food aid across the city.
52. These cross-sector organisations deliver a range of different versions of community food aid provision from traditional soup kitchens to food and advice projects and the rise in volunteer-led community cafes. Of these:
  - 13 said food poverty was part of their rationale for setting up;
  - 17 are open regularly (more than once a week);
  - 12 are open one day per week;
  - 25 have an open-access policy
  - 7 serve targeted populations only (gender, age, area/based, disability, income.)

53. Initiatives such as the Holiday Hunger project have worked well and served 2,500 meals during the June to October half-term period. The Tang Hall Big Picnic served 1,027 people with freshly cooked food over 12 one-day-a-week sessions.
54. York food and activity clubs served 2,930 meals and gave out 285 food bags during the period 13 July 2018 and 7 January 2019 and nine Holiday Hunger projects totalled 67 food club sessions.
55. The Task Group noted that while both formal and informal initiatives are available for those who need support there were no robust measures for gathering information. It is difficult to measure unique users of food aid by those who are experiencing food poverty at projects which are open on a continuous, all-inclusive basis or where food is embedded alongside other services.
56. Available data from the weekly community cafes/informal food banks, such as Red Tower, Planet Food, YourCafe / Luke's Larder, Bell Farm Community Assoc, Chapelfields and Foxwood Community Hubs and Lidgett Grove, shows that the weekly customers to each of these projects range from 35-70 meaning around 360 people each week use open-access cafe provisions across the city. This does not capture the full level of usage when you consider Chill in the Community CIC's informal food bank in Acomb, is also open 7 days per week.
57. York Foodbank, which has locations in Acomb, Huntington Road, Tang Hall and Gillygate, is part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by the Trussell Trust. In 2017 York Foodbank provided 3,379 three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis.
58. According to the Trussell Trust the primary referral causes to foodbanks for the period April to September 2017 were:
  - Low income – 26.52%
  - Benefit delays – 24.71%
  - Benefit changes – 17.90%
  - Debt – 8.29%
  - Other – 7.82%
  - Homeless – 5.41%
  - Sickness – 2.81%
  - No recourse to public funds – 2.74%
  - Domestic violence – 1.50%

- Child holiday meals – 1.04%
- Delayed wages – 0.83%
- Refused Short-Term Benefit Advance – 0.40%

59. The Task Group had its final meeting on 13 February 2019 when it was agreed that issues around increasing food poverty in the city were complex and this should be the subject of a separate piece of work which could be picked up by the new administration after May's elections.
60. It was also noted that the Council's Financial Inclusion Policy and Action Plan was adopted in November 2012 and was in need of a refresh. In the current policy the work of Advice York, the Financial Inclusion Steering Group, the impact of the roll-out of Universal Credit, and measures to address food poverty are not included. A lot of the data from 2012 paints a different picture of York as many of the issues which exist today including access to digital support and resources were not around seven years ago.
61. Similarly key partners such as the Welfare Benefits Unit are not members of the Financial Inclusion Steering Group yet they are in positions to make valuable contributions.

## **Analysis**

62. Citizens Advice York sees many clients with debt problems caused by or exacerbated by UC. There is a particular impact on housing arrears due to the new housing benefit system in UC and clients are often forced into arrears due to no fault of their own, but simply by the new payment system of monthly in arrears and payment of the housing element, especially if UC claimants have to wait several weeks for a first payment.
63. Many people struggle to fill in forms online and some people have poor digital skills. These are the groups most likely to suffer from the workings of UC.
64. A key to helping minimise any adverse impact of UC on the citizens of York during the continued natural migration of benefits claimants to UC is in getting the support service in place that is of high quality and easily accessible to all who need it.
65. Rent arrears, for example, rapidly build up and if these are deducted in one go once the first UC payment is made then the individual is left with nothing to live on for another month. An alternative offered by DWP is in the form of an advance – but this means a claimant is pushed into debt

that is repaid out of subsequent UC payments – taking priority over any other payments.

66. So, there is a clear pattern of increased debts and arrears. A way to avoid further undue delays in receiving a first payment is by working to provide support for claimants to make accurate applications. The new Universal Support Service of Citizens Advice (and also up to this year from CYC) is a solution, as is effective personal budgeting support to plan how individuals can budget for UC.
67. The WBU is concerned that the most vulnerable claimants will drop out of the UC system because of Claimant Commitment responsibilities and the impact this will have on their health and housing status.
68. It is important to note that some people are better off on UC and it is important that these people are identified and reassured about transitioning across given the negative aspects of UC that are highlighted in the media.

### **Consultation**

69. To gather the information in this report the Task Group has consulted with Citizens Advice York, the Welfare Benefits Unit, York Food Poverty Alliance and CYC specialist officers.

### **Conclusions**

70. York may appear to be a rich city with a booming tourist industry, but poverty is real – and growing – in a climate where food prices continue to rise and incomes remain stagnant.
71. An increase in food poverty, the use of Food Banks and an increase in discretionary housing payments have direct links with the process described in this report.
72. The UC payments are paid one month in arrears and in practical terms that means five weeks after the UC claim is made. But if there are any inaccuracies or mistakes in completing the online application process this can add further delays.
73. This is a group of people who are living in poverty and have had little or no chance to build up a financial buffer of savings. If they receive no money for two months then they must fall back on the support of families, friends, food banks and other charities. To help offset any delays claim forms need to be clear and easily understood by people who may have



difficulty filling in these forms. And it is important that suitable digital and IT services are available in West Offices and other publicly-accessible building to ensure they can be used by benefit claimants who need them

74. The Council's Financial Inclusion Policy and Action Plan was drawn up in 2012 and would benefit from a review and refresh to reflect the work of the FISG the impact of Universal Credit, food poverty and the need to incorporate digital inclusion, and membership of the FISG could be widened to include other city organisations involved in the welfare of citizens.
75. Organisations such as the WBU and CAY can sometimes struggle to make long-term plans as annual funding is problematic and any project involves planning, implementation and then scaling back if funding comes to an end. This causes difficulties if expectations are raised and recruitment may be an issue if contracts are for limited periods.
76. Finally it is important that both Members and Council officers are more aware of how decisions can impact on vulnerable residents in the community so more cross-council and cross-partner engagement should be encouraged, while after the local government elections in May new and existing Members would benefit from comprehensive training around Financial inclusion so they better understand the issues and what the Council is doing.

### **Review Recommendations**

77. After considering the information provided in this report the Committee is asked to:
  - i. Recommend to the new administration that a deeper scrutiny review into the causes of and responses to food poverty is considered, taking into account key elements of the York Food Poverty Alliance report at Annex E.

And request Council to:

- ii. Agree that a review and refresh of the 2012 Financial Inclusion Policy and associated Action Plan should be undertaken. This review should include, but not be limited to, consideration of the work of Advice York and the Financial Inclusion Steering Group, the impact of the roll-out of Universal Credit, measures to address food poverty and support for digital inclusion;

- iii. Consider broadening the membership of the Financial Inclusion Steering Group to include organisations such as the Welfare Benefits Unit;
- iv. Investigate options for securing long-term funding support for successful time-limited FISG grant funded schemes, such as the Citizens Advice York GP Surgeries Advice Scheme;
- v. Continue to monitor the impact of Universal Credit in York and agree that future six-monthly reports on Financial Inclusion are considered by the Executive rather than the Executive Member;
- vi. Commission the FISG to examine the current provision of digital and IT services available for benefit claimants at West Offices and other publicly-accessible buildings to ensure these facilities are accessible for all who need them;
- vii. Ensure the language and terminology on CYC forms used for requesting financial assistance is easily understood and adequately conveys the necessary information to people who may have difficulties filling in these forms;
- viii. Seek out and learn from best practice elsewhere on how best to engage with 'hard to reach' groups who may not necessarily be comfortable reaching out to statutory bodies when they need advice or support;
- ix. Raise awareness within Council directorates of the impact that their policies and actions can have on more vulnerable members of the community, and encourage more cross-council and cross-partner engagement;
- x. Ensure that after May 2019 all new and existing Members have comprehensive training around Financial Inclusion so they have a full understanding of the role of the council and its partners.

## Options

- 78. Members can chose to either endorse the draft recommendations contained in this report or identify alternative or additional recommendation(s) for presentation to the Executive.

## Council Plan

79. This report is linked to ‘a prosperous city for all’ and ‘a Council that listens to residents’ priorities in the Council Plan.

## Implications

80. **Financial:** While this report is about financial issues which affect many people in York, no specific implications have been identified associated with the review recommendations.
- **Human Resources (HR)** : There are no HR implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
  - **Equalities:** There are no equalities implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
  - **Legal:** There are no legal implications
  - **Crime and Disorder:** There are no crime and disorder implications
  - **Information Technology (IT):** No IT implications have been identified.
  - **Property:** There are no property implications
  - **Other:** There are no other implications

## Risk Management

81. There are no risks associated with the recommendations in this report. However, doing nothing may mean that we will fail to keep up with the changing welfare benefit landscape and we know that substantially more people will transfer over to UC in the coming years.

Unless we take a strategic, cross-city and multi-agency approach we may not co-ordinate to best effect help for people who are in poverty or could fall into poverty.

Short-term funding schemes mean uncertainty for providers and could affect sustainability of successful schemes.

## Recommendation

82. Having considered the information in this draft final report Members are asked to:

- i. Consider and agree the draft recommendations arising from the review as shown in paragraph 77 above;

Reason: To conclude the work of this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols and enable this review final report to be presented to the Executive.

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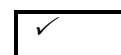
Report Approved



Date 20/02/2019

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

## Background Papers:

City of York Council Financial Inclusion Policy and Action Plan 6/11/1012

<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=6878&Ver=4>

Decision Session – Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health Welfare Benefit Update and Financial Inclusion Out-turn Report 2017/18

<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=740&MId=10806&Ver=4>

National Audit Office Report – Rolling out Universal Credit

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/rolling-out-universal-credit/>

## **Annexes**

Annex A – Financial Inclusion Briefing paper  
Annex B – Citizens Advice Universal Credit Report  
Annex C – Universal Credit Survey  
Annex D – Welfare Benefits Unit Submission  
Annex E – York Food Poverty Alliance Report

## **Abbreviations**

ADS – Assisted Digital Support  
AY – Advice York  
CAY – Citizens Advice York  
CIC – Community Interest Company  
CSMC – Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee  
CTS – Council Tax Support  
CYC – City of York Council  
DHP – Discretionary Housing Payment  
DWP – Department for Works and Pensions  
FISG – Financial Inclusion Steering Group  
GP – General Practitioner  
HRA – Housing Revenue Account  
PBS – Personal Budget Support  
SYCU – South Yorkshire Credit Union  
UC – Universal Credit  
WBU – Welfare Benefits Unit  
YFAS – York Financial Assistance Scheme

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## Briefing Note

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31 October 2018

### Scrutiny review of Financial Inclusion and Universal Credit

#### Summary

1. It was decided at the scoping meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> October that the scrutiny review of Financial Inclusion and Universal Credit (UC) would have four meetings and these would consist of:
  - i. background information for the last three full years and to date on the key welfare support funding provided by the council;
  - ii. a meeting with key third sector partners supporting customers claiming UC to understand the effect it is having on the families;
  - iii. a meeting to review the effectiveness of the initiatives funded by the Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG);
  - iv. a final meeting to sum up the information provided in the first three sessions to form a view on the current position and draft any recommendations.
2. This briefing note provides background information on the welfare support statistics to meet point (i), above.

#### Background

2. UC replaces six<sup>1</sup> national working age benefits & those of pension age are not affected. UC Full service was introduced in the City of York Council between the 12<sup>th</sup> July and September 2017. The effects on some customers claiming UC are well publicised nationally and continue to be in the national headlines.

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<sup>1</sup>

The six benefits that will be replaced by UC for working age people are

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) - not Contribution-based (CB)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) - not Contribution based.
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit (HB)– this will be replaced by a Housing Credit within UC

3. This briefing note provides the most up to date UC information we have from the DWP. It also looks at the claims history of the key welfare benefit support provided by City of York Council to see if the rollout of UC has impacted in any way to date on the number and costs of claims. This includes:

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
- York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS) – Including Emergency Payments, Community Payments & Discretionary support for Council Tax.
- Council Tax Support (CTS)
- Housing Benefit (HB)

### Universal Credit

4. The tables below provide detailed information on the customers claiming UC from April 2018 to September 2018:

#### Employment indicator

Month 2018/19	Not in employment	In employment	Total
Apr-18	1917	1569	3486
May-18	2057	1698	3758
Jun-18	2170	1774	3943
Jul-18	2188	1893	4086
Aug-18	2333	1838	4173
Sep-18	2548	1906	4454

#### Gender

Month 2018/19	Male	Female	Unknown/ Missing	Total
Apr-18	1647	1832	5	3486
May-18	1762	1988	8	3758
Jun-18	1811	2126	8	3943
Jul-18	1869	2206	5	4086
Aug-18	1907	2261	5	4173
Sep-18	2016	2427	5	4454

#### Age

Month 2018/19	16-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-65	Total
Apr-18	167	586	517	461	405	314	313	312	254	165	3486
May-18	183	604	558	512	447	329	338	336	269	185	3758
Jun-18	176	627	603	547	488	341	353	340	271	196	3943
Jul-18	184	667	640	562	497	359	347	355	273	192	4086
Aug-18	201	681	674	568	508	362	335	356	286	196	4173
Sep-18	215	709	732	608	540	391	373	377	292	219	4454

5. In terms of household information the DWP data is only currently available for the period April to June 2018:



**By household type**

	Single, no child dependant	Single, with child dependant(s)	Couple, no child dependant	Couple, with child dependant(s)	Total
Month 2018/19					
Apr-18	1827	752	133	343	3052
May-18	1904	807	141	355	3212
Jun-18	1991	895	137	375	3408

**With element entitlements**

	Carer Entitlement	Child Entitlement	Child Care Entitlement	Disabled Child Entitlement	Limited Capability for Work Entitlement
Month 2018/19					
Apr-18	130	1089	98	40	285
May-18	144	1161	103	49	313
Jun-18	157	1274	115	56	332

**Housing cost entitlements**

	No Housing Entitlement	Social	Private	Unknown or missing	Total
Month 2018/19					
Apr-18	1223	1120	696	16	3052
May-18	1278	1183	743	10	3212
Jun-18	1322	1268	800	15	3408

**UC payment amounts**

	No payment	£0.01 to £100.00	£100.01 to £500.00	£500.01 to £1000.00	£1000.01 to £1500.00	£1500.01 or over	Total
Month 2018/19							
Apr-18	503	119	1038	731	283	48	3052
May-18	545	110	1089	761	298	48	3212
Jun-18	540	136	1150	833	325	60	3408

6. The household information is more informative in providing a profile of the customers currently claiming UC across the city. In terms of HB customers migrating Para 17 below shows that we have lost 700 customers from our existing caseload since full service in July 17. The above data shows over 2000 customers with housing costs which indicates that a majority of these are not our migrating customers but new claimants.

**Discretionary Housing Payments**

7. DHP provides the council with the authority to award discretionary housing payments to help residents with their housing costs (rent). Changes to welfare benefits e.g. the introduction of UC & Removal of spare room subsidy has seen the value of the DWP grant paid to the council increase in recent years as set out below:

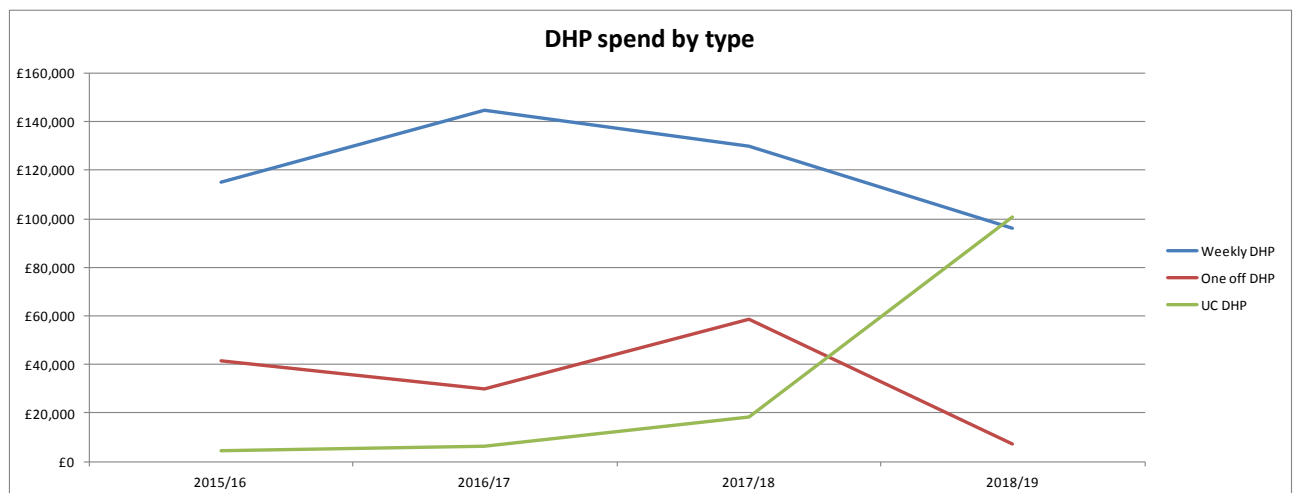
**DHP Grant & Spend by Year**

Year	Grant	Spend
2015/16	£177,562	£160,895
2016/17	£205,155	£180,842
2017/18	£226,402	£206,798
2018/19	£256,596	£204,028*

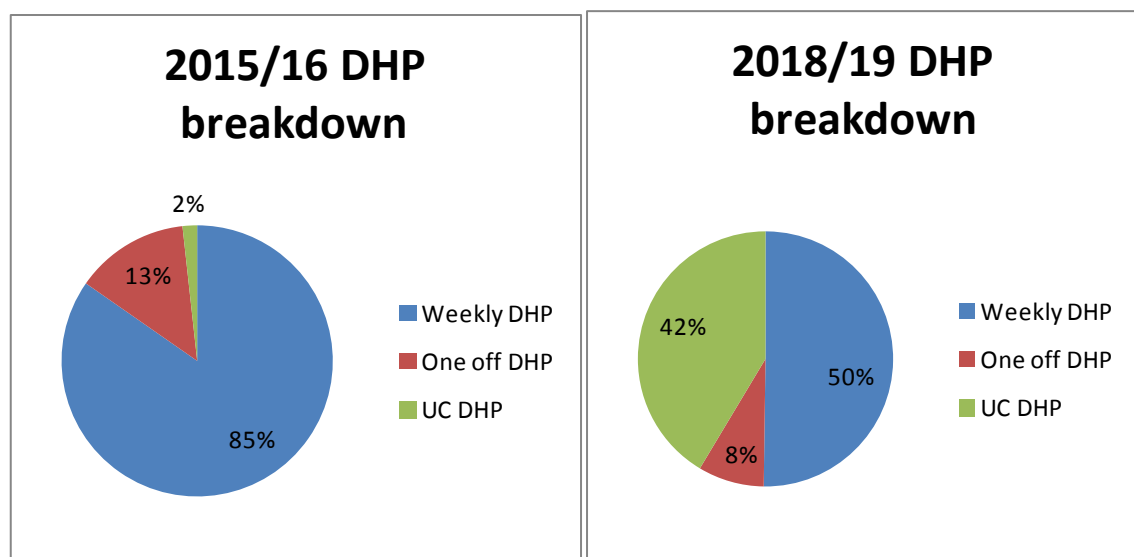
\* Extrapolated from current figures

8. The award of DHP is not linear so whilst the council always intends to spend the full grant across the year this is not always achieved as is shown in Table 1 above. York is not unique in not spending its full allocation of DHP grant. How we compare to other local authorities in terms of the percentage of the grant spent in the last full year (2017/18) is set out at Annex A of this briefing paper. The graph below shows how much UC is starting to affect the way the DHP funding is been distributed in recent years and especially since UC Full Service was rolled out in July 2017:

Graph of DHP spend

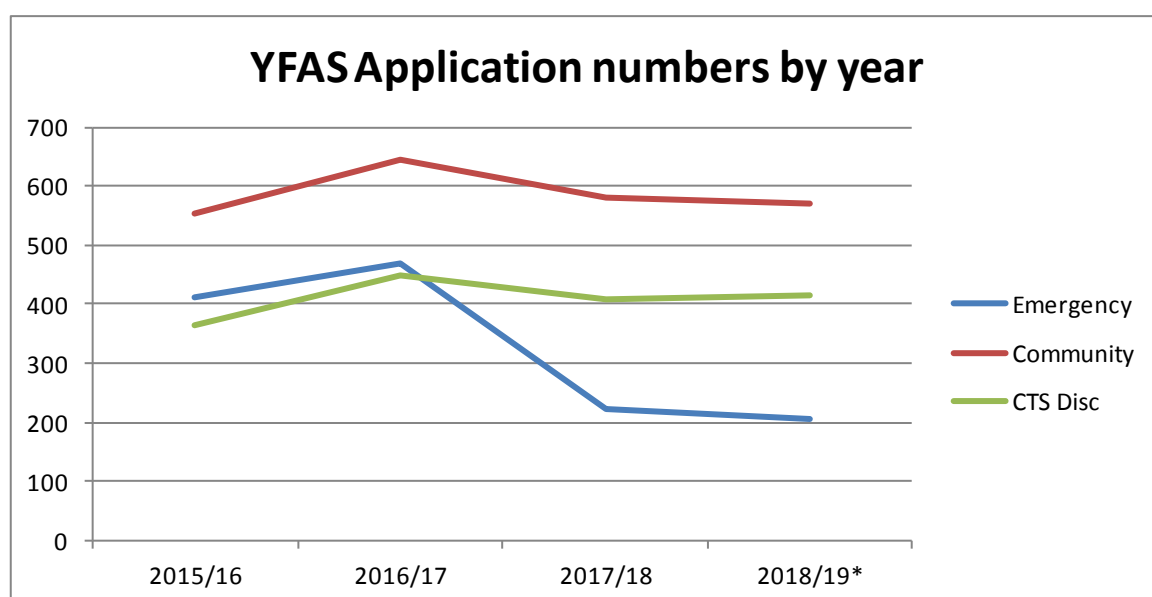


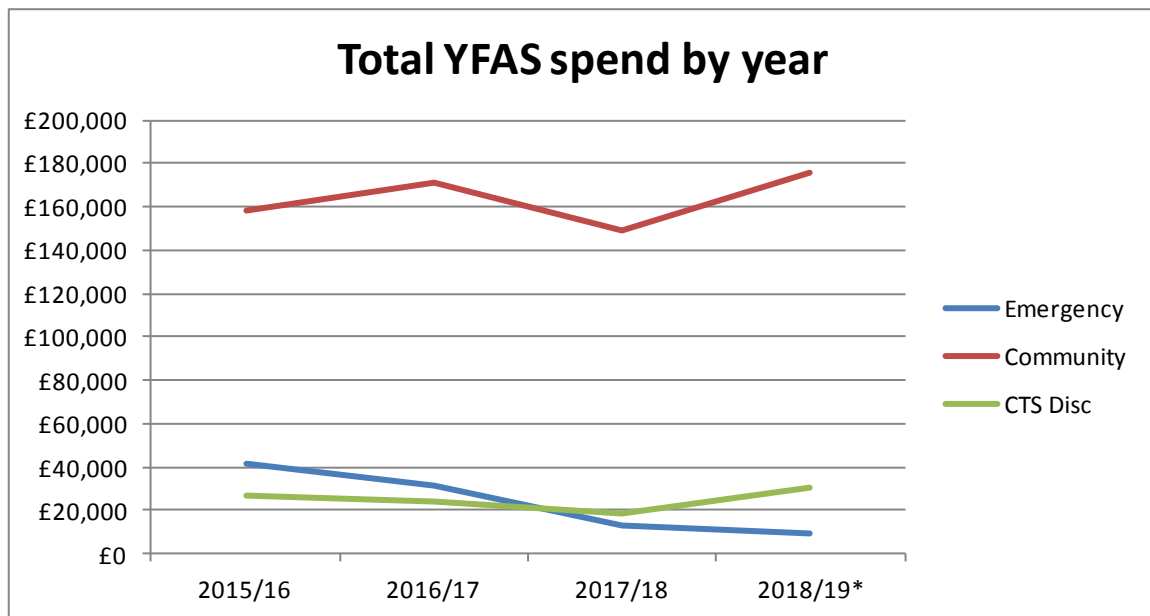
9. The projected growth in UC demand for DHP in 2018/19 compared to 2015/16 is shown very clearly in the charts below:



## York Financial Assistance Scheme

10. York's financial assistance scheme (YFAS) is provided by City of York Council to support people who require urgent assistance, following an emergency or unforeseen event, and supports vulnerable adults to move into or remain in the community. It is means tested and the customer must have no other form of help.
11. The scheme is discretionary but will not provide emergency assistance to people who are eligible for a budgeting loan or a benefits advance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or provide help where other agencies have a statutory responsibility to do so.
12. The YFAS scheme splits down into three component parts:
  - I. Emergency Payments – Immediate short term needs
  - II. Community Payments – Provides support to vulnerable adults to move into or remain in the community
  - III. Council Tax Discretionary Payment – Provides help for council tax payers who are having financial difficulty paying their Council Tax
13. The scheme is fully funded by the council with a budget for 2018/19 of £209K. The two graphs below show both the numbers claiming and spend by category for the past three full years and the year to date (2018/19) spend extrapolated to year end.

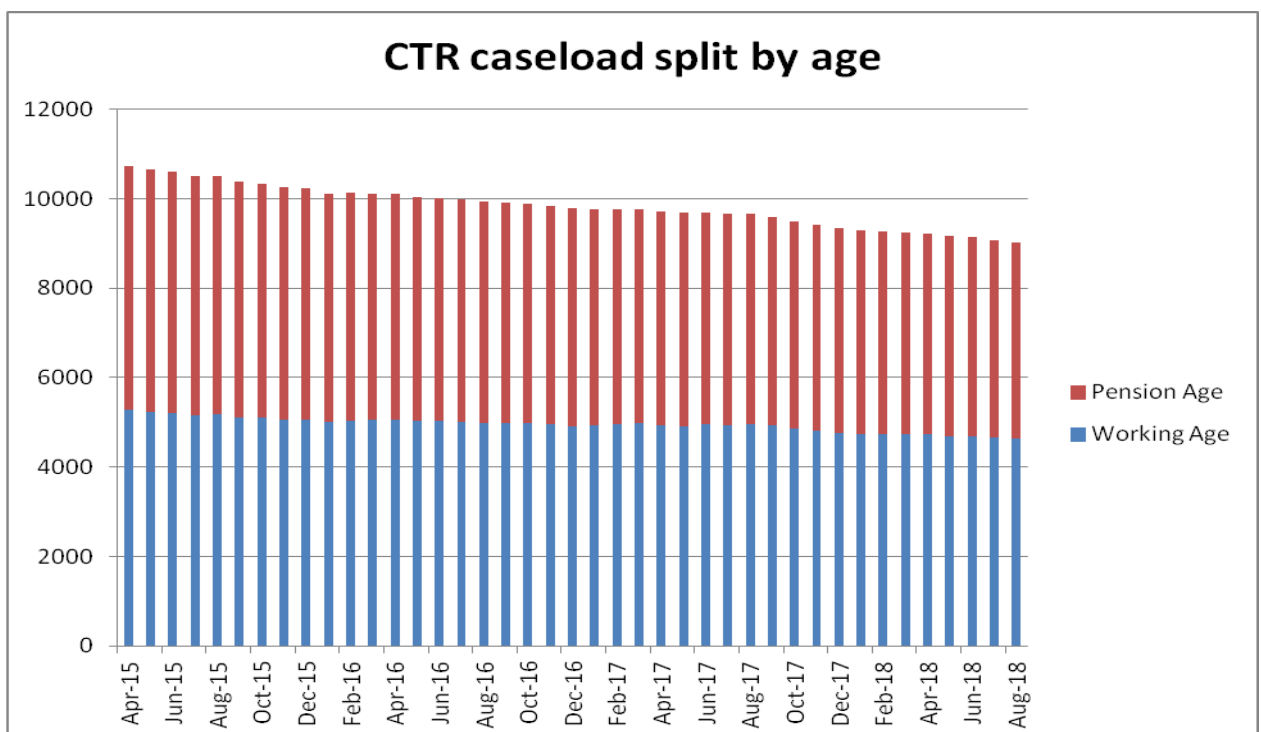




14. The two most noticeable changes in the profile of the graphs is the fall in the number of customers claiming after cash was taken out of the system in April 2016 and the increase in spend on Community & Discretionary Council Tax payments over the last year.

### Council Tax Support

15. Local council tax support known as CTS provides assistance to council tax payers on low income or claiming benefits with their council tax. The maximum amount of support is 77.5% of the council tax bill.
16. The graph below shows the trend for both working age and pension age claimants since April 2015:

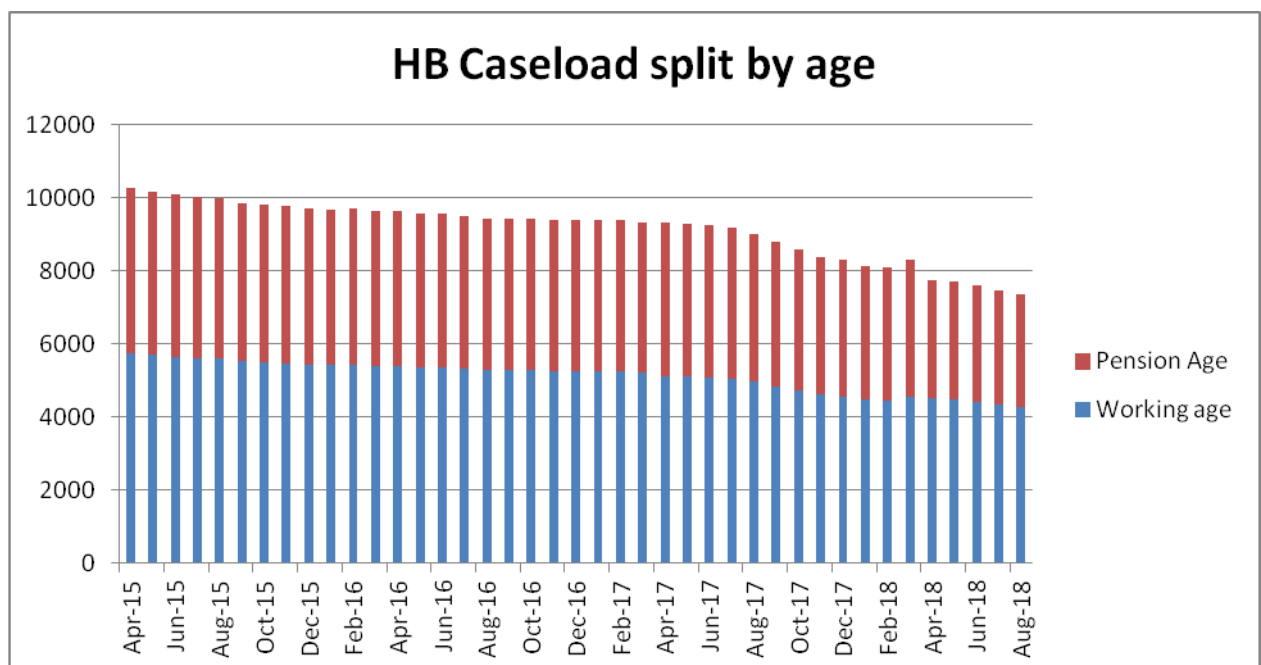


**ANNEX A**

17. The most noticeable trend is in the greater fall off of pensioner as opposed to working age claimants. There has been a fall in working age claimants (700 since July 2017) which may be attributable to the implementation of UC and is an issue that is been addressed through a more proactive approach to ensuring UC customers with CT liability make a claim.
18. The trend that may be of more concern is that of falling pensioner numbers whilst the overall number of pensioners in the city is growing. The most likely cause is that since the implementation of CTS in April 2013 there has been no CTS take up campaign aimed at pensioners. Whilst pensioners benefits have not been affected in the same way as working age many still live in poverty and see benefit support as asking for charity. They have become slightly forgotten with the headline welfare benefit changes all aimed at working age residents.

**Housing Benefit**

19. A final area of welfare benefit support that continues to be delivered by the council and will continue beyond 2023 for pensioners and some working age customers is HB. The graph below shows the trend in customer numbers since April 2015:



20. The trend follows that of CTS with a large fall in pensioner numbers as opposed to working age. This reflects the theme set out in the CTS paragraphs above that pensioners are not taking up welfare support even though there are a growing number in the city.
21. The actual decrease in working age caseload since Full Service in July 2017 is 714 approximately 14% of the full working age case load. In the

same period pension age claims fell by 991 or approximately 24% of the full pension age caseload.

### **Advice & Support**

22. Customers in receipt of UC or any other welfare benefit who require financial advice and support outside of the council can be supported through the Advice York Partnership which includes:

Age UK York,  
Christians Against Poverty,  
Citizens Advice York,  
City of York Council,  
Foundation UK (formally Keyhouse),  
IDAS,  
Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust,  
OCAY,  
Peasholme Charity,  
Welfare Benefits Unit,  
York Advocacy,  
York Carers Centre,  
York Foodbank,  
York Housing Association,  
York Independent Living Network,  
York Racial Equality Network,  
York Travellers Trust, Yorkshire Housing Association.

### **Summary**

23. The statistics contained within this briefing note are providing some indication that UC is having a growing effect on residents across the city. Perhaps as importantly they also show that potentially vulnerable older residents are also missing out on welfare benefit support.

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**Abbreviations:**

CAB - Citizens Advice Bureau  
CTS - Council Tax Support  
DHP - Discretionary Housing Payment  
DWP - Department for Work and Pensions  
HB - Housing Benefit  
UC - Universal Credit  
YFAS - York Financial Assistance Scheme

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# Making a Universal Credit claim



Rebecca Jeffrey

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## Summary

Universal Credit is one of the biggest changes to the welfare system since its inception. Bringing together six existing benefits, by the time it has rolled out around 7 million families will be receiving the new benefit - more than half of which are working families. This is a hugely ambitious programme, seeking to simplify the existing complicated benefit system and incentivise more people to start and progress in work.

While Universal Credit is working for the majority, there are a significant minority of people who are having problems - many of whom are in vulnerable situations and most in need of support. Citizens Advice helps many of these people and therefore understands where reforms are needed.

We support Universal Credit's aims and principles. The reform is an opportunity to improve on the previous benefits system, which presented significant challenges to many people. However, this opportunity is being undermined by delivery challenges and limited support which is negatively impacting on some claimants. As it currently stands, too many people are struggling to make a claim for the new benefit, resulting in long waits for a first payment.

Over the last year there have been a number of welcome changes to the design of Universal Credit's wait for first payment. However, our evidence from the people who are struggling with the system shows that delivery problems are continuing.

The Government have taken a test and learn approach to the rollout of Universal Credit, with a commitment to make improvements as issues present. A number of solutions to these delivery challenges are already in development, but are not yet in place. Without these solutions and adequate support, people risk having a bad start to Universal Credit and their finances being put at risk.

In this report, we use our evidence and insight from helping tens of thousands of clients with Universal Credit to set out some of the problems that have become apparent at this stage of rollout, and suggest how they could be addressed. We have found:

**A significant number of people are not receiving their full payment on time as they struggle to provide evidence as part of their claim.** DWP data shows that currently 17% of Universal Credit claimants are still waiting longer than 5 weeks to receive their full payment. DWP have recognised many of these delays are due to challenges with outstanding evidence. However, our research shows people are struggling with this - including 40% of those we help who found

evidencing housing costs difficult. Advance Payments can provide necessary support to people whilst they wait for their first payment. But, it is unclear what additional support is available for people if their full payment is delayed.

**Additional delays to people's income put them at higher risk of getting into debt.** Our evidence shows that the people we help who are not paid on time are 23% more likely than those paid on time to get into debt, putting their finances at risk. Problem debt can have wide-ranging impact on people's lives, and the knock-on effects could risk undermining the aim of Universal Credit to support people into and through work.

**Many people are struggling to make their claim. This adds delays to the process, and can reduce the amount of Universal Credit people receive.** For some it may result in them dropping out of their claim altogether. DWP evidence shows 44% of those who made their claim online make multiple attempts to complete their application. For those struggling most, this can lead to long delays in claims, with 1 in 4 of the people we help taking more than a week to finish their claim - reducing their entitlement and delaying income.

**People need more support at the beginning of their claim.** For the people we help, awareness of the adaptations or current support available is low, and existing support is often insufficient to help people manage this new system. This puts additional pressure on DWP staff, and can set up additional challenges for people further down the line.

Nearly one million people are now on Universal Credit and the new benefit is available in half of Jobcentres. Rollout has rapidly increased, with the benefit due to be in all Jobcentres by the end of the year, and those claiming existing benefits set to move over from next year. While the system is working for many making new claims, there remain significant groups who are struggling and need more support.

**The government needs to urgently add further features to the system and ensure adequate support is in place** so that people are paid on time and their finances are not put at risk. It is vital this happens before steps are taken to migrate existing benefit claimants and ahead of further roll out, when hundreds of thousands more people will be affected. Specifically, the government should use the break in rollout during August to:

- 1. Ensure adequate support is available to everyone who needs it by:**
  - publishing a minimum standard of Universal Support with sufficient availability and coverage

- having clear and distinct offers to help people make a claim and to empower people with the skills they need to manage Universal Credit
- extending the scope of Universal Support to include help to make a claim beyond the digital claim, an evidence check service, and funding for free impartial debt advice
- strengthening referral routes by introducing a no wrong door policy
- proactively telling all Universal Credit claimants about Alternative Payment Arrangements and support available.

**2. Speed up and complete features which make it easier to provide evidence as part of a claim, including:**

- completing development of and fully rolling out the Landlord Portal
- extending the concept of the landlord portal by introducing a centralised system to help claimants evidence their costs, including for childcare and housing costs in the Private Rented Sector
- ensuring it is possible for people to easily provide evidence online at the beginning of their claim, including the extension of 'digital fit notes' to Universal Credit
- publishing an evaluation of 'prove your identity' and, if the evidence suggests it is successful, making sure this is new feature is available

**3. Make claiming Universal Credit less complicated by:**

- introducing an automatic interim payment for those who are not paid on time
- reviewing what actions are required to get a first Universal Credit payment
- starting the Universal Credit wait for first payment at the point someone begins the claim process
- reviewing the timescales for closing claims and communicate this clearly with claimants by introducing further reminders, across channels, to let people know when they have not completed a requirement of their claim.
- completing development and implementation of announced fixes, such as the online system to book Jobcentre appointments

## Background

Universal Credit was introduced in 2013 to simplify the benefits system, and to better support and encourage work. It is available for both those out of work and those who are in low paid work, to support their living costs. By the time Universal Credit is fully rolled out around 7 million families will be receiving the benefit<sup>1</sup> - including more than half who will be working families.<sup>2</sup>

It brings together and replaces six existing benefits - often known as legacy benefits. Universal Credit is designed to be a single household payment, which includes housing costs and is paid monthly. It uses HMRC real time information to respond to changes in income, reducing the Universal Credit payment gradually as earnings increase. The benefits it replaces are:

- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Based Employment Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

The new benefit is being built and rolled out using a test and learn approach. It is now available in half of Jobcentres, with rollout set to have complete national coverage by the end of this year. In July 2019, the process of people being moved from legacy benefits to Universal Credit - known as managed migration - will begin. The current plan for moving this group requires them to make a full Universal Credit claim, or their benefits will stop.

**Table 1: Some of the recent changes to Universal Credit**

Change made	When they come into effect
Made the UC helpline free of charge	Nov 2017
Improvements to Advance payments including increasing the availability and level of payment	Jan 2018
Removed 7 waiting days	Feb 2018
Introduced a housing benefit roll-on which gives those moving from legacy benefits to UC an additional 2 weeks of housing benefit which is non-repayable	April 2018

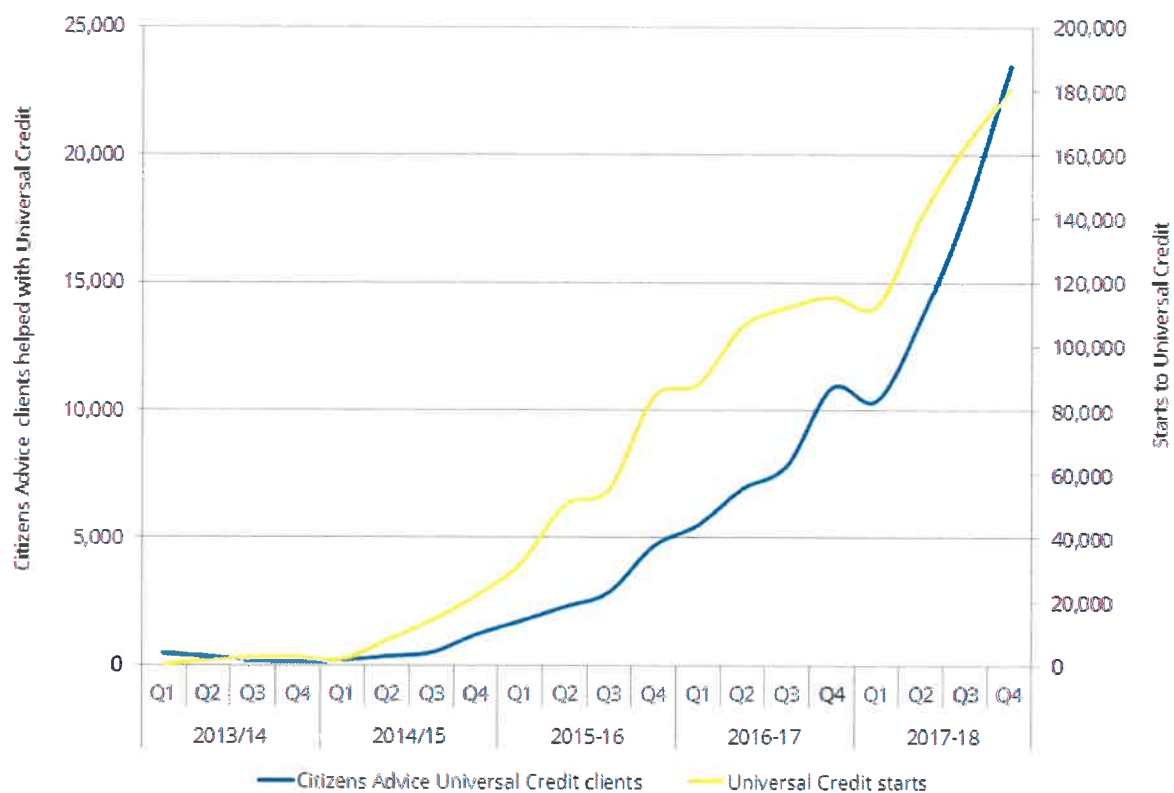
<sup>1</sup> OBR, [Welfare Trends](#), January 2018

<sup>2</sup> Citizens Advice, [Delivering on Universal Credit](#), July 2017

Extended transitional protection rules so increased numbers of those moving from legacy benefits will have their income protected	July 2019
---	-----------

The rollout approach and test and learn development has meant that the Government can act when they have seen issues with the policy, design or delivery of the benefit. This has led to a number of welcome changes being made in the last year (shown in Table 1). Over the last 6 months, this means resources within the Universal Credit build have been focused on developing these changes so that they could be delivered quickly. These alterations focus on policy and design changes to Universal Credit and will support people as they move onto Universal Credit. Additional features are currently being designed and implemented. However, without these fully in place, and without adequate support, many of the delivery problems which remain will not be addressed for the tens of thousands of claimants moving on to Universal Credit in this phase of rollout.

**Figure 1: Citizens Advice clients helped with Universal Credit and starts to Universal Credit<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> Whilst some people will come to us for help with Universal Credit later in the claim, the majority of people we are currently supporting need help with their initial claim and therefore we have compared our client numbers to starts to Universal Credit.



There are now 980,000 people on Universal Credit, with 80,000 people starting on the benefit each month.<sup>4</sup> Citizens Advice helps the equivalent of 12% of new starts each month. Since rollout began, we have helped 120,000 people with Universal Credit issues. As rollout continues, the number of people we help with Universal Credit problems has increased - both in numbers and as a proportion of clients helped with welfare issues, now accounting for 1 in 7 of our benefit clients.

In 2017/18, people we helped with Universal Credit had on average 2.1 Universal Credit issues and were more likely to need help with another non-Universal Credit issue. 79% of clients we helped with Universal Credit have another issue, compared with 65% of clients helped with legacy benefits. This includes issues such as debt (26%) and housing (15%).

The consequences of these problems can be large - both for the individual and government. Those claiming benefits being replaced by Universal Credit are less likely to be able to plan for their futures and manage large changes in income or spending, and are more likely to have debts or arrears, which make it harder to deal with financial difficulties.<sup>5</sup> Many of the people we help are just about keeping their head above water and delays or shocks to income can tip them off balance.

The most serious implications can include homelessness, relationship breakdown, poor mental health and financial exclusion. In particular, problem debt can have an impact on people's behaviours and ability to make life decisions<sup>6</sup> and could therefore risk Universal Credit's aim to support people into and through work.

Last year, the government made a number of positive changes to the design of Universal Credit, with the aim of helping people with their start to the benefit. It is still too early to fully evaluate the impact of these changes. However, beyond these changes there still remain a number of delivery problems and challenges to existing support. If fixed, it would tackle some of the issues people are facing in their start to Universal Credit and help it to achieve its aims. In this report, we highlight and evidence some of these ongoing Universal Credit delivery problems and suggest recommendations to fix them. In August there is a break in Universal Credit rollout, which should be used to make these fixes.

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<sup>4</sup> DWP, [Universal Credit official statistics](#), June and July 2018

<sup>5</sup> Money Advice Service, [Financial capability in the UK](#), 2015

<sup>6</sup> Citizens Advice, [The Debt Effect?](#), 2016



## Research method

We have drawn on a number of different methods to understand the delivery problems that the people we help are experiencing with Universal Credit. Much of this evidence, from both our ongoing client caseload and client monitoring survey, have been gathered during the period where the most recent changes to Universal Credit have been implemented (Table 1).

Our evidence uses data we gather from advising 120,000 people about Universal Credit in local Citizens Advice across England and Wales. It also draws insight from qualitative case studies gathered alongside this advice, provided by our expert advisers who support clients with Universal Credit.

In addition to this we have been closely monitoring clients' experiences of Universal Credit. Since August 2016, we have been carrying out a survey of clients in 31 full service Universal Credit areas. This research uses evidence from this survey gathered between November 2017 and June 2018 with a sample of 678 responses. Additional responses are used from June 2017 - October 2017 when looking at the impact of payment delays.<sup>7</sup> Payment timeliness remained relatively stable over this period. We tested the differences in payment timeliness and indicate where these are statistically significant.

We also surveyed local Citizens Advice Chief Officers about their experience of support services for Universal Credit claimants in their area. This took place between November 2017 and January 2018, and has a sample of 206 local Citizens Advice - equivalent to 70% of our network.

### Acknowledgements:

Thank you to colleagues at Citizens Advice who contributed to this report, especially Kayley Hignell, Gwennan Hardy, Lindsey Kearton, Emily Spoor and Rachel Remedios.

Thanks also go to staff and volunteers across our network of local Citizens Advice who contributed much of the evidence, particularly: Allerdale; Bath and North East Somerset; Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton; Brighton and Hove; Calderdale; Craven and Harrogate Districts; Cheshire East; Cheshire West; Copeland; County Durham; Dudley; Eastbourne; Halton; Hambleton and Richmondshire; Hammersmith and Fulham; Leicestershire; North East Doncaster; North Lancashire; Oxford; Oxfordshire South and Vale; Pennine West; Plymouth; Shropshire; South Lincs; Southampton; Southend; Sutton; Swale; Tameside District; Wiltshire; and Wrexham.

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<sup>7</sup> This question excludes those who didn't answer both questions required for analysis. N= 646.

# 1. Receiving a first Universal Credit payment

Universal Credit is designed to be paid monthly and in arrears - this means that your first payment is intended to be received after approximately 5 weeks.<sup>8</sup> This payment structure has been introduced to be more responsive to people's circumstances, tackle problems like large overpayments in the legacy system, and is intended to mirror payments in work.

Challenges with delivery and implementation can mean these payments are delayed. While Universal Credit is working well for some, DWP data shows that 1 in 6 claimants are currently not receiving their full payment on time and so are waiting longer than 5 weeks for their first full payment and the income they need.<sup>9</sup> This can put people at risk of falling behind on bills and getting into debt. Advance Payments offer some support for people during their initial wait, however it is unclear what support is available for people who have long delays in receiving their full payment.

## The impact of delays

In the recent National Audit Office review of Universal Credit, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) acknowledged that they didn't expect payment timeliness to improve significantly in 2018.<sup>10</sup> The latest published DWP data shows the average delay to first full payment is 3 weeks.<sup>11</sup> This means many are going around 8 weeks without the whole income deemed necessary for them to live on.

"I had to wait 7 weeks for my first payment and had to borrow, so on receipt of first payment had to pay all back on debts." *Wes, Citizens Advice survey respondent*

"I only received £99 when I was supposed to receive £270 so I couldn't pay my rent, or other payments and costs like food. It has had an impact on my health." *Josh, Citizens Advice survey respondent*

<sup>8</sup> One month plus 7 processing days

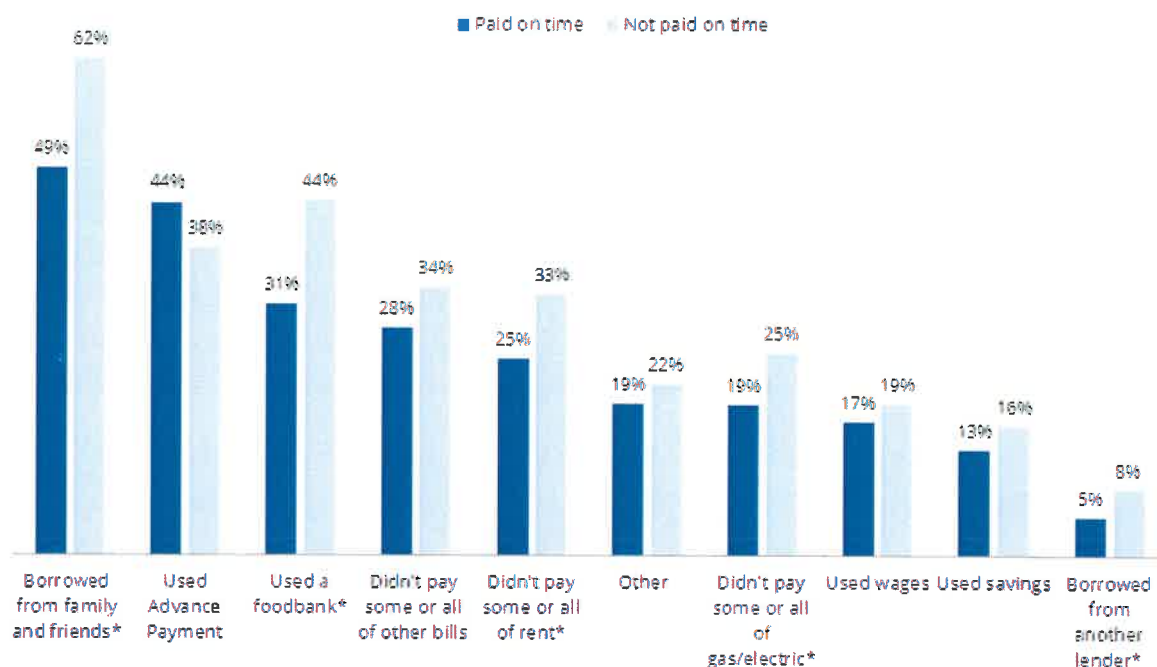
<sup>9</sup> DWP, [Length of payment delays for new claims to Universal Credit](#), July 2018

<sup>10</sup> National Audit Office, [Rolling out Universal Credit](#), June 2018

<sup>11</sup> DWP, [Length of payment delays for new claims to Universal Credit](#), July 2018

When we surveyed our clients claiming Universal Credit about how they had coped during their waiting period, those who had experienced delays in their payment beyond the initial wait were more likely to get into financial difficulty, and were 23% more likely to get into debt.<sup>\*12</sup> Those who had not been paid on time were 60% more likely to borrow money from a lender, and 32% more likely to get behind on rent than those who received their payment on time (Figure 2).<sup>\*13</sup>

**Figure 2: Comparison of how people cope during the wait for first payment**



Source: Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, June 2017 - May 2018, N=646. \*Indicates a statistically significant difference

Those not paid on time were also more likely to fall behind on multiple bills or need credit - with 28% using 3 or more sources of borrowing to cope with their initial wait for payment, compared to 19% of those who were paid on time.<sup>\*14</sup> The consequences of these debts can be large and long lasting - both for the individual and the government.<sup>15</sup> This can include homelessness, relationship breakdown, poor mental health and financial exclusion. Many people on a low income already face a balancing act with their finances - with 7 in 10 of working claimants of Universal Credit and tax credits we surveyed reporting they would

<sup>12</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, June 2017 - May 2018, N=646, \* indicates a statistically significant difference.

<sup>13</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, June 2017 - May 2018, N=646

<sup>14</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, June 2017 - May 2018, N=646,

<sup>15</sup> Citizens Advice, Stuck in debt, 2017

find a drop in income of £100 per month difficult to cope with.<sup>16</sup> Problem debt can have an impact on people's behaviours and ability to make life decisions<sup>17</sup> and could therefore risk the aim of Universal Credit to support people into and through work. **DWP therefore need to take urgent steps to reduce the numbers of people receiving late payments and the time that they are waiting.**

## Financial support when waiting for payment

Advance Payments are available to support people during their wait for first payment. These are for up to 100% of your estimated first month's payment, and are repayable over 12 months. The increased amount and wider availability of Advance Payments is a welcome necessary step to provide some income whilst people wait for payment. It is unclear what support is available for people whilst they are waiting for their full payment if it is delayed.

In Housing Benefit when the processing of the benefit is late or someone has good reason for not having provided the correct evidence, an interim payment or payment on account is made. For this, the Local Authority pays an amount based on the information it has. If, once the necessary information is available, this reduces the amount of Housing Benefit the person was entitled to, it is collected as an overpayment. This is automatically paid and means an individual does not need to agree a time period for paying it back. Knowing what repayment period to choose can be a challenge for claimants as they do not know when their full payment will be received, and this could create budgeting challenges.

Advance Payments can give people the income they need to pay their essentials. However, the people we help can experience significant knock on challenges with the repayment of Advance Payments through ongoing reduced income whilst they are being repaid. In addition, our advisers note that they work with people who will not take out an Advance Payment because they are concerned about debt and repayments. Therefore, a payment on account or interim payment separate to the Advance Payment system, specifically for when people have late payments, may support those who are concerned about repayment.

A further advantage of an interim payment would mean debt only occurs for the smaller number of people who might have an overpayment, rather than requiring *all* people who are not paid in full on time to borrow through alternatives like Advance Payments. **DWP should therefore explore**

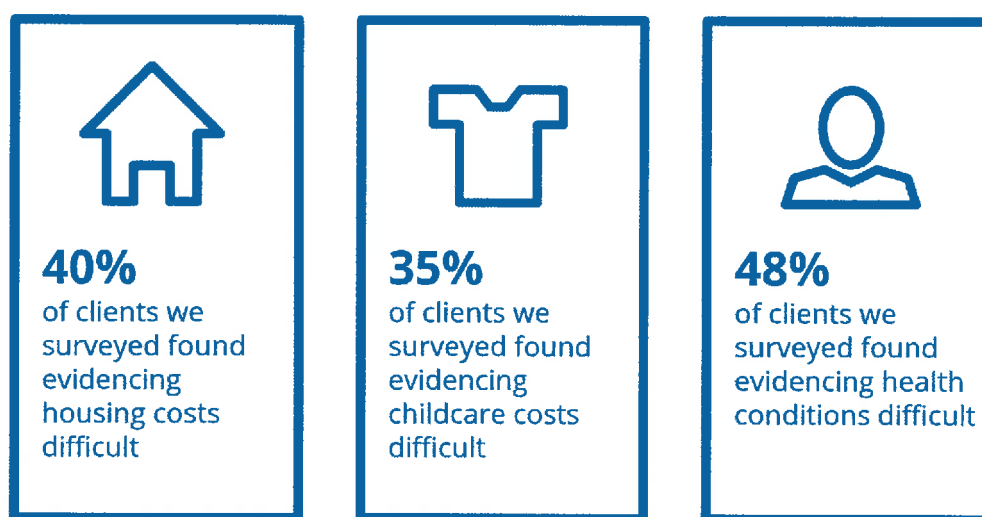
<sup>16</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit and Work Incentives, April 2018

<sup>17</sup> Citizens Advice, The Debt Effect?, 2016

**introducing an automatic interim payment for those who are not paid on time**, like those that exist in Housing Benefit. This would ensure people have security of income for their essential costs, and reduce debt and difficult budgeting challenges.

## Evidence issues

DWP data shows that those who have additional costs are least likely to be paid on time - with around a third of those who are working and need support with childcare costs not being paid on time. One quarter of those deemed eligible for financial support for their caring responsibilities or housing costs also receive late payments.<sup>18</sup> The reasons behind late payments often relate to outstanding evidence issues.<sup>19</sup> While in some cases this will be the result of claimants not taking action, our evidence suggests many are struggling with these requirements. As it rolls out, more people who have additional costs like these are due to go on Universal Credit - particularly during managed migration. It is therefore vital that these challenges are addressed quickly and adequate support is put in place.



## Identity

Those who are unable to evidence their identity online through the Government Verify service have the option to confirm their identity with relevant documents at a face-to-face appointment with Jobcentre staff. This can include passports, UK photo driving licences and national identity cards. Claimants cannot receive their Universal Credit payment or receive an Advance Payment until they have completed an identity check. This can create challenges for those who do not have these documents at the beginning of their claim.

<sup>18</sup> National Audit Office, [Rolling out Universal Credit](#), June 2018

<sup>19</sup> [PQ119724](#), December 2017



### Citizens Advice client case study - struggling with identity evidence

Roy came to Citizens Advice for help applying for benefits. He had been claiming disability benefits for 18 years but had recently moved to a full service area and needed to submit a claim for Universal Credit. He asked for help doing this at his local Jobcentre, as he was struggling due to his dyslexia and lack of digital skills.

After the Jobcentre signposted Roy to Citizens Advice, his adviser helped him to complete a claim online. However, as he does not have any photo ID and is unable to use online banking, he was required to verify his identity in person at the Jobcentre. Roy has no savings, meaning he was unable to purchase a form of ID and, at the time his adviser spoke with him, was already starting to get into rent arrears because of delays completing his benefit claim.

### Health conditions

Those who are accessing financial support for a health condition face particularly long delays, with only 1 in 3 of those who have a limited capability for work element in their claim receiving their full payment on time.<sup>20</sup> There are a number of potential reasons behind this late payment. Many Universal Credit claimants who have a health condition and are new to this support are not entitled to extra financial support until 3 months into their claim, following a Work Capability Assessment. This mirrors the current process in Employment and Support Allowance and means that a claimant's first payment is not expected to include any extra financial support for their health condition.

Other Universal Credit claimants who have a health condition are expected to receive extra financial support in their first payment. For example, those who have a terminal illness. We also see cases where people face challenges with the result of their Work Capability Assessment - which entitles them to this support - transferring over from legacy benefits, as well as people who have claimed Universal Credit whilst they appeal their ESA assessment and face long waits for their appeal decision, and therefore payment.

As part of making a Universal Credit claim, people who are currently unable to work due to a health problem must provide evidence of their health conditions whilst they wait for their work capability assessment in order to ease their work search requirements. This is normally through a fit note from their doctor. Almost half (48%) of those we spoke to said they found evidencing health conditions difficult.<sup>21</sup> To improve this process, **learning and developments**

<sup>20</sup> NAO, Rolling out Universal Credit, June 2018

<sup>21</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=478

**from the legacy system should be introduced into Universal Credit - such as the ability to send digital fit notes.**

## **Housing Costs**

On housing costs, the DWP normally requires both proof of a tenancy and that payments are being made - for example, a bank statement. Two in 5 of the people we help with Universal Credit who we surveyed said they found providing housing evidence difficult.<sup>22</sup> To improve the process of evidence collection in Universal Credit, the DWP have introduced two schemes to help with housing issues:

- The Landlord Portal - to help those in social housing by allowing these housing providers to more easily verify and confirm costs.
- Housing Confident - raising awareness amongst DWP staff of the importance of discussing housing with claimants to help them overcome housing issues and direct them to any support they might need.

These improvements have started to be made and are understood to be having an impact, however **the Landlord Portal needs greater development and wider implementation to see these improvements at scale on a national level.** At the end of May 2018, the Landlord Portal was available for 215 social housing providers.<sup>23</sup> Whilst these housing providers are mainly the largest providers and cover a large proportion of claimants, there are 1,713 social housing providers in England alone.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, this is still in the early stages of its rollout and development, and is not available for all those in social housing. In addition this is not currently available for any claimants living in the Private Rented Sector, where additional support is still needed. Whilst DWP are currently developing a new service to help private landlords request direct payments and rent arrears deductions, it is unclear if this will also provide support with evidence requirements.<sup>25</sup>

The support the Housing Confident initiative directs people to, Universal Support, is currently inconsistent across the country and narrow in scope, focusing on Assisted Digital or Personal Budgeting support. 81% of our local Citizens Advice offices are not confident that support services in their area will meet local need and demand among Universal Credit full service claimants.<sup>26</sup> This means support to help people make a claim is focused on the online form,

<sup>22</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=574

<sup>23</sup> PQ148858, June 2018

<sup>24</sup> DWP, Current registered providers of social housing, June 2018

<sup>25</sup> RLA, DWP seek landlords and agents to test new service in live environment, July 2018

<sup>26</sup> Citizens Advice survey of local Citizens Advice Chief Officers, December 2017 - January 2018

and help with evidence requirements is currently not available under Universal Support.

The documents needed to evidence extra costs often have to be provided in person at the Jobcentre. **Work is under way in the DWP to fully develop the ability to upload evidence to the Universal Credit journal. It is vital that this is in place for people at the beginning of their claim** to ensure those who cannot attend the Jobcentre can easily complete their claim, for example those who are currently working or have health conditions. This is also necessary to ensure Jobcentres have sufficient capacity to support claimants with looking for work or a higher income rather than checking and uploading evidence.

Some costs must also be evidenced throughout the claim, particularly if changes occur - for example self-employed earnings or changes in childcare costs. Our survey of Universal Credit clients found that 1 in 3 (35%) found providing this childcare evidence difficult.<sup>27</sup> DWP should build on the initial success of the Landlord Portal and consider **developing centralised systems to help claimants evidence their costs**. For childcare, this could form part of the Government's online childcare service<sup>28</sup> and allow large providers to verify costs and childcare placements without the need for additional claimant evidence.

#### Citizens Advice client case study - struggling with childcare evidence

Anum works part time, and so needs childcare for her two pre-school age children. Her Universal Credit caseworker told Anum that she didn't need to visit the Jobcentre every month to provide the child care receipts, but could instead come in once every three months and provide evidence for several months at a time. However, when Anum followed her caseworker's advice, the childcare element of her Universal Credit was stopped because she wasn't providing evidence often enough - when she explained that she'd been told that three-monthly visits were okay, Anum's case was escalated to a decision maker.

Two months later, Anum still hadn't received £300 of childcare costs, which made it difficult for her to pay for her childcare and get to work. Despite calling the Jobcentre several times to understand why the payment hadn't been made, Anum was not told what had happened or when she would receive the money.

Work coaches often help with evidence requirements by checking the suitability of the provided evidence when it is brought into the Jobcentre. As support is not available for evidence requirements, this can add additional workload to work

<sup>27</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=237

<sup>28</sup> Responsibility for childcare is devolved therefore free childcare offers differ across each of the home nations



coaches who then need to support claimants to get the right or most suitable evidence, and then arrange further appointments for this evidence to be provided.

**The scope of Universal Support needs to be extended to cover all stages required for the completion of a claim not just the initial digital claim.** This would reduce the number of claimants struggling with this part of their claim and reduce the number of people affected by late payments. The DWP could look to other successful services where evidence and form filling is required to reduce this workload.

An example of this would be the Post Office passport checking service. This allows people applying for a passport to check their application ahead of submitting it to ensure it is correctly completed. Our evidence shows 48% of consumers use this service<sup>29</sup> and Government explain that it is less likely a passport application is rejected if you use the service.<sup>30</sup> **DWP could integrate a service into Universal Support which supports claimants to get appropriate evidence and check a claimant's evidence for suitability ahead of submitting it or taking it to the Jobcentre.** This could also include more proactive work with evidence providers such as private landlords and childcare providers to provide suitable evidence, with agreed templates.

## Recommendations:

1. **Ensure adequate support is in place to everyone who needs it** so that people can get the help they need to make a Universal Credit claim and avoid payment delays. This should involve:
  - extending the scope of Universal Support to cover the completion of a claim beyond the digital claim, including introducing an evidence check service
2. **Speed up and complete features which make it easier to provide evidence as part of a claim** so that people are not waiting longer for their full Universal Credit payment. This should include:
  - completing development of and fully rolling out the Landlord Portal
  - extending the concept of the landlord portal by introducing a centralised system to help claimants evidence their costs, including for childcare and housing costs in the Private Rented Sector

<sup>29</sup> Citizens Advice, [Consumer Use of Post Offices](#), June 2017

<sup>30</sup> Gov.uk, [Passport Check and Send service](#), June 2018

- ensuring it is possible to provide evidence online easily for people at the beginning of their claim, including the extension of 'digital fit notes' to Universal Credit

**3. Make claiming Universal Credit less complicated** so that people receive payment on time. This should include:

- introducing an automatic interim payment for those who are not paid on time

## 2. Applying for Universal Credit

At Citizens Advice we help hundreds of thousands of people with issues relating to the legacy system each year - from people experiencing problems when they have a change of circumstances that require them to change benefit, to people missing out on benefits that they did not know they were eligible for. We therefore support the aim of Universal Credit to simplify the benefit system.

A key component of achieving this is through the introduction of a single online claim. Under the previous legacy system it was possible for an individual to need to make multiple applications, across different channels, to different government departments and local authorities - each time providing similar information. Instead, Universal Credit is designed to be completed online with one claim through a personal account and journal. This records a person's details, assesses their eligibility for the benefit and then becomes one of the main communication channels between the claimant and Jobcentre or the Department for Work and Pensions.

A single application should make this process simpler. However, there are a number of stages that must be completed within a Universal Credit claim (Figure 3). Many Universal Credit claimants are able to navigate this without support. But DWP research shows that even for those who made their claim online many are struggling with this process - with almost 1 in 3 (30%) finding the online claim process difficult or very difficult.<sup>31</sup>

Multiple stages involved in the claim can add complexity and mean there are multiple points where a person might drop out or see a delay. These delays are in addition to those outlined in Chapter 1 and are not currently captured in the payment timeliness statistics. The welcome changes implemented since the Budget 2017 focused on reducing the designed wait for payment. But they do not tackle delays caused by people who are facing difficulties in making their claim.

### Starting a claim

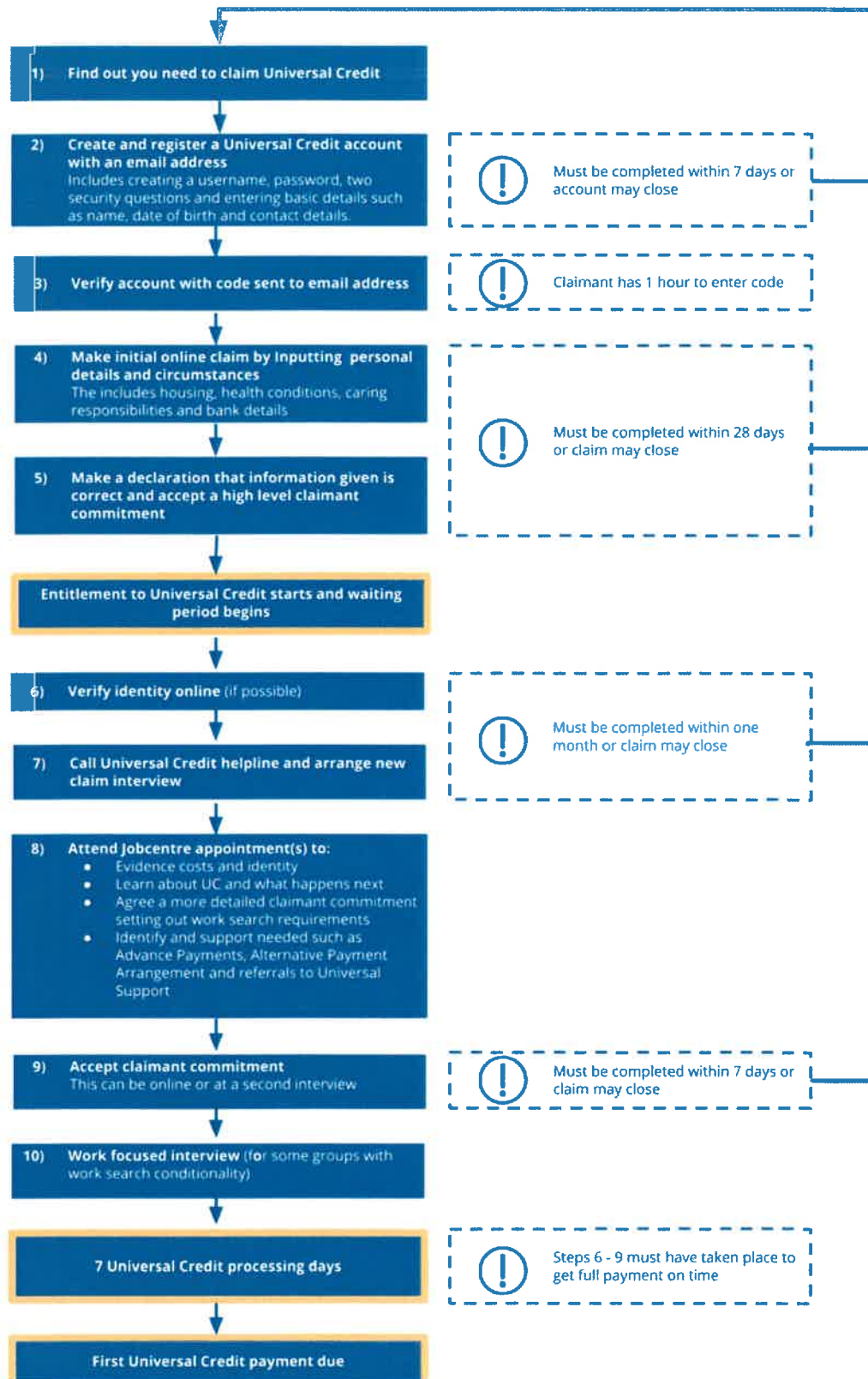
The first stage of a claim is the online claim. This involves registering and verifying an account, completing personal details and circumstances, making a declaration that the information given is correct and accepting a high level claimant commitment. Evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions suggests that people are struggling to start their claim, with 44% of those who made their claim online making multiple attempts.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> DWP, [Universal Credit Full Service Survey](#), June 2018

<sup>32</sup> DWP, [Fulls service claimant survey](#), June 2018 p. 33

Figure 3. Stages involved in making a Universal Credit claim



The amount of time it can take to make a claim risks further payment delays. Guidance from DWP recommends people complete their claim as soon as they have created an account, and that completing a claim through to declaration should take between 20 minutes and an hour, depending on whether you are single or in a couple.<sup>33</sup> However, their evidence shows that people take an average of 2 days to go from registering a claim to making the declaration. For those who struggle this can be longer - for example our survey of Universal Credit clients shows 1 in 4 (28%) took more than a week to make their claim.<sup>34</sup>

Entitlement to Universal Credit does not begin until the claim is received by the DWP, with limited backdating rules to cover the time prior to this. This is currently taken to be when the declaration has been made. Therefore, struggling with this process can mean people do not receive financial support to cover this period and adds additional time people are waiting for their first payment.

These delays can mean people spend long periods of time without income, adding pressure to their finances and making it harder to keep up with household bills. Our recent research found that those on a low income already face a balancing act with their finances - with 7 in 10 of working claimants of Universal Credit and tax credits we surveyed reporting they would find a drop in income of £100 per month difficult to cope with.<sup>35</sup> To support those struggling most, **the date of a Universal Credit claim should start when a person first starts the claim process.** This would bring Universal Credit in line with other benefits such as Personal Independence Payments, where it is possible to start the claim date when you ring the helpline and ask for an application form.

#### Citizens Advice client case study - Challenges making a claim

Lisa first contacted Citizens Advice five weeks after she made her first Universal Credit claim because she'd not received the payment she was expecting. Our adviser suggested that she looked at her Universal Credit journal, but Lisa didn't know what a journal was. Lisa isn't computer literate and couldn't visit the Jobcentre for digital support - she was housebound due to receiving cancer treatment - and so she needed her son's help to make her claim and didn't realise there were further steps.

When she accessed her journal with her son, Lisa found out that her claim hadn't been processed because her husband also needed an account and the two needed to be linked together. However, once her husband had an account they couldn't link the claims - as Lisa had missed the deadline for the claims being linked together, her claim was closed and she and her husband had to start a new claim.

<sup>33</sup> DWP guidance, [Understanding Universal Credit: making a claim](#), June 2018

<sup>34</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=624

<sup>35</sup> Citizens Advice, [Universal Credit and Work Incentives](#), April 2018



A telephone interview was later arranged for Lisa for her claimant commitment interview because she couldn't visit the Jobcentre. When no one called Lisa, the interview was rescheduled for a week later - the day before Lisa was due her first Universal Credit payment. Lisa didn't receive a phone call, but because she hadn't been able to accept a claimant commitment her expected Universal Credit payment did not arrive.

Lisa eventually had another interview scheduled and received her first payment, 3 months after starting her claim. As there had been evidenced errors in her claim she was able to have payments backdated, but the delay caused Lisa financial hardship and unnecessary stress while she was undergoing cancer treatment.

Computers are available in Jobcentres for people to make their claim. However, DWP evidence suggests that people need additional support to complete the initial stage of their claim, with more than 2 in 5 (43%) saying they needed more help to set up their claim.<sup>36</sup> Support is currently available to help people start their online Universal Credit claim through Universal Support. Funding is given to local authorities to provide Assisted Digital support. This is decided and delivered locally, either by the local authority or a partner organisation.

Limited availability or coverage of this support can add additional delays as people wait for help with their claim. Evidence from our local Citizens Advice network suggest this support can be patchy and can lack a coherent local strategy. For example, one local Citizens Advice reported that Assisted Digital Support for Universal Credit in their rural area consisted of sessions in local libraries. However, this would only take place one day each week - and in some areas for only 2 hours per week. This means that if a person needs support to set up a claim, this could be delayed by up to a week depending on availability.

**Additional support is needed to help people make a claim. This needs sufficient coverage and availability so that the support takes place quickly to avoid additional delays.**

"I had an awful experience at the start - the person at Jobcentre tried to help but was confused herself, which meant it took over two weeks to complete my application. I then only got 5 weeks money rather than 7. I had to pawn my laptop and TV, and then ran out of time before I got money through to buy them back."

*Megan, Citizens Advice survey respondent*

<sup>36</sup> DWP, [Fulls service claimant survey](#), June 2018 p. 37

## Completing a claim

Following the initial online claim, there are a number of additional stages that must be completed within the first month of a claim so that payment can be received. One particular area we see clients struggle with is verifying their identity online using the Government Verify service. More than half (59%) of clients we surveyed found the government Verify service difficult.<sup>37</sup>

Whilst it is possible to verify your identity at a face-to-face appointment in the Jobcentre, as discussed in Chapter 1, this can add additional confusion to a claim - with some not realising that they need to log back into their journal if they have been unable to complete Verify. A reminder to call the helpline has recently been introduced to help, but depending on the channel this is provided through, people may still miss important messages about their claim, such as setting up an initial interview. This can add delays to claims. DWP's most recent evidence shows that only 38% of Universal Credit claimants are able to successfully use Verify.<sup>38</sup> As an alternative, they are currently trialing a different system known as "prove your identity". They plan to rollout this service later this year following a review.<sup>39</sup> With people facing such large challenges with Verify, **DWP should publish an evaluation of 'prove your identity' and, if it is successful, should make sure this new feature available.**

"My husband and I applied for Universal Credit ... we wanted to apply to see if we could get support for childcare while my husband was in between jobs. The application online was exhausting as I was unable to be verified but my husband was verified straight away. I eventually had to go to the Jobcentre with my two and a half year old to get my paperwork seen. By this point my husband's application had expired and they had requested a meeting with him as well. After the 4th week of trying and getting a suitable appointment my husband found a job and has been working for an agency. We therefore gave up on the process as he was never going to be able to attend an appointment in working hours." *Laura, Citizens Advice survey respondent*

For some, struggling with these stages of the claim process can mean they drop out of Universal Credit altogether. DWP data shows that 1 in 5 have their claim closed and do not go on to receive a UC payment as they have not completed

<sup>37</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=616

<sup>38</sup> NAO, [Rolling out Universal Credit](#), June 2018

<sup>39</sup> BBC Wales, [Universal Credit: Online ID demands delaying benefits](#), 22nd June 2018

part of the application process.<sup>40</sup> Some of this group will be people who have found work and are therefore no longer entitled to Universal Credit. For others, it may be because they have struggled with the process or do not understand that they might be entitled to Universal Credit whilst working.

DWP data shows that 1 in 10 claims are closed as a result of not booking an initial interview within the time limit.<sup>41</sup> After submitting your claim, you must ring the Universal Credit helpline to book your new claim interview. **Progress has been made to improve this part of the claim process by looking to introduce an online booking system for Jobcentre appointments.** While this has now been commissioned, it is not yet in place.

In some circumstances, claims can be closed without a claimant realising this is what would happen or that they had missed a stage of their claim. DWP data shows that 1 in 20 have their claim closed because the claimant commitment has not been accepted.<sup>42</sup> Our survey of Universal Credit claimants we help showed 27% found finding and signing their claimant commitment difficult.<sup>43</sup> To avoid claims being closed unnecessarily, **further reminders should be introduced to let people know that they have not completed a requirement of their claim.** For those who struggle with their digital claim or have limited access, it is important that they are given sufficient notice of a claim closing. Therefore, **DWP should look at the time frame for the closing of claims, and communicate these clearly with claimants, ensuring reminders are multichannel beyond the online journal.**

#### Citizens Advice client case study - Struggling with evidence requirements

Thea had been out of work for several weeks and didn't have any income when she started her first Universal Credit claim. However, because she didn't have any of the documents required to verify her identity online her claim was closed. This happened twice. When an adviser helped Thea to start a new claim, she arranged to verify her identity in person at the Jobcentre. Because she didn't have any income and struggled to afford the bus journey, Thea asked the Jobcentre to combine her verification interview with her claimant commitment interview, in order to save money. The Jobcentre refused to arrange this, meaning that Thea had to pay for two separate visits to the Jobcentre in order to start her UC claim.

Thea was already in rent arrears and relying on emergency assistance and Food Bank support. The additional expense of the extra bus journey has added financial pressure which she has found stressful and difficult to manage.

<sup>40</sup> [Fol:2025](#), May 2018

<sup>41</sup> [Fol:2025](#), May 2018

<sup>42</sup> [Fol:2025](#), May 2018

<sup>43</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=583



In this first month, claimants must also provide evidence of additional costs such as rent or childcare payments to receive their first payment in full. We discussed this further in Chapter 1.

Without a simplified process and adequate support, a significant minority of claimants will continue to face challenges and delays with their claims. Whilst support currently exists through Universal Support, this is inconsistent across areas (Figure 4). This can mean some do not know about the support that is available. For example, 45% of those we help did not know about help applying for Universal Credit but would have used it if they did.<sup>44</sup> To ensure people are aware of the support available, **DWP should publish a clear minimum standard of support** so people can be clear about the support they can expect across the country.

**Figure 4. Inconsistent Support Services**

<b>Universal Support in a South West local authority</b>	<b>Universal Support in a West Midlands local authority</b>
<p>In this area, both Assisted Digital and Personal Budgeting support is offered as part of a holistic Universal Credit advice service by the local Citizens Advice.</p>	<p>In this area, Universal Support is delivered through a number of providers.</p>
<p>A full time Universal Credit adviser is employed to deliver help 5 days a week, with a daily drop-in and appointments. This support helps any Universal Credit claimant across the claimant journey - from making and evidencing claims and beyond, including managing an ongoing claim.</p>	<p>Assisted Digital support is available through the local library service and through digital skills training from a local charity. The library staff have been trained to show people how to get to the Universal Credit website, but are not then able to help them with their claim. If further support is needed, they are referred to a local charity who provide digital skills training, where they can take an IT course. The local Jobcentre also offers some support to people to make their claim with computers available. However, the support available is dependent on how busy the Jobcentre is.</p>
<p>This service is funded through a block payment, with additional payments available if demand increases. The local authority have added additional funding beyond the Universal Support allocation from DWP.</p>	<p>Personal Budgeting support is delivered through the local authority who have integrated it into their</p>
<p>This allows for a wider scope of support beyond Personal Budgeting and Assisted digital. For example this</p>	

<sup>44</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=586

<p>includes an identity support scheme - where clients can get support to get identity documents for their Universal Credit claim - and a 'Loan a Phone' scheme - to help people make and manage their Universal Credit claim.</p> <p>This service is delivered in a dedicated space in the local Citizens Advice opposite the Jobcentre. This is equipped with computers, a printer, phone and Universal Credit materials. Support is then also available from additional specialist advisers within the local Citizens Advice when it's needed, for example specialist housing and debt advice.</p> <p>The Universal Credit Adviser holds strong relationships with the Jobcentre and DWP Area Partnership manager, allowing individual cases to be escalated effectively and for frequently occurring issues to be shared.</p>	<p>welfare assistance service. This support includes helping people with Discretionary Housing Payment and Council Tax Support applications, and with basic budgeting skills. However, if the person's circumstances are more complicated they will try and refer to advice services in the area if appointments are available.</p>
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## Recommendations:

1. **Ensure adequate support is available to everyone who needs it** so that people can access support quickly to make their claim. This should include:
  - Publishing a minimum standard of Universal Support with sufficient availability and coverage
2. **Make the process of claiming Universal Credit less complicated** so that people do not face additional delays to their payment or face reductions in the amount of Universal Credit they receive. This should include:
  - starting the Universal Credit wait for first payment at the point someone begins the claim process
  - reviewing the timescales for closing claims and communicate these clearly with claimants by introducing further reminders, across

channels, to let people know when they have not completed a requirement of their claim.

- completing development and implementation of announced fixes, such as the online system to book Jobcentre appointments

**3. Speed up and complete features which make it easier to provide evidence as part of a claim.** This should include:

- publish an evaluation of 'prove your identity' and, if it is successful, make this feature available for new Universal Credit claims

### 3. Understanding and adapting to Universal Credit

Moving to Universal Credit will see changes to the way some people currently budget and interact with the benefits system. Many of these changes and actions are required by claimants at the beginning of a Universal Credit claim. This also requires workcoaches to ensure people are aware of what steps they need to take, refer appropriately to support, and to put adaptations in place. Problems at this stage can have large knock-on effects for the stability of an ongoing Universal Credit claim, and it is therefore important that support and adaptations are easily available when needed.

The Government have made some welcome changes to support people financially during the wait for first payment to Universal Credit - such as introducing additional housing payments for those moving to Universal Credit from legacy benefits, and the wider availability of Advance payments. It is now clear that more action is needed to tackle the challenges some claimants face adapting to Universal Credit and with the long-term stability of their claim.

#### Financial Stability

Universal Credit is designed to be paid monthly directly to one member of a household. It is paid in arrears to reflect any income earned over the previous month. In the previous system of Tax Credits, those who were working could experience large overpayments as the system was paid in advance based on predictions for this year. Whilst this meant individuals had a predictable level of income from benefits, it could often create a yearly budgeting challenge of repaying overpayments.

For some - particularly those moving from legacy benefits - the change in how Universal Credit is paid and calculated may create different budgeting issues as a result of changes to the frequency of payments. Additional challenges exist for claimants who have fluctuating wage payments or are having debt repayments deducted directly from their benefits. In Universal Credit, housing costs are paid to the claimant by default, who then pays the landlord themselves, meaning those who previously had their housing benefit paid direct to their landlord have to change the way they budget. These groups may require additional support and adaptations to their claim whilst they adapt to Universal Credit.

These budgeting challenges have been recognised by DWP who have put additional support in place - through Universal Support Personal Budgeting support and Alternative Payment Arrangements. Local Authorities are given flexibility in how to deliver Personal Budgeting support, directly providing these services themselves or funding others to deliver them. Yet, only 1 in 5 (21%) of the clients we spoke to know about this budgeting support - with almost half (47%) saying they would have used this service if they had known it was available.<sup>45</sup>

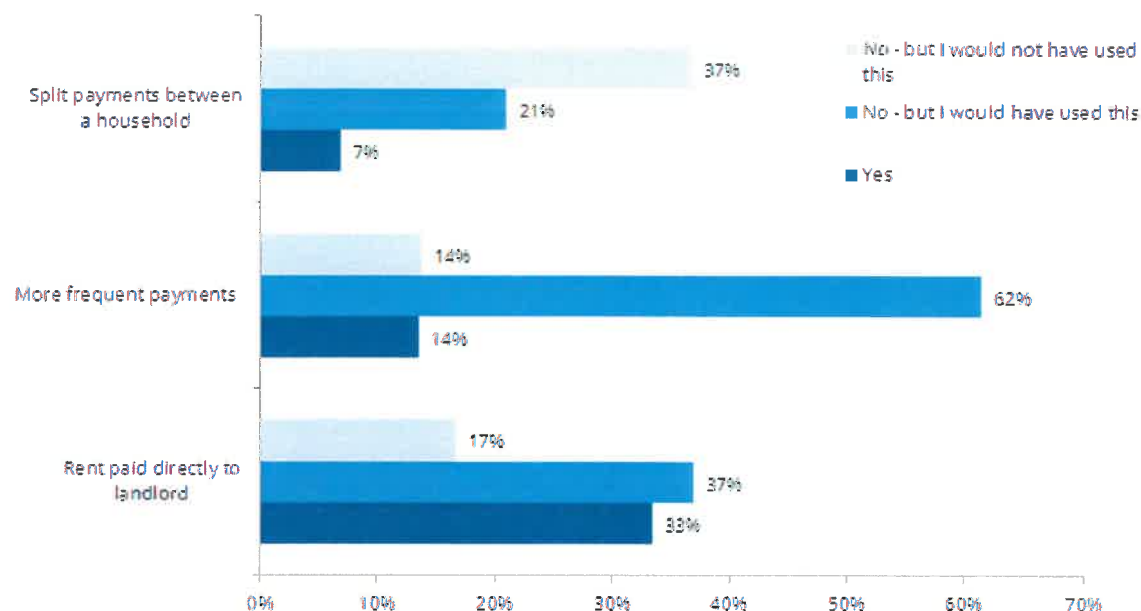
The scope of this support can also be limited. Our survey of Universal Credit claimants we help found half (48%) would have used support with debts if they knew it was available. Our local Citizens Advice also tell us that debt advice is the largest area of unmet need in terms of funded support services for Universal Credit claimants, and that many of those receiving support with budgeting need help managing and getting debt under control to make budgeting support effective.<sup>46</sup> Debt advice is not currently available through Universal Support and although some debt advice exists outside of Universal Support, local Citizens Advice told us that often these services are already under pressure and struggle to meet the needs of existing clients. **The scope of Universal Support should therefore be extended to include funding for free impartial debt advice.**

"I have no idea what payment I will get until a few days before - it makes it very difficult to budget as I have 2 children. I've become a real mess because of UC - but am trying hard to sort it out and get on top of debt, but it is very stressful" *Georgia, Citizens Advice survey respondent*

For those who need adaptations to their claim in addition to support, DWP have made available Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs). These allow for housing costs to be paid direct to a landlord, for Universal Credit payments to be paid twice monthly, or for payments to be split between members of a household. APAs have the potential to offer vital support for many claimants by allowing them to achieve greater financial stability on the new benefit whilst adapting to a new system. However, our evidence suggests that many people are not aware of the support available. Just 14% were aware of the option of having payments paid twice monthly, with almost two thirds (62%) saying they would have used this if they had known about the option (Figure 5).

<sup>45</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=587

<sup>46</sup> Citizens Advice survey of local Citizens Advice Chief Officers, December 2017 - January 2018

**Figure 5: Awareness and demand for Alternative Payment Arrangements**

Source: Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=522

Over the last year, DWP have taken a proactive approach to raise awareness of the availability of Advance Payments and direct payments to landlords. As a result, we have seen awareness of both increasing. Advance Payments in particular are now routinely discussed by work coaches at the beginning of a claim. Our evidence suggests this has been effective, with two thirds of those we surveyed now knowing about their availability. **Lessons from this approach should be applied to other claim adjustments like Alternative Payment Arrangements, by proactively letting people know about their availability.** This will be particularly important when supporting people through the managed migration from legacy benefits due to start next year.

#### Citizens Advice client case study - more frequent payments

Alex found budgeting a monthly payment difficult, so she applied for an Alternative Payment Arrangement which would mean she was paid every fortnight. This took two months to process, but when the fortnightly payments did arrive Alex found it much easier to manage.

However, when Alex started working the Alternative Payment Arrangement was automatically removed and the payments became monthly again. Because she hadn't been expecting this, Alex hadn't budgeted for it - she had to wait two weeks longer for payment than she expected, and this put her in severe financial hardship.



Alex's utility company wasn't prepared to be lenient because she was already using emergency credit on on her pre-payment meters. This meant her electricity and gas was cut off and she couldn't wash. Alex told us this made her feel ashamed when she went to work, and because she had OCD being unable to wash also caused her severe distress.

## Work requirements and conditionality

As part of their ongoing claim, most Universal Credit claimants will be subject to a set of conditions they are required to meet. These requirements - known as conditionality - will often be focused on activities to look for or prepare for work, or, for those on a low income, what could be done to increase their income from work. Currently, these initial conditions are agreed with a work coach in the first month of a claim and set out in a commitment. A failure to agree this commitment can result in late or non-payment of Universal Credit.

Our evidence suggests that there are challenges with people understanding their commitment, with 2 in 5 of the people we help telling us they don't understand how much work/work search is expected from them<sup>47</sup> and almost half (45%) saying they do not know how to ask for changes in their commitment.<sup>48</sup> Commitments have been designed to be a live document which take into account people's circumstances, with adjustments and changes throughout a claim. Getting this right is vital to ensure people have the support they need to look for and increase their work and to avoid financial sanctions.

More than half of those who are coming to Universal Credit from legacy benefits during managed migration will be new to conditionality.<sup>49</sup> Many of this group will also be adapting to new payment systems and ways of managing their claim.

**DWP should look at what actions are required during the assessment period for first payment, to avoid the unnecessary delay of closed claims and allow time for greater understanding of a claim.** This could include agreeing the more detailed conditionality later into the claim, particularly for people new to conditionality.

## Support

At the beginning of a Universal Credit claim people are required to take a number of actions - from claiming the benefit itself, evidencing costs, and understanding how the benefit works, to agreeing and starting their work

<sup>47</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=569

<sup>48</sup> Citizens Advice, Universal Credit full service monitoring survey, Nov 2017 - May 2018, N=588

<sup>49</sup> SSAC, [The Universal Credit \(Transitional Provisions\) \(Managed Migration\) Amendment Regulations 2018: explanatory memorandum](#), June 2018

requirements where appropriate. Successfully completing these actions can be crucial to ensuring a person's long term stability on Universal Credit, both to receive payment on time and to develop the skills needed to manage their claim and budget effectively.

Work coaches, service centre staff and Universal Support all play a key role in this. By the end of Universal Credit rollout, work coach caseloads are expected to increase significantly - from 85 claimants per work coach to 373 in 2024. This is more than 4 times higher than their current caseload. For service centre staff, caseloads will increase from 154 claimants per case manager to 919. Evidence from DWP research last year suggests that staff are already struggling to support claimants as they lack the time and ability to identify support needs.<sup>50</sup> **To ensure support needs are met and workcoach capacity is sustainable, adequate support will need to be available outside of Jobcentres through Universal Support.** It will also be important to monitor the staffing levels in Jobcentres and service centres to ensure they are able to meet demand.

One of the main challenges with existing Universal Support is that it is trying to achieve two key things. Universal Support was originally focused on supporting people with developing skills, particularly digital and budgeting skills. Both these skills are integral for adapting to Universal Credit and for the ongoing management of their claim - as well as being skills which will support employment. However, at this stage of rollout it is now clear that a significant group of claimants need more help making a Universal Credit claim and getting on the benefit. DWP evidence suggests that more than 2 in 5 (43%) need more help setting up their claim.<sup>51</sup> Support provision in some areas has increasingly focused on this, for example helping people set up their online claim or to open bank accounts - either through additional short term funding or at the expense of longer term skills support.

The requirements for these two types of support - skills and initial claim support - are very different. Support with skills can take place through weekly sessions, whereas help to make a claim needs to happen quickly and with greater coverage to avoid delays to claims and entitlement. The needs of claimants who struggle to make a claim often go beyond the scope of existing online and budgeting support - for example completing evidence requirements or understanding their commitments. To ensure appropriate support is available, **DWP now need a clear and distinct offer on making and completing a claim, as well as on the more transformative and empowering skills support.**

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<sup>50</sup> National Audit Office, Rolling out Universal Credit, June 2018

<sup>51</sup> DWP, Fulls service claimant survey, June 2018



Currently only Jobcentres, local authorities and support providers are able to refer into Universal Support. While this may be suitable for support focused on developing skills when gaps are identified by a work coach, help to claim needs to happen before you have a claim, when you may not yet have a work coach or have been to the Jobcentre. We spoke to local Citizens Advice about how these referral systems were working, and found 30% feel systems are not effective at ensuring claimants are referred to the right services.<sup>52</sup> One way to improve referral processes would be to **introduce a no wrong door policy which means whenever a person reports challenges with Universal Credit they are able to be referred to the support they need.**

## Recommendations

1. **Ensure adequate support is available to everyone who needs it** and that it gives people the help they need to adapt to a new system and work coach capacity is sustainable. This should include:
  - having clear and distinct offers to help people make a claim and to empower people with the skills they need to manage Universal Credit
  - strengthening referral routes by introducing a no wrong door policy
  - extending Universal Support to include funding for free impartial debt advice
  - proactively telling all claimants about Alternative Payment Arrangements and support
2. **Make the process of claiming Universal Credit less complicated** so that when people's claims are set up they are sustainable. This should include:
  - reviewing what actions are required to get a first Universal Credit payment and which actions could be delayed to later in the claim

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<sup>52</sup> Citizens Advice survey of local Citizens Advice Chief Officers, December 2017 - January 2018

## Conclusion

Universal Credit offers people vital income to pay their essential living costs. A difficult start to the new benefit and a long wait for payment risks undermining its key aims and putting people's finances at risk. Welcome changes have been made to reduce the designed wait for first payment. However, our research shows that delivery challenges remain for a significant number of people, and adequate support is not available - including for the 17% who are not receiving their full payment on time.

These delays add to the time people are waiting for the income the government has calculated they need to make ends meet. Our evidence shows for the people we help, those not receiving their payment on time are 23% more likely to get into debt and fall behind on essential bills. In addition, problem debt can have a detrimental impact on people's behaviours and ability to make life decisions, and could therefore risk the aim of Universal Credit to support people into and through work.

The rollout approach and test and learn development of Universal Credit means welcome changes to the design of the benefit have been made. Features to improve the delivery of Universal Credit and support people with their claim are currently in development and being implemented. But, with the acceleration of Universal Credit rollout, and without these or the provision of adequate support in place, too many people are struggling with their start to Universal Credit.

**The government needs to urgently add further features to the system and ensure adequate support is in place** so that people are paid on time and their finances are not put at risk. It is vital this happens before steps are taken to migrate existing benefit claimants and ahead of further roll out, when hundreds of thousands more people will be affected. Specifically, the government should use the break in rollout during August to:

**1. Ensure adequate support is available to everyone who needs it by:**

- publishing a minimum standard of Universal Support with sufficient availability and coverage
- having clear and distinct offers to help people make a claim and to empower people with the skills they need to manage Universal Credit
- extending the scope of Universal Support to include help to make a claim beyond the digital claim, an evidence check service, and funding for free impartial debt advice

- strengthening referral routes by introducing a no wrong door policy
- proactively telling all Universal Credit claimants about Alternative Payment Arrangements and support available.

**2. Speed up and complete features which make it easier to provide evidence as part of a claim including:**

- completing development of and fully rolling out the Landlord Portal
- extending the concept of the landlord portal by introducing a centralised system to help claimants evidence their costs, including for childcare and housing costs in the Private Rented Sector
- ensuring it is possible to provide evidence online easily for people at the beginning of their claim, including the extension of 'digital fit notes' to Universal Credit
- publishing an evaluation of 'prove your identity' and, if the evidence suggests it is successful, making sure this is new feature is available

**3. Make claiming Universal Credit less complicated by:**

- introducing an automatic interim payment for those who are not paid on time
- reviewing what actions are required to get a first Universal Credit payment
- starting the Universal Credit wait for first payment at the point someone begins the claim process
- reviewing the timescales for closing claims and communicate these clearly with claimants by introducing further reminders, across channels, to let people know when they have not completed a requirement of their claim.
- completing development and implementation of announced fixes, such as the online system to book Jobcentre appointments

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## **Universal Credit Survey**

### **Universal Credit Full Service in York: July 2017 to July 2018**



The Universal Credit Focus Project survey has come to an end and we are now able to collate our data to highlight the emerging trends and common experiences of Universal Credit (UC) claimants in the York area.

Over the full year we received 69 responses (40 between July 2017 – January 2018 and 29 between February 2018 – July 2018). Not all the respondents answered every question; the percentages given relate to the number of respondents who answered each particular question.

#### **Summary: February 2018 – July 2018**

The three main issues that emerged in our July 2017 to January 2018 interim report were difficulties due to the initial wait for the first payment of UC, administrative barriers to making and maintaining UC claims and problems identifying eligibility for Council Tax Support. These concerns continued to be reflected in the responses received between February and July 2018.

#### **Initial delay in waiting for payment**

In early 2018, a series of measures were introduced by the government to try and alleviate the hardship that the initial wait for payment was causing. In January 2018, the amount of the advance payment available to claimants increased to 100% of their likely award and the repayment period was extended from 6 to 12 months. In February 2018, the 7-day waiting period was removed. As these dates correspond with the second half of our survey period, the responses from February 2018 - July 2018 may indicate whether the government's action has had any meaningful impact on claimant's experiences.

Between February 2018 – July 2018, 96% of respondents found it fairly difficult (32%) or very difficult (64%) to pay for their essential living costs while they waited for their first payment of UC. This is an increase from our interim report, where 85% of respondents reported finding it fairly or very difficult to manage. Of those that found it fairly or very difficult, paying for food (80%), rent/mortgage (70%) and gas and electricity (64%) were the payments that respondents struggled with the most. 48% of respondents used a foodbank while they waited for their first payment, 64% of respondents borrowed money and 44% had help from family and friends. Comparing these figures to our interim period, the percentage of respondents borrowing money and getting help from family and friends remained similar (1% higher for both during the interim period) but the percentage of respondents accessing a foodbank was lower at 35%.

## Advance payments

In our interim report in March, we stated that in the first 6 months of the UC focus project, 41% of respondents had claimed a UC advance, and out of the 11 people who were repaying the advance, 9 of them were finding it very difficult to meet essential living costs. During the period February 2018 - July 2018, 84% of respondents claimed a UC Advance, with nearly 60% of respondents stating that they found it fairly (18%) or very (41%) difficult to manage ongoing expenses while the advance was being repaid. This is despite the extension of the repayment period that was introduced in January 2018.

## Administrative problems

A major concern that was apparent in our interim report were the problems that claimants had with finalising their claims and providing appropriate and sufficient evidence. Between February 2018 – July 2018:

- 69% of respondents found it fairly difficult (42%) or very difficult (27%) to provide the information required, compared to 44% in our interim survey
- Rental agreements (67%) and proof of identity (78%) were the most difficult evidence to obtain
- 68% of respondents reported having to provide the same proof more than once, compared to 52% in our interim survey

It would appear from this data that administrative problems are an ongoing problem that is yet to be resolved in any meaningful way.

## Council Tax

For the period February 2018 – July 2018, nearly 40% of respondents were already claiming Council Tax Support at the time of their UC claim, or made a claim at the same time. Nearly 22% of respondents were not aware that they might be eligible for Council Tax Support (21% in the interim report). The link between Universal Credit and Council Tax Support needs to be further strengthened to ensure that those who are entitled do not miss out.

## Further findings

Alongside the issues that emerged in our interim report, the second half of our survey also highlighted the impact that making a claim had on claimants' mental and physical wellbeing.

One respondent commented that Universal Credit made him feel *"like a product with a barcode"* and another stated that she had lost half a stone on what she now calls the *"Universal Credit Diet"*. Several respondents reported that the claims process had triggered mental health problems or made existing conditions worse. One respondent stated that the process had made him feel suicidal. When asked to provide feedback to the DWP about Universal Credit, 100% of the claimants who responded made negative comments.



## More detail, February to July 2018 ...

### Who responded

- 29 responses – 85% were already receiving Universal Credit and 15% had claimed and were awaiting payment
- 89% (24) paid rent
- 41% (11) had children, and 11% of them had childcare costs (i.e. in work)
- 37% (10) had a disability or health problem.

### The claims process

The respondents all reported that they made claims online. Of these claims:

- 38% of people used their own computer
- 13% of people borrowed a friend or family computer
- 50% reported having to use a public computer (e.g. in the Jobcentre)
- 80% needed help to make the claim (although we do recognise that respondents directed to the survey are more likely to have been supported)
  - Help was received from varying sources – Jobcentre Plus, the council, library services and Citizens Advice. This is a significant increase from the percentage of people (50%) needing help during the period July – January

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide more information about making their claim, with 14 people (48%) responding.

Two people responded that the Jobcentre had been very helpful in assisting them to make their claims.

One respondent commented that the whole process was “*lengthy and frightening*”, and another stated that having to ask family for help while he waited for his first payment made him feel “*very ashamed*”.

### Getting paid

- 18 respondents were already receiving Universal Credit
- The average waiting time was 6.2 weeks (although this may also include receipt of advance payments)
- 6 respondents had to wait 7 weeks or more

### Claimant Commitment

Of the 23 people who responded to this question, 87% said that they understood their claimant commitment. Respondents were asked to give further feedback about their commitment and of the 12 people who responded to the question, 3 people made very negative comments:

*“I really feel like [the claimant commitment] gives civil servants more weapons against me under the name of commitment”*

*“It’s discrimination it does not take into account real life like child care travel etc”*

*“The rules, or the government like to call it a “commitment”, is a constant reminder of the trap the system sets for you. To be honest I think looking for paid employment for 30+ hours is a big ask. I realise as do most people that it’s important to get into employment quickly*

*and most of us want that. But the system is unforgiving, it has a "one shoe fits all" policy and that's not helpful when all individuals have different needs. It bulldozers over vulnerable and desperately worried people."*

### **Further comments**

18 respondents chose to make further comments about Universal Credit in general. The main themes were

- Issues with accessing the internet
- Hardship while waiting for the first payment
- Accruing debts

### **Feedback to the DWP**

19 respondents chose to provide comment, with all 19 making negative comments. The specific feedback given was very similar to the feedback given between July 2017 – January 2018 and included:

- The impact of UC on the mental health of claimants
- Ongoing problems with private landlords
- Recognising the difficulties faced by those with no internet access
- Claimants feeling that they do not have enough money to survive.



## **July 2017 – July 2018: Full Year Findings**

The survey covered the first year of the Universal Credit full service roll-out in York. Over the full year that the Universal Credit Focus survey has been taking place, there have been many amendments to the UC regulations, as well as developing case law, updated guidance and improved understanding. It is difficult to compare the figures across the year due to this as respondents in July 2017 were faced with a different system to those in July 2018. Despite this, the results highlight two main areas of UC implementation which continue to raise concern.

### **Making and maintaining a claim: one size fits all**

Universal Credit full service is digital by default. In practice, what this means is that people claim online, manage their claim online and communicate with the DWP online on a long-term basis. Although the DWP accept that this approach will not work for everyone, they believe that only a minority of people will not be able to use the system in this way. Our survey indicates that it is not the minority but the majority that are not using the system as intended. Problems making and managing a digital claim have also been highlighted in specific cases supported by our Universal Credit Focus project.

Across the year, 56% of respondents made their claim using a family, friends or public computer. If a claimant does not have internet access at home, as well as causing issues with the initial claim, it also indicates that the ongoing management of their claim and communication with the DWP will be problematic. This problem is further highlighted by the fact that 63% of respondents needed help to make their claim. If those 63% also need help with the ongoing administration of their claims there will be unsustainable pressure on advice agencies and statutory services. Claimants frequently receive text messages or emails



telling them to log on to their journal. It is unsustainable for people without internet access at home to be able to visit family/friends or public computers every time this happens. In some cases, the message on the journal may be general and insignificant, in other cases missing an 'action' could mean the risk of a sanction. There is also the consideration of the cost of transport to get to a location where a computer is accessible.

DWP statistics and the recent Citizens Advice report, 'Making a Universal Credit claim'<sup>1</sup> confirm that these figures are not a localised problem but a national trend; the DWP reported that 44% of claimants made multiple attempts to make a UC claim<sup>2</sup>, and Citizens Advice highlighted that 28% of claimants took longer than a week to successfully make a claim.

To address this problem, the government has given funding to local authorities to provide a Universal Support package. The actual support offered is decided and delivered locally, either by the local authority themselves or a partner organisation. As part of their research, Citizen's Advice contacted the national network of bureaux and concluded that 'limited availability or coverage of this support can add additional delays as people wait for help with their claim and that the support provided 'can be patchy and can lack a coherent local strategy'. Moving forward, it is imperative that the Universal Support package in each local area is publicised, clear and meets the needs of claimants, providing not just access to computers, but help making and maintaining claims.

The one size fits all approach is also apparent in the issues that have been highlighted regarding evidence and proof. It appears that non-standard documents lead to delays with processing and can mean that claimants wait even longer for their claims to be finalised.

Proof of housing costs is a particular problem area; across the year 52% of respondents who found it fairly or very difficult to provide all the evidence required of them found it particularly difficult to provide proof of rent. This is confirmed by the Citizen's Advice report<sup>1</sup>, where 40% of their respondents found providing evidence of housing costs difficult. The government has responded in part to this issue by introducing a Landlord Portal, where registered social landlords can verify and confirm residents rent figures easily, however the portal has not yet been rolled out fully across the county and will still only provide help to the social rented sector once complete. Alongside problems with non-formalised rental agreements (such as a letter from a landlord not being accepted as proof), we have also seen several cases on our advice line of the DWP refusing to pay full rent figures to claimants who have an 'untidy tenancy' (e.g. where an ex-partner has left but is still named on the agreement). With managed migration in mind (see below), it is vital that the DWP resolve these issues to prevent real financial hardship and considerable distress to those affected.

### **Transition to Universal Credit**

We are currently in a period where claimants in full service areas are migrating to Universal Credit either because they are choosing to claim or because they have a relevant change in circumstances. The nationally managed process by which existing legacy benefit claimants will be moved across to Universal Credit is due to begin in early 2019. Throughout the rollout of Universal Credit, the government have been committed to a test and learn approach; it is

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/welfare%20publications/Making%20a%20Universal%20Credit%20claim%202018%20-%20final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/714842/universal-credit-full-service-claimant-survey.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714842/universal-credit-full-service-claimant-survey.pdf)

essential that they listen to claimants' voices regarding the transition process and make changes before managed migration begins.

Across the whole year, 89% of respondents reported that it was fairly difficult (22%) or very difficult (67%) to pay essential living costs while waiting for their first UC payment. Of those people, 86% struggled to pay for food, 70% found it hard to keep up with rental or mortgage payments and 64% struggled to pay for gas and electricity. When asked how they covered costs during this period, 63% reported borrowing money, 43% said that they turned to family and friends and 37% accessed a foodbank for support. These figures are mirrored in the Citizens Advice report which found that 31% of respondents who had been paid UC on time had accessed a foodbank, and 44% of those who received their first payment late used a foodbank.

The government's answer to this issue has been centred on Universal Credit Advance payments, but it does not appear that these provisions go far enough. 52% of our respondents received an advance payment, with 63% stating that it was very or fairly difficult to cover essential costs while the advance was being repaid (10% of those who had received an advance had not started repayments). 24% of our respondents were not made aware that they could apply for a UC advance.

In a recent guardian article<sup>3</sup>, Abby Jitendra, policy and research manager at the Trussell Trust, Britain's largest food bank provider, said "repaying an advance payment, for example, can be an unaffordable expense when taken from a payment that wasn't enough to start with, pushing people further into debt at the time when support is most needed".



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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/aug/11/third-of-universal-credit-claimants-face-payment-deductions>



## Scrutiny Review of Financial Inclusion and Universal Credit – WBU response

City of York Council clearly share the concerns of many in their consideration of the impact of UC on York residents. I have prepared a response based on the issues raised in the remit.

### Universal Credit impact

Universal Credit has impacted on claimant's income in many ways, in general the main issues relate to:

- Lower amounts for disabled people, including disabled workers and families with a disabled child.
- Deductions to third parties (eg for utility debts or rent arrears) are higher.
- Payment patterns for earnings can skew UC payments, making it difficult to budget and, in some cases, reducing overall entitlement.
- The Minimum Income Floor for self employed people means that some are treated as having income they 'should' have rather than actually have.

Along with the continued freeze to the benefit rates and alterations to work allowances (not available unless a claimant has children or limited capability for work) many York residents will find the UC system does not adequately cover living costs. National research has repeatedly highlighted increases in the number of people in poverty.

Issues about the wait for payments were addressed by the government but our UC survey found that many found that accessing Advance Payments, and coping with repayments, were still causing problems.

A main concern about the UC system is the support for the most vulnerable. UC Support through CYC appears effective but the government is only financing help with initial claims rather than ongoing maintenance of claims (and I expect this is similar when this support transfers to Citizens Advice in April 2019). Claimants are expected to check their online journals daily despite many not having access to computers or other gadgets. Many advisers are worried that the most vulnerable will not be able to maintain their claims due to complexity, frustration at continued admin errors by the DWP and difficulties understanding Claimant Commitment responsibilities. It is a concern that these vulnerable claimants will drop out of the UC system and the impact this will have on their health and housing status.

Problems arise when UC are making payments direct to landlords as they are paid four-weekly rather than aligning to the claimant's monthly payment pattern. Payment in arrears and delays are leading to landlords taking court action threatening eviction. We are aware of one housing association requesting that claimants do not request direct payments due to delays; this puts further budgeting pressure on UC claimants. Direct payment to landlords is supposed to support the most vulnerable but appears to be creating extra stress and problems.

Queries to our advice line and feedback from the DWP show that claimants who are unable to work due to health conditions are not being referred for assessment and are expected to meet high job-seeking demands. Sanctions are higher amongst UC claimants with a suggestion that Work Coaches are not using their discretion to understand why some claimants are not able to meet their responsibilities (eg. not assessed or their health problems are not severe enough to class as 'limited capability for work').

We are increasingly seeing queries from EU nationals, both on UC and legacy benefits. This situation is clearly likely to become more complex.

It is important to note that some people are better off on UC; it is essential that these people are identified and reassured about transitioning across given the negative aspects of UC that are highlighted in the media.

### **Council Tax Discretionary Support**

Demand on advice and support providers has increased due to the introduction of UC. This could suggest that they deal with the most pertinent issues facing a client and have less opportunity to advise on other issues. This may impact on take up of the Council Tax Discretionary Scheme. Further, our UC survey suggested that UC claimants were still not being made aware of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme itself by the DWP therefore access to information about discretionary support may be limited if the claimant is not being directed to the council.

### **Discretionary Housing Payments**

The above overview provides an indicator of drivers affecting take-up. The benefit freeze and an increase in sanctioning also applies to people on 'legacy' benefits (ie benefits people could claim before Universal Credit such as Income Support, tax credits).

## FISG initiatives

The variety of initiatives provides a broad range of support, particularly for claimants who may struggle maintaining a UC claim. Meetings between recipients of the funding and Advice York meetings support partnership understanding. Advice York provides both a forum for partnership working and communication with CYC; it also helps ensure that DWP communication with the council is shared.

There is a lot of pressure on advisers and on front line staff/volunteers who are finding themselves in an advice-giving role as a peripheral part of the job.

The Welfare Benefits Unit provides specialist benefits advice to anyone who works with claimants. We receive FISG funding for our Universal Credit Focus project. This allows us to provide more indepth support (ie follow up and case work) and we provide briefings on UC to organisations. We have received positive feedback about the service and how this enables greater support for clients.

Overall contacts to our advice line (phone and email) increased by 50% last year. For both our main service and the UCF project we have found a number of factors are increasing demand:

- Complexity of the advice system. Consideration needs to be given to both legacy benefits and UC when claimants have a change of circumstances.
- UC regulations are open to interpretation and cases have not progressed through the Tribunal/court system to clarify understanding. DWP administration processes also cause concern with our follow-ups repeatedly identifying mis-information provided by the DWP or errors on processing of claims (nationally recognized eg. missing elements in the calculation).
- Traditional advice services such as Citizens Advice do not usually follow up with clients and more queries are one-touch compared to other community services. This is very effective for a majority of clients who are able to take queries forward on the advice given. Other services provide ongoing support with benefit issues and tend to work with more vulnerable clients on a number of issues (eg. Peasholme Charity) or provide a specific service in which benefit issues may be in the background and can at time act as a barrier to accessing support (eg. working with Blueberry Academy but concerned about the impact on finances if moving into work). These services often have very experienced advisers who use our service for more complex queries only. However, with cuts across benefit services nationally there are fewer benefit specialists working directly with clients, particularly on an ongoing basis. As a result we are having to provide a more detailed response – providing basic information before building up directive step by step advice. This can lead to repeated queries for a client that a more experienced adviser would have been able to take forward. This has increased demand and there are times when a worker/volunteer is struggling to grasp the

advice we're offering. The UCF project offers us the opportunity to step in and become more involved in the advice we offer (eg providing a written submission or detailed written advice). This could be taken further by offering direct client contact more frequently but we would not currently be able to offer this regularly due to likely high demand.

- Incorrect decisions need to be challenged and there are few services offering tribunal representation. This is an area of concern and we have limited funding currently to help with representation.

In 2017/18 WBU worked with: Age UK, Blueberry Academy, Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust, Changing Lives, Citizens Advice, Community Links, Family Mediation Service, IDAS, Lidgett Methodist Church, Lifeline, Mainstay, Masonic Charitable Foundation, NY Aids Action, OCAY, P3, Peasholme Charity, Refugee Action York, Royal British Legion, SASH, York Advocacy. See also our 2018/19 6-month monitoring report.

The FISG initiatives appear to provide effective support, through our project and others. Research into advice work demonstrates the positive impact. FISG support could be strengthened by increasing the length of awards offered. Annual funding can be problematic as any project involves planning, implementation and then scaling back if funding may end. This causes difficulties if expectations are raised and recruitment may be an issue for limited periods. At the WBU, Trustees agreed to offer a permanent position and rely on reserves if funding finished but this is not possible for many organisations. The WBU is working to a deficit budget; we match fund our CYC SLA contract funding through our sales of publications and training.

Supporting advice through a variety of organisations can help people get the support needed when deciding life changes including moving into work or coping with uncertain employment. The FISG initiatives can help mitigate against the effects of the current benefit system. Coping with the effects of the current benefit system remains a challenge within the YFAS, CTR and DHP schemes, particularly as there is more likelihood that they are needed to address long-term situations caused by the levels of financial support and structure of the benefit system; arguably, previously, support was needed to help in exceptional circumstances and easier to define.

Continued joint working between CYC and voluntary organisations can effectively help to challenge the negative impact of Universal Credit implementation. It also strengthens the knowledge gained about claimants' experiences which can help when communication with the DWP and other partners.

Liz Wilson  
Chief Executive, Welfare Benefits Unit  
20 December 2018



Report to: City of York Council Scrutiny Committee

**Review: financial inclusion in the city**

**Objective: to understand the increasing levels of food poverty in York.**

February 2019

Co-Authors: Maddy Power and Rosie Baker



## Q1 BACKGROUND TO FOOD POVERTY IN YORK & CURRENT STATISTICS

### **SUMMARY**

- **Around 1/5 (22%) of respondents to the YFPA Primary school parents' survey in York, have reported experiencing food poverty in the past 12 months.**
- **Both Food Bank use and informal community food aid usage are rising.**
- **There are over 30 organisations providing variations of food aid across York.**

### 1.1 The background to food poverty in York

York may appear to be a rich city with a booming tourist industry, but poverty is real – and growing - in the 9<sup>th</sup> most unequal city in the UK, in a climate where food prices continue to rise and incomes remain stagnant.

Over 17 times the numbers of people who access formal food banks, are estimated to be using some kind of independent / community food aid and one of the key indicators of food poverty is low intake of fresh fruit and vegetables (Independent Food Aid Network)

The York Food Poverty Alliance, a cross-sector group under the network of Good Food York, includes community organisations and cafes, the University of York, JRHT, York City Football Club Foundation and the City of York Council. It has been meeting quarterly since April 2018 and is determined to tackle the root causes of growing food poverty in York.

### 1.2 Mapping Community Food Aid

One of the preliminary pieces of work the YFPA completed was to map the existing community food aid on offer on York. This is also known as 'independent food aid' and typically projects require no formal referral processes. Some serve specific geographical communities only and others target particular demographics of people e.g. young children and families or people with mental health problems.

Since our database of organisations was drawn up in April 2018, contact has been made intermittently with managers of the organisations to review and probe further. Questions were asked about approximate usage of the service and to establish some further background e.g. "Did your organisation start-up with tackling food poverty as one of the main drivers?"

This will help us understand and report on some of the factors surrounding the emergence of food poverty as an issue in York.

### Results

There are approximately 32 cross-sector organisations delivering a range of different versions of community food aid provision from traditional soup kitchens and the Edible York beds to the statutory food & advice projects and the ever-popular rise in volunteer/peer led Community Café model. Of these,

- 13 said food poverty was part of their rationale for setting up;



- 17 are open regularly (more than once a week);
- 12 are open one day per week;
- 25 have an open-access policy
- 7 serve targeted populations only (gender, age, area/based, disability, income.)

It is extremely difficult to measure unique users of food-aid by those who are experiencing food poverty at projects which are open on a continuous, all-inclusive basis or where food is embedded alongside other services.

The data we have available is from the weekly community cafes/informal food banks such as Red Tower, Planet Food, YourCafe / Luke's Larder, Bell Farm Community Assoc, Chapelfields and Foxwood Community Hubs and Lidgett Grove (n=7).

The numbers of weekly customers to each of these projects range from 35-70 meaning around 360 people each week use open-access café provisions across the city. This does not capture the full level of usage when you consider Chill in the Community CIC's informal food bank in Acomb, is also open 7 days per week.

#### Further work

This review of organisations is yet to be completed but thereafter our database will be adapted into a pocket-sized paper map to be distributed to people city-wide.

## 1.3 Available local statistics

**1.3.1 York Food Bank**, between April 1 – November 30, 2018, York Food Bank served 2623 people, 1008 were children. The previous full 12 months, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, 4,262 people received food assistance from York Foodbank; of this, 1,647 were children.

**1.3.2 York Financial Assistance Scheme** - Food vouchers: contact Susan Wood, CYC

**1.3.3 Food and Affordability Survey in Primary schools, York Food Poverty Alliance**, Oct 2018-Feb 2019:

- The percentage of respondents that had ever used a food bank is 10.9%
- Over 1/5 (22%) said that “within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more”
- 17% that said either fresh fruit or vegetables were the most unaffordable and over 1/5 (24%) reported that they only eat fresh fruit or vegetables either less than once a week or only 1-3 times a week.
- More than ¾ (76%) consider the most unaffordable foods to be protein products, either meat or fish.
- 21% Have a total household income in the lower two income groups: either £1769/mth or less or £409/mth or less.

#### Q2: How local measurement might be improved - Recommendations

## SUMMARY

- The hidden levels of food aid usage are difficult to measure.
- Nationally, organisations such as the Food Foundation and End Hunger UK are lobbying the government to measure food insecurity.
- Locally, the York Human Rights City Network is working with YFPA to advocate the need for measurement to be improved.

### 2.1 Quantitative measurement

All food aid providers would benefit from numerical measurement. York Food Bank (Trussell Trust) has an easier task of counting referrals hence they get included in headline reports and statistics gathering.

The two main barriers YFPA partners have identified that hinder the useful collection of numerical data from less formal provisions are: -

- a) Difficulty in finding a mechanism to count people / unique users of food aid at projects which provide a 'hub' of services
- b) Difficulty in identifying users who have/are or are at risk of experiencing food poverty first-hand at projects which are open-to-all and actively encourage universal access.

**Recommendation 1:** Questions to measure food insecurity and food bank use to be input into an appropriate statutory survey.

### 2.2. SOCIAL IMPACT

Chill in the Community CIC and Red Tower CIC have outlined many options in their reports, which demonstrate a social impact model of evaluation and useful tools for monitoring service usage. (See Appendix 1.)

**Recommendation 2:** A database to be created to distribute to all community food providers to be able to input their data under categorical headings, quarterly perhaps.

**Recommendation 2.1:** For an additional layer of measurement to capture the targeted population of those experiencing food poverty, an assessment of demographics needs to be developed such as that used by Fareshare (See Appendix 2.)

### 2.3 SOCIAL VALUE

Social Value Engine model: 4Community Growth are using this and have assessed Bell Farm Community Association's services (and their own projects to the best of our knowledge).

**Recommendation 3:** Roll-out Social Value Engine assessment to cross-sector projects city-wide.

### 2.4 QUALITATIVE MEASUREMENT

**Recommendation 4:** This method would be improved by identifying a baseline for qualitative data.

Many projects already collect qualitative data by way of professional observations, collection of personal narratives and quotations from service users / 'Experts by Experience' and ethnographic-style observations. The End Hunger UK campaign encourages the collection of personal narratives around food poverty and produced an exhibition which toured various places last Summer. Work was attempted to include York in the tour, but this didn't come to fruition.

YFPA is currently asking its members to contribute more to this data source by nominating a person to be interviewed e.g. a staff member/volunteer to get a narrative of anecdotal evidence/ observations /their perspectives as service providers.

Secondly, we are applying for funding to run a project which involves, from the outset, Experts by Experience in the strategy-formation and appropriate delivery of community food interventions.

**Recommendation 5:** Focus on the collection of evidence from 'Experts by Experience' in a range of different media, as suggested by, and in co-production with them.

### Q3: The current role of crisis supports in York in mitigating food poverty

#### **SUMMARY**

- **Formal, referral-based crisis support is inadequate and inconsistent.**
- **A shift towards more inclusive, universal models of food aid within wider support services and inline with good practice on delivering a sustainable food economy, would be welcomed.**

#### **3.1 York Food Bank**

This is run by Trussell Trust, a national Christian organisation. The local branch is currently recruiting for a new manager and management has lacked continuity for the past 6 months. They operate through their four distribution centres across the city in Acomb, Tang Hall, Clifton, Huntington on a referral-only basis.

Whilst this service helps some people it does not help everyone. The York Food Poverty Alliance would advocate moving away from this model of food aid. It has been critiqued for its limitations on healthy, fresh foods and the fact many people it could help choose not to access a referral-only service which is stigmatised.

#### **3.2 York Financial Assistance Service**

This council service plays a similar but different role to the Food Bank and people can apply to one or both at the same time. You can be awarded a supermarket voucher but there is no restriction on what you buy with it. People are limited to a total of 2 awards per 12-month period, for food and/or other items, except if claiming after a disaster or benefit sanction which would not count towards the total.

In September, YFPA's partners gave feedback to a council representative from YFAS who was conducting a review. The feedback was that it is inadequate and underfunded. Whilst we welcome the review which has now been completed, we would like to see evidence that the new application process has a positive effect and whether this service has the capacity to really make a difference to people's lives.

### **3.3 Community Food Aid projects and York Food Poverty Alliance (established April 2018)**

York Food Poverty Alliance works with groups, organisations and individuals in York to provide, monitor and support food aid provision and to strengthen their ability to reduce food poverty and tackle its root causes.

- **'Holiday Hunger' since July 2018**

#### Background:

School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes (such as loss of a free school meal, reduced working hours etc.). There is a growing body of evidence of a holiday experience gap - with children from disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health; and more likely to experience social isolation.

Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can have a positive impact on children and young people and that they work best when they provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities, for more than just breakfast or lunch, and when they involve children (and parents) in food preparation. (Source: DfE.)

#### York food and activity clubs summary - July 2018 to January 2019:

- **2930 meals served & over 285 food bags given out** between 13th July and 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019.
- 9 'Holiday Hunger' projects totalling **67 food club sessions**.
- **29 out of 45** respondents (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that it was **harder to make ends meet during the school holidays** than during the school year.
- **82%** respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they **spend more on food during the school holiday** than during the school year.
- **Almost half**, (47%) agreed or strongly agreed that they **sometimes find themselves without enough money for food** during the school holiday.
- **One third of people (31%)** responded that within the past 12 months, **the food they bought just didn't last** and they didn't have money to get more.
- **48%** of families with school-age children were in **receipt of Free School Meals**.
- For a **Case study** of good practice (See Appendix 3)

### 3.4 Soup kitchens / homelessness projects

There are at least 7 soup kitchen projects operating in York aimed at the homeless population. These are not suitable for families, so we do not have data on their potential to mitigate child and family food poverty.

## Q4: A range of options for the Council and its partners to improve the city-wide response to food poverty in York.

### SUMMARY

- YFPA is developing a Food Poverty Action plan to be launched by the end of April 2019.
- YFPA held focus groups to gather ideas for change from 'experts by experience' and members of the public.
- The key areas of work needed to tackle the root causes surround low incomes and benefits support.

### 4.1 York Food Poverty Action plan – **DRAFT proposals**

- Real Living Wage: CYC to lead the way in paying all its outsourced supply employees the Real Living Wage and to promote the uptake of this wage to other sectors city-wide.
- Financial Assistance: a better and larger package of services to be developed to include increased promotion of Free School Meals and Healthy Start vouchers.
- Food Aid: continue to support and monitor informal food aid provisions, especially those that offer successful models of advice + food provision schemes *whilst* developing a Food Bank exit strategy at the same time.
- Government action on welfare reform i.e. 'Fix Universal Credit'

### 4.2 Focus Group summary findings, January 2019

#### 4.2.1 Themes

- i. Management strategies on a low income: *Shopping, budgeting and cooking; use of Social Security*
- ii. Macroeconomic and policy context: The lived experience of changing circumstances

### 4.2.3 Participant recommendations:

#### i. **Universal credit reform**

The need for (urgent and meaningful) reform to Universal Credit was discussed emphatically and at length by participants in the Acomb focus group. There was a need for greater claimant dignity and autonomy within the system; for more consistent and accurate interaction with staff processing claims and payments; and for the reassertion of a claimant's right to receive Universal Credit/welfare benefits.

#### ii. **Improved access to healthy, cheap and seasonal food**

Among participants, there was a widely held desire for improved access to seasonal, cheap fruit and vegetables – for instance, from a new large and affordable indoor market or independent retailers. According to more than one participant, such improved access was contingent upon a better and cheaper public transport system or the improved availability of affordable parking in York. Cheaper prices for healthy items was also thought important within the 'big supermarkets'.

#### iii. **Expansion/development of and improved access to sociable, inclusive, open-access food aid**

A significant minority of participants recommended the further development of open-access food aid, such as community cafes and informal Pay-As-You-Feel food stores.

"We need more community cafes. Ones that are large and welcoming enough for families."

Female, Tang Hall

However, according to one participant, the further continuation of community cafes was contingent on financial support from the Local Authority (rate relief). One participant recommended improved food provision for children during the school holidays.

#### iv. **Other recommendations cited by a minority included:**

- a. Housing: Implementation of rent controls to reduce housing costs.
- b. Provision of education about cooking on a budget.
- c. Awareness-raising about the reality of food poverty in the UK:

"I honestly despair at the fact that we have food poverty in such a rich country – it's obscene." (Female, online)

- d. Re-orientate Local Authority priorities in York away from tourists towards residents, including a reconsideration of parking costs and re-evaluation of food prices in restaurants.

## APPENDIX 1

**Chill in the Community CIC's monitoring activities:****Play & picnic scheme**

Numbers attended

Volunteer hours

Meals served

Kg food consumed

Number of food collections / Kg of food can be translated into meals

Qualitative / observations / personal narratives

**Package: food + support (coaching, budgeting, cooking advocacy)**

Families helped per week compared to over the holidays

Individuals supported with benefits advice

Sessions delivered

**Pay as you feel café, informal food bank & 'Pay it Forward'**

Meals/drinks paid for

Food parcels distributed

Numbers of individuals accessing

## APPENDIX 2

**Extract From:**  
**Fareshare's COMMUNITY FOOD MEMBER APPLICATION FORM**

[Please give details of the group(s) targeted by the project:

**Who are your main client group(s): Tick all that apply**

- |                        |                          |                                   |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Homeless men           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Client with drug and              |                          |
| Homeless women         | <input type="checkbox"/> | alcohol problems                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rough sleepers         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mental Health                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homeless 16-25 yrs old | <input type="checkbox"/> | Physical health problems          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single homeless people | <input type="checkbox"/> | Schoolchildren - primary school   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| People at risk of      |                          | Schoolchildren - secondary school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homelessness           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Young people (16-25)              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Women                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Adults (26-64)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ex-offenders           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Older people (64+)                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Asylum seekers         | <input type="checkbox"/> | other                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Families               | <input type="checkbox"/> | if other, please specify:         |                          |

People on low-incomes/Benefits

**Client Group Details**

What proportion of your client group falls into each of the following living situations?  Please give a percentage estimate.	Sleeping rough	
	Hostel	
	Housed (vulnerable)	
	Other	
Which age range does your client group belong to?  Please tick appropriate box.	Children (under 16)	
	Young adults (16-25)	
	Adults (26-64)	
	Older people (65+)	



	No specific age range	
How many clients on average do you serve-deal with on a daily basis?  Please tick appropriate box.	0 - 25	
	25 - 50	
	50 - 75	
	75 - 100	
	100 - 125	
	125 - 150	
	150+	
Is this a regular client group?	Yes	
	No	
Please estimate the percentage of male:female clients you serve on a daily basis.		

## APPENDIX 3

## PART 1: HOLIDAY HUNGER PROJECT CASE STUDY – SUMMER 2018

## PARTICIPANT: RED TOWER CIC

**1. HOW / WHO BY?**

**Managed by:** Red Tower CIC and Rosie Baker (local volunteer.)

**Partners:** City of York Council, York Food Poverty Alliance/Good Food York, Walmgate Community Association.

**Food provision:** Donations collected from Morrison's, Coop, Olivia's Bakery, Bettys & Taylors and Edible York.

**Finances:** £429 received from a CYC Ward Budget grant, of which approx. £102 was used on this particular project. An additional £70, initially included in this budget was spent instead by the York Food Poverty Alliance to advertise the full Holiday Hunger programme being carried out across all venues.

**2. WHY / WHO FOR?**

One of the ward councillors where the Red Tower is situated, Guildhall Ward, brought the issue of food poverty to the table at the July 2018 council meeting. Her motion sought to get food poverty monitored, taken seriously and for measures for its reduction to be worked towards and it was passed unanimously. Guildhall ward is rated low, 3/21 of the city wards on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation; 16.8% of children are in child poverty. The nearby residents and some social housing communities surround the Red Tower and its lush gardens. Following its recent renovations after serious flooding, the Red Tower's revived mission is to open its doors more regularly as a community hub and "bring this historic building to life by offering an inclusive, welcoming space for creative, learning and social activities, run by local people, encouraging local and wider community participation."

**3. WHAT HAPPENED / WHAT WAS ON OFFER?**

A volunteer project coordinator, Rosie Baker, was recruited by the Red Tower to run the project. Other volunteers were sourced through the Red Tower's existing group, through Rosie's contacts and organically via people offering their time. The cafe opened every Monday for 7 weeks. It filled a gap in the Holiday Hunger programme as there was no other food aid provision scheduled for Mondays. On offer were fresh, healthy lunches of salads, sandwiches, pastries and fruit and a pack-up lunch for every child. Additionally, home-made or donated cakes and biscuits were served, and people were advised on healthy amounts. Also served teas, coffees and juices. There were Pay-As-You-Feel signs up and volunteers gestured to the donations box when people wanted to contribute. All the takings were used by the Red Tower CIC for its overheads and own project aims.

Every week a 'Food 4U Shop' operated upstairs in the tower displaying the produce that couldn't be made into lunches for people to take a bag of groceries home; the suggested donation per bag of food was £1. Volunteers talked to people about the value of the otherwise 'free' food and encouraged people to share what was there/think about how to use it best to limit the journey towards waste.

Craft activities for children and advice-giving were provided by the council staff if people needed it on at least 2 of the weeks. Toys and games were provided every week by the venue.

#### 4. WHAT WENT WELL?

**Outdoor well-being:** The garden was enjoyed by customers young and old every week; in the beautiful sunshine mainly and even in the downpours (children literally dancing in the rain.)

**Inclusion:** Elder neighbours enjoyed a sit-down, a hearty lunch and others to chat to; Some neighbours who had not been keen on the project to begin with, came to eat at the cafe by the end of the holiday period; People of minority ethnic origin came to the cafe.

**Alleviating hunger:** There was enough tasty, varied food for everyone – volunteers included – every week. Left-over food was taken away by volunteers to feed people at home.

**0-Waste:** In total approx. 785kg of food was intercepted before being sent to landfill. All recyclable products and waste food were collected for proper disposal by a local compost expert.

**Volunteer experience:** 1 intern, 1 coordinator (Rosie piloted her own cafe-concept), 2 staff from the CIC and 13 other volunteers repeatedly contributed their time, resources and enthusiasm. They appeared to benefit, get along well and enjoy it.

#### 5. WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED / ANY CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME?

- More planned activities for children to have a go at: although free play and running was very much valued & enjoyed, this would be especially necessary in times of less clement weather.
- Seek donations of protein-based foods from the supermarkets as all protein on this project was purchased using the ward money budget.
- More engagement from the volunteers towards the customers would be beneficial: to talk to them about any food insecurities to educate about using food that's still edible; to befriend as appropriate and for research purposes, to collect narratives from 'experts by experience.'

#### 6. FEEDBACK FROM CUSTOMERS

##### a) What kind of feedback was collected?

YFPA evaluation forms (x20) and verbal feedback from customers.

.....  
.....

##### b) Evidence of feedback:

Personal narrative

"I volunteered at the Red Tower because I wanted to gain experience & contribute to a project that reduces food waste & provides low-cost healthy food. My son has been eligible for FSM since I left my ex over a year ago and having only managed to get minimum wage / 0-hours / term-time only or P/T self-employed work since then, I claim universal credit, which just about makes ends meet! I had much less income during the summer holidays and my main concern was buying decent, healthy portions of protein for my son and myself (I'd rather not feed him re-formed chicken or low meat-content sausages just because they're cheap!) Being part of Red Tower meant I knew he'd have access to ample cheese/egg/tuna sandwiches & loads of fresh fruit 'n' veg. He had so much fun playing outdoors there each week & regularly asks when the next community café is on. I was able to take surplus food home to store, use economically & share with neighbours who I knew needed it too. There were of course cafe-goers seeming much more in need than we were. But the inclusivity & non-judgemental atmosphere for everyone is something you don't get out in society much elsewhere."

..... *"Fantastic idea. We are on holiday in York with our 4 children. We stopped in for a cup of tea and a juice for the children. It was a welcome break. We struggle to afford a mainstream cafe, so this was a real treat."*

- .....
- Feedback from a member of the visiting community / venue management / resident's association:

*"Many thanks for everything you have done to make the pay-as-fee cafe a success / Following the resounding success of the pay-as-fee cafe it would be good to promote the York Food Poverty Alliance and hopefully organise similar projects in the future."* (Walmgate Community Association.)

## PART 2: ONGOING CASE STUDY

**With the support of 4CommunityGrowth and a team of volunteers, Red Tower's journey is being tracked and celebrated from its origins as a pilot school holiday-only PAYF cafe, to a full food + advice Community Hub for local residents.**

### **Holiday Hunger 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018 (part of week-long half term provision)**

Numbers: 17

Feedback: Ruth Potter from OCAY was there and got more potential users of her services than she did when she ran some stand-alone events at the Red Tower. It shows the basic idea of a PAYF meal and shop with advice available, if people want it, will work better together than splitting it into two events.

### **Autumn Monday Events – hot lunches, shop, crafts & advice**

Dates: 5/11/18 – 17/12/18

Numbers: 32 average

Open every Monday until 17 December, Community First Credit Union came every week and some free craft workshops.

### **January 2019 onwards – supported by 4Community Growth**

This is the advice and support programme in addition to the PAYF cafe and shop:

Weekly

The Credit Union and the Guildhall Local Area Co-ordinator

Fortnightly

Craft workshops run by community artist Kat Wood.

Monthly

Healthwatch, Older Citizens Advocacy York, North Yorkshire Police Service with the York BID Rangers. To add: a benefits advice session.

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**Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee****11 March 2019**

Report of the Single-use Plastics Scrutiny Review Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee

**Single Use Plastics Scrutiny Review Draft Final Report****Summary**

1. This report presents the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) with all the information gathered by the Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee appointed to investigate the use and disposal of single use plastics in York, together with the Sub-Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

**Background**

2. In December 2017 Full Council considered a Motion around single use plastics and resolved that:
3. Council notes:
  - There are significant environmental problems with disposing of single use plastics, which release toxic chemicals when they break down, are a non-recyclable material and therefore a waste of energy and economic value, and also contribute significantly to waterway litter in York, which can then contribute to long lasting plastic pollution on beaches and in the marine environment.
  - The harmful effects this has on marine life and the increased amount of plastic entering the food chain.
  - Existing initiatives aimed at reducing the numbers of single use disposable coffee cups being used for take-away drinks, such as the 'Freiburg cup' and the York manufactured 'iamreusable' cup.
4. Council therefore:

- Requests the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to consider the merits of undertaking a scrutiny review in order to investigate the council's use of single use plastics in its buildings etc. and through its procurement arrangements, and how the behaviour of others may be influenced in relation to this particular form of pollution in support of the coalition's broader environmental policies. Options to reduce the use of single-use disposable cups in York should include working with Make it York (possibly via its new service level agreement with the Council) and the York Business Improvement District (BID) to reduce waste and tackle litter and rubbish collection challenges within the city centre."
5. The resolution was originally considered by the Economy and Place Policy Development Committee which agreed to undertake a review, but before membership of a Task Group was finalised it became clear that this item should be considered by CSMC as part of the Motion is around developing the Council's procurement policy on plastic goods.
  6. At the June meeting of E&P Policy Development, Members agreed they wanted to pursue a joint Task Group approach to carrying out this review with CSMC and further agreed Cllrs Kramm and Richardson be on any joint Sub-Committee.
  7. This issue was first discussed by CSMC in June 2018 when it was agreed to convene a Joint Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee with E&P Policy Development Committee. However, the Committee also agreed to delegate authority to the Head of Civic and Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to prioritise the order and timing of review work given the shortages within the scrutiny team at the time and the fact that the Committee was already committed to two other scrutiny reviews.
  8. It was next considered at a meeting of this Committee in November 2018 when Cllrs Looker and Fenton were appointed to the Joint Ad Hoc Sub-Committee.
  9. The Sub-Committee met for the first time in late November when Cllr Fenton was appointed Chair. Members broadly discussed the information they would need to progress the review, who they wanted to consult with and agreed the following remit:



## **Remit**

### Aim:

To investigate to use and disposal of single use plastics in York, what measures can be taken to reduce the use of single use plastics in Council buildings and how these measures can influence city partners and businesses in helping reduce plastic pollution.

### Objectives:

- i. Examine the current Council policy in relation to single use plastics in its buildings;
- ii. Understand the current arrangements for recycling or reusing plastics for York residents;
- iii. Better understand what levers the Council has to reduce the use of single use plastics in food and drink outlets;
- iv. Liaise with York BID to understand what actions can be taken to reduce and better manage coffee cup disposal in York city centre;
- v. Engage with One Planet York to communicate to partners measures to reduce the use of single use plastics;
- vi. Look at best practices in other towns and cities.

## **Information Gathered**

10. In January the Sub-Committee met with officers from CYC Waste Management and Yorwaste to learn about the current arrangements for recycling or reusing plastics in York. Sub-Committee members noted that all households are provided with a fortnightly kerbside recycling collection. Within the city centre St Nicks operates smaller collection vehicles to negotiate narrower streets. This is a weekly recycling collection to c.2,420 households (2.76% of households) as part of a five-year contract.
11. Plastic recycling is complicated as while all plastic bottles are recyclable they have different polymers. Kerbside recycling should only involve plastic bottles; drinks and milk bottles; household cleaning, detergent and fabric conditioner bottles; toiletry bottles including make-up/cleanser, shampoo, conditioner and bubble bath bottles.

12. Other plastics, including plastic food wrapping; food trays and margarine tubs are mixed plastics and should not be put into kerbside recycling containers. Mixed plastics can be recycled in the public recycling banks which are provided and paid for by Sainsbury's, at their Monks Cross or Foss Island sites. Alternately, mixed plastics can be placed in a general household waste bin.
13. York uses the Allerton Waste Recovery Park (AWRP) to process its waste. AWRP is designed so domestic refuse goes through a mechanical treatment process to further separate recyclable material, such as metals and plastics. However, the sub-committee noted that Allerton Park is struggling to sell contaminated plastics.
14. The sub-committee agreed that for CYC to benefit it needed to encourage residents to recycle more plastic, but strategically the focus should be on banning certain types of plastics.
15. It was also noted that some other authorities ask their residents to put their refuse in one collection bin but this causes problems because it causes materials to become contaminated, it costs to separate the recyclable materials and ultimately it generates less revenue.
16. In early February 2019 the Sub-Committee met a representative of One Planet York to understand how OPY can help communicate to partners measures to reduce the use of single-use plastics.
17. One Planet York is a network of 65 organisations in the city which have pledged, among other things, to support an overarching framework of reducing waste, reusing where possible and ultimately sending zero waste to landfill. It was established as a light influencing body to communicate, inspire and encourage positive practices for a more sustainable and resilient city.
18. OPY organisations have already taken steps to eliminate disposal cups. University of York, for example, has introduced a reusable Yorcup scheme as an alternative to disposable cups. It has also replaced single-use plastic straws with paper straws, replaced black plastic coffee cup lids with white lids which can be recycled and encouraged students wanting takeaways from the dining hall to bring their own reusable food container to reduce the use of polystyrene boxes.
19. One Planet York is able to showcase what York organisations are doing to help promote a behaviour change through a peer influencing approach.

20. To satisfy Objective (iv) of the remit, to liaise with York BID to understand what actions can be taken to reduce and better manage coffee cup disposal in York city centre, the Sub-Committee was pleased to note that the BID is currently looking at solutions regarding this issue. The findings from their investigations will be reported to the BID Board in due course and shared with CYC scrutiny once all the relevant information has been collated.
21. On 15 February the Sub-Committee met CYC's Facilities Manager and the Category Manager Procurement to discuss the use of single-use plastics in Council buildings.
22. Members were pleased to note that lamreusable cups are now on sale at Cafe West at West Offices and people who used these, and other reusable drinks containers, are given a 10p discount on hot drinks bought at the cafe. The cafe had already introduced biodegradable takeaway cups which are fully compostable, including the lids, and is looking to provide a separate recycling bin for biodegradable and compostable products.
23. A bigger issue with the cafe is plastic cutlery. FM has looked at wooden cutlery as an alternative but this is about three times more expensive to buy and many people did not like the texture. Metal cutlery is available for people eating in the cafe, but not for those people buying takeaway food. When the cafe first opened metal cutlery was available for all customers, but stock disappeared. FM is now looking at the possibility of reintroducing metal cutlery at all West Office hubs which could be washed and replaced after use. There would be an initial increased cost of providing metal cutlery but if items are replaced after use this would be a one-off expense and would lead to a better outcome.
24. The Sub-Committee noted that much of the takeaway food at Cafe West, such as salads and some sandwiches, is sold in clear plastic containers, but further noted that the cafe is run by the charity United Response and a switch to suitable non-plastic containers might create a financial burden which would be difficult to manage.
25. FM is also looking at a 'nudge' campaign to raise awareness of the damage caused by single-use plastics with visuals around the building highlighting the impact single-use plastics are having on the environment.
26. The Sub-Committee learned that CYC procurement works within the Council's Social Values Policy which aims to increase sustainability. The

policy provides the Council with significant leverage to incentivise suppliers to be more sustainable in their practices and to encourage the organisations the Council buys from to be more environmentally aware.

27. If the Council was looking to buy something that is made of plastic and there were alternatives that fell within the Social Values Policy then procurement would stop and think about these alternatives. This could apply, for example, in catering contracts for schools and old people's homes. Some of this work is already being done with Council suppliers and through its wider supply chain.
28. In early 2018 the government ran a call for evidence, *Tackling the Plastic Problem*<sup>1</sup>, on how the tax system or charges could be used to reduce single-use plastic waste. This received 162,000 responses, demonstrating the strong public interest in tackling this issue.
29. This led to a Budget announcement published in October 2018<sup>2</sup> that the government will introduce a new tax on produced or imported plastic packaging. Subject to consultation, this will apply to all plastic packaging that doesn't include at least 30% recycled content.
30. Alongside already planned reforms to the Packaging Producer Responsibility System, this will encourage businesses to ensure that far more packaging can be recycled and to use more recycled plastic in their packaging. The government will consult on both reforms shortly.
31. Future revenues from the packaging tax and Packaging Producer Responsibility reforms will enable investment to address single-use plastics, waste and litter.
32. The Budget also announced £20 million to tackle plastics and boost recycling: £10 million more for plastics research and development and £10 million to pioneer innovative approaches to boosting recycling and reducing litter, such as smart bins.

## **Best Practice**

### Brighton and Hove City Council Single-Use Plastics Policy

33. To support Brighton and Hove becoming a single-use plastics free city, the council commits to:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-the-plastic-problem>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/single-use-plastics-budget-2018-brief>

- Work with staff to ensure that single-use plastics are eliminated across our offices
  - Support our schools and communities in their efforts to make their buildings plastic-free zones
  - Through The Living Coast Biosphere programme, communicate the importance of protecting our urban, rural and marine environments, and support and promote positive initiatives, city campaigns and actions for reducing plastic waste
  - Work with our event organisers to eliminate single-use plastics across all city events held on council land and share guidance for this more widely
  - Support communities and litter-pick initiatives to ensure our parks, beaches and open spaces are free from plastic litter
  - Use government legislation that regulates against the use of single-use plastics to support our efforts where we can
  - Require all our suppliers to minimise the use of single-use plastics in their service provision and find sustainable alternatives (where appropriate)
  - Where the use of plastics is unavoidable, the council will encourage the use of recycled plastics, where practicable, and support manufacturers that make products from locally sourced waste plastics
  - Work with partners in joint ventures and innovative projects for reducing single-use plastic waste
  - Share best practice and information about plastic free initiatives, to residents, businesses, visitors and beyond through the council's social media and communication channels
34. Brighton and Hove City Council will work to embed these commitments into the sustainable events guidance, sustainable procurement policy, and into other key council strategies, policies and plans.

### Plymouth

35. In June 2018 it was announced that Plymouth was the first UK city to be accredited by the global charity Surfers Against Sewage with Plastic Free Communities status for its waterfront district.
36. More than 70 business pioneers and 50 community ambassadors in Plymouth including local businesses, schools and community groups,

supported the city's bid by pledging to reduce the amount of single use plastics they consume.

37. Plymouth City Council has reacted to the recent European Parliament vote to ban single-use plastics by 2021 by saying that the city will not be waiting that long to make further efforts to stop polluting the oceans with items such as tea stirrers, straws, plastic bags and water bottles.
38. The Council is working with partners on the Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City Plastics Taskforce to implement a ban in the city by 2020, starting with a voluntary code of conduct.
39. In addition, all the Council's buildings will go single-use plastic free by September 2019 and all events on Plymouth City Council land will be required to complete an Environmental Assessment to show how single-use plastic will be eliminated, replaced by alternatives, or at the very least, reduced to an absolute minimum.

#### Surrey County Council Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Policy

40. SCC is strongly committed to take responsibility for tackling the plastic waste problem both within its local area and across the UK. With this in mind, SCC has urged the Government to bring forward the 2014 date in their target of "achieving zero avoidable plastic waste".
41. SCC is initially focusing on eliminating the use of plastic drinks bottles, plastic food takeaway boxes, plastic cutlery, disposable coffee cups, plastic drinks bottle caps, straws, stirrers and plastic lids. Its commitment for supporting Surrey to become SUP free includes:
  - End the sale and provision of SUP products in order to phase out SUP use across SCC estate and operations wherever possible.
  - Ensure the procurement policy and procedures require all suppliers to reduce and work towards zero avoidable SUP use (wherever possible) including jointly with partners through ORBIS and at SCC run events.
  - Support greater awareness and action from our suppliers and contractors in finding sustainable SUP replacements wherever appropriate and encourage higher recycling rates across SCC estates.
  - Share best practice, raise awareness, and support SCC staff, partners, communities, schools, district and borough councils, businesses and beyond towards making their own locations avoidable plastic-free zones.

- Work with all stakeholders including district and boroughs, schools, communities and businesses to promote, support and innovate to reduce SUP across Surrey.

#### Bristol City Council

42. Bristol City Council proposed itself “single-use plastic free” in 2016 and set out to develop a strategy to encourage and enable the city’s institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures. Specifically the Council would:

- End all sales of SUP bottles in council buildings and phase out their use at all events hosted in Council-owned buildings, both public and private.
- End the use of other SUP products in council buildings starting with (but not limited to) ‘disposable’ cups, cutlery and drinking straws.
- Ensure reusable and affordable food containers are available for sale in public markets – to be piloted at St Nicholas market in the city centre.
- Work with the Festivals Team to create policy in which single-use ‘disposable’ plastic cups are replaced at all city festivals with reusable or deposit-scheme cups. This will ultimately be a condition for obtaining a licence for large scale events.
- Work with tenants in commercial properties owned by the Council to phase out SUP glasses, bottles, cutlery and straws and help them to engage with Bristol’s existing ‘Go Green’ scheme.
- Work with bars and cafes, starting with those situated on the harbour-side, to phase out single-use ‘disposable’ cups and to encourage the use of reusable and deposit scheme ones.
- Encourage, enable and aid all employees and councillors to engage with the Plastic Free July challenge.
- Work with existing local groups and experts to implement these changes.”

#### Oxford City Council

43. Earlier this year Oxford City Council committed to working to bring an end to the use of unnecessary single-use plastics in the city. In April 2018 the Council resolved to request the Executive Director for Sustainable City brings a report to City Executive Board on the options for bringing an end to the use of unnecessary Single Use Plastics (SUP) in Oxford, to:

- enable Oxford City Council to become a full signatory of the 'Plastic Free Pledge', by phasing out the use of unnecessary SUPs in all City Council buildings, and working with commissioning partners to end the purchase and procurement of SUPs through the Council's supply chain;
- encourage the city's businesses, organisations and residents to go 'plastic free,' working with best practice partners in the city to explore the creation of a 'plastic free network,' that could provide business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to sustainable alternatives;
- provide feasible options to incentivise traders on Council land to sell re-usable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out SUPs; including investigating the possibility of requiring food and drink vendors to avoid SUPs as a condition of their event permission, strengthening the existing conditions and guidance circulated to exhibitors and traders.

#### Birmingham City Council

44. In September 2018 Birmingham City Council called for action at city level to make a significant contribution to reducing disposal of plastics and cleaning up the environment. The Council resolved to call on the Executive to ask the Transport and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore the opportunities and the options available to the City so it can become a Plastic Free City. The Scrutiny Committee will report back by the end of the 2018/19 Municipal Year a range of options, including cost neutral options, which the Executive can implement as soon as possible from the start of the 2019/20 Municipal Year. These options to include:

- Encouraging the city's institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt measures to minimise the use of single-use plastic products.
- Immediately starting the process of reducing the sale and provision of single-use plastic products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in Council buildings where it is reasonable to do so.
- Encouraging market traders to sell re-usable containers and inviting customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out single-use plastic containers and cutlery on market stalls.
- Working with the Council events team and creating a policy in which single-use "disposable" plastic cups are replaced at all large



city festivals with re-usable or deposit scheme cups and which the release of balloons on City Council property is not permitted, investigating the possibility of ultimately making these a condition for obtaining a licence for large scale events held in the city.

- Promoting refill schemes with retail businesses and Business Improvement Districts.
- Investigating the possibility of installing free water fountains in City Council reception areas and elsewhere in our buildings.
- Further investigating having locally branded water containers for sale.
- Encouraging the city's businesses, organisations and residents to go 'plastic free,' working with best practice partners in the city to explore the creation of a 'plastic free network,' that could provide business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to sustainable alternatives;
- Working with tenants in commercial properties owned by Birmingham City Council to encourage the phasing out of disposable plastic cups, bottles, cutlery and straws.
- Ensuring that sustainability is a key feature of the 2022 Commonwealth Games and commit to working with the LOC and Games partners to minimise the use of single use plastic items.
- Ensuring that all Local Authority Maintained Schools are part of a new City Council initiative to help them become plastic-free working with partners such as City Serve and Veolia.
- Encouraging, enabling and aiding all City Council employees, Councillors, businesses, community groups, and citizens to engage with an annual Plastic Free Challenge Month to be launched in April 2019.
- Writing to all major supermarkets trading in the city encouraging them to introduce plastic free aisles.

45. Working with Procurement services to encourage all businesses with which the Council has contracts to support the banning of single-use plastics in their place of work and consider the possibility of phasing out of single-use plastics in the awarding of new contracts where this is relevant and proportionate.

## **Analysis**

46. The use of plastics and its impact on the environment has been a topic nationally and internationally for many years. In 2015 the Government introduced a law requiring large shops to introduce a 5p charge for

single-use plastic bags. Following the scheme's introduction the sales of plastic bags reduced by 83 per cent, demonstrating that intervention can have an impact on behaviours.

47. Programmes such as Blue Planet II and images in the media have increased the focus and there is scientific evidence of the growing impact on oceans and seas, and other eco-systems, of the build up and permanence of plastics.
48. Plastic waste often does not decompose and can last centuries in landfill, or else ends up littering the streets or polluting the natural environment.
49. Each year we use 2.26 million tonnes of plastic packaging in the UK, with only 842 tonnes being recycled. The vast majority of this packaging is made from new plastic, rather than recycled material. This is because recycled plastic is often more expensive than new plastic, despite its lower environmental impacts.
50. At the moment in York plastic bottles are the only plastic material officially accepted in our kerbside recycling collection. They are made of high grade plastic material PET1 (Polyethylene Terephthalate) and HDPE2 (High Density Polyethylene) which have consistently strong recycling markets in which to sell the material.
51. Mixed plastic, however, can be poorer quality and dirty. These factors, coupled with the instability of the recycling markets, has meant that it has previously not been possible to consider introducing mixed plastics to the existing kerbside recycling collection. However, some mixed plastic is already put into the recycling boxes by residents and Yorwaste collects it.
52. Black plastic doesn't reflect light, so can not be seen and sorted by the scanners in the recycling facility and could end up contaminating other materials such as glass bottles.

## **Consultation**

53. In gathering the information in this draft final report the Sub-Committee has consulted with CYC Waste Management and Yorwaste, CYC Facilities Management and Procurement, One Planet York and York Business Improvement District. It has also taken into account best practices adopted by other local authorities and considered Government measures to reduce the use of single-use plastics.

## **Conclusions**

54. The environmental impact of plastics and in particular single-use plastic is a national and international issue and the benefits for the local environment from efforts to reduce it should be supported. The drivers for reducing single-use plastics are environmental, economic and health.
55. City of York Council can do little in isolation, but by demonstrating a determination to work towards eliminating the use of single-use plastics in its own building and on Council-owned land it can set an example to businesses, organisations and residents and encourage them to do likewise.
56. Then, as a participant in the One Planet York initiative, the Council can communicate the importance of protecting our urban, rural and riverside environments and support and promote initiatives and actions for reducing plastic waste.

## **Review Recommendations**

57. After considering the information provided in this draft final report, CSMC is asked to recommend that:
  - i. CYC Facilities Management:
    - a) continue to work with United Response to explore options to replace disposable plastic food containers (such as those used for sandwiches and salads) with more environmentally friendly alternatives
    - b) undertakes a trial whereby metal cutlery is made available in West Office hubs and the cafe as an alternative to disposable plastic cutlery
    - c) works with Communications colleagues to prepare and distribute publicity materials encouraging CYC staff to reduce their use of single-use plastics
    - d) considers options for expanding the range of recyclable materials collected at West Offices, for example through dedicated bins for biodegradable / compostable coffee cups and crisp packets

- ii. CYC Procurement, through the implementation of the Council's Social Values Policy, strives to minimise the procurement of single-use plastics
- iii. The Council:
  - a) Works with partners such as Make It York to explore options for reducing the use of single-use plastic cups and food trays at events held on Council land
  - b) Continues to liaise with York BID to explore opportunities to reduce the use of disposable coffee cups in the city centre and provide better disposal facilities, noting that the BID are currently looking at options on these issues
  - c) Through its role as a participant in the One Planet York initiative:
    - Learns from and shares information and best practice on reduction of single-use plastics with partners in the city such as educational establishments and businesses;
    - Makes use of available communication channels to share information with residents on ways in which they can reduce single-use plastics and make full use of recycling opportunities.
- iv. CYC Waste Services to continue to work with Yorwaste and St Nicks to explore options for increasing the number and types of single-use plastics that can be collected for which there are practicable recycling opportunities.

## **Options**

58. Having considered the information in this report Members can:
- i. Identify if any additional work that needs to be carried, or not;
  - ii. make additional recommendations to the review recommendations at paragraph 58.

## Council Plan

59. This report is linked to A Prosperous City for All priority in the Council Plan which highlights that environmental stability underpins everything we do, seeks to increase the percentage of waste recycled and works towards plans for One Planet living.

## Implications

60. **Financial:** The cost of providing metal cutlery in West Office hubs and the cafe would have financial implications on FM as there would be a one-off outlay to buy this cutlery. However, if staff are responsible in returning their cutlery after use it could result in a long-term saving as FM would no longer need to regularly buy plastic cutlery. FM is currently awaiting estimates for the cost of bulk buying metal cutlery.
- **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications associated with the recommendations in this report.
  - **Equalities** There are no equalities implications
  - **Legal** There are no legal implications
  - **Crime and Disorder** There are no crime and disorder implications
  - **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications
  - **Property** There are no property implications
  - **Other** There are no other implications

## Risk Management

61. There are no risks associated with the recommendations in this report. However, the risk of doing nothing could lead to further damage to the urban, rural and marine environments, not just locally but nationally and internationally.

## Recommendations

62. Having considered the information in this draft final report Members are asked to:

- i. Consider and agree the draft recommendations arising from the review as shown in paragraph 58 above;

Reason: To conclude the work of this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols and enable this review final report to be presented to the Executive.

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Report Approved ☒ Date 22/02/2017

Wards Affected:

All ☒

For further information please contact the author of the report

## Abbreviations

AWRP – Allerton Waste Recovery Park

BID – Business Improvement District

CSMC – Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee

CYC – City of York Council

E&P – Economy and Place

FM – Facilities management

HDPE2 – High Density Polyethylene

OPY – One Planet York

PET1 – Polyethylene Terephthalate)

SCC – Surrey County Council

SUP – Single-Use Plastics



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**Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee****11 March 2019**

Report of the CSMC Scrutiny Review Task Group

**Scrutiny Operations and Functions Review – Draft Final Report****Summary**

1. This report presents the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) with all the information gathered by the Task Group assigned to review scrutiny operations and functions at City of York Council, along with its conclusions and recommendations.

**Background**

2. In June 2018 CSMC considered an update report on the implementation of changes to the Council's scrutiny function resulting from the review of 'Future Ways of Working in Scrutiny' completed in March 2017.
3. Specifically the Committee considered the operation of a trial in relation to Economy and Place Scrutiny and the alignment of Scrutiny Committees to Directorates. The Committee were told that the changes had allowed members of the Economy and Place Policy Development Committee to look at long-term policy development and give early input to Executive on emerging issues. By comparison, the E&P Scrutiny Committee had struggled to find appropriate topics to review so the focus had been more on overview.
4. During the debate it was noted that the previous year had not been a particularly productive one for any of the Scrutiny Committees and it was felt that member engagement was an issue, as was support from Officers and that there might be some merit in reviewing the organisation's cultural approach towards scrutiny in an effort to help it become more effective.
5. Concern was also raised at that time regarding the increased workload faced by the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy and Scrutiny Committee now that the housing and community safety elements of the

Directorate has been included in the remit of the former Health and Adult Social Care policy and Scrutiny Committee.

6. Whilst CSMC agreed to extend the pilot arrangements with the two Economy and Place Committees for a further year, Members also agreed to review how the scrutiny function moves forward for the next administration and to appoint a Task Group comprising Councillors Williams, Galvin, Reid and D'Agorne to carry out this work on the Committee's behalf.
7. In August 2018 the Task Group met for the first time and proposed a remit for the review, along with the aims and objectives below. The remit was agreed, as set out below, by a full meeting of this Committee in September 2018.

### **Remit**

8. **Aim:** To propose operational arrangements and a structure for scrutiny to improve engagement and outcomes, ensuring that the function is as effective as possible.
9. **Objectives:**

### Structure

- To address the balance of committee workloads
- To evaluate the current functions of Scrutiny Committees, including pre and post decision call-in, overview and the performance management role

### Engagement

- To assess the current level of officer and member engagement and explore ways to improve it
- To explore ways to establish robust and measurable work planning

### Training

- To assess the need for member training and on-going development on scrutiny topics
10. Over a series of meetings, the Task Group sought to identify and resolve a number of challenges to allow the next administration to begin their



tenure with a solid foundation for Scrutiny work in York.

## **Information Gathered**

### Scoping Meeting

11. The Task Group agreed that it would be essential to investigate the views of Members in key Scrutiny positions (Chairs / Vice-Chairs) in order to ascertain their views on the current effectiveness of Scrutiny.
12. It was highlighted in this meeting that a number of similar reviews had previously been carried out and that this review would not be focussed solely on the structure of scrutiny committees as it was felt that engagement with the function was of equal, if not greater, importance at the current time.
13. Members also discussed the importance of discussing the operation of the Scrutiny function with the Corporate Management Team in order to address concerns regarding the engagement and support of senior officers.

### Meeting with Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs

14. On 10 December 2018 the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all the Scrutiny were invited to a meeting with the Task Group to share their view on how scrutiny was working in York.
15. During the discussions it was noted that there was a belief that Councillors are not always assigned to the Committees and Task Groups in which they have the most interest / expertise and that this resulted in a lack of engagement and focus in Scrutiny. It was also noted that Scrutiny Members were often left feeling disheartened as they did not always see the fruit of their labours. The Task Group felt this could be improved with better communication and feedback about the progress of implementation of scrutiny recommendations.
16. The meeting considered that Scrutiny Committees were presented with too many reports which were simply 'to note' by Members. It was felt that the purpose and effectiveness of scrutiny was not being fulfilled in this respect.
17. One of the key issues discussed at the meeting was that of timing. Members suggested that reports to Scrutiny often came too late for the various committees to have meaningful input into subsequent decisions. If Scrutiny is to be effective in making a cross-party contribution, prior to

formal decision making, then these reports need to be made available at a much earlier stage in the process. There were discussions regarding how this could be resolved in terms of improved committee work planning and review of the forward plan process.

18. The meeting discussed the culture of the organisation with regard to the role of scrutiny. Whilst it was acknowledged that some scrutiny members do not always value scrutiny as it could be, it was also felt that at times further efforts could be made to engage scrutiny early by officers and future controlling administrations, of whatever political makeup to enable it to add real value to the work of the Council and the quality of life for York residents.
19. The meeting also discussed the effectiveness of the new working arrangements for the Economy and Place Scrutiny and Policy Committees. It was noted that whilst the acknowledgement of the different roles of Scrutiny was important, the distinction between the committees was not always clear.
20. It endorsed the view that the remit of the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy and Scrutiny Committee was too big and that forming two committees covering this work area might be helpful. In suggesting that, however, Members were mindful of avoiding too much potential constitutional or structure change by endeavouring to adhere to the current principle of matching scrutiny committees to directorates.

#### Corporate Management Team

21. On 18 December 2018 the Task Group then met members of the Corporate Management Team to discuss issues around scrutiny from an Officer perspective.
22. It was noted that whilst there was good Officer / Member engagement with the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy and Scrutiny Committee, the Committee found it difficult to get to grips with its new responsibilities, particularly around community safety. There was sympathy for members given the wide range of complex topics presented to the committee. As a consequence, issues were not being examined in detail or to the extent that the committee would have liked.
23. It was also felt that the Committee's extended remit led to Members moving between the work of varied sections of the directorate too often.

24. CMT spoke of the on-going governance review being undertaken, and suggested that any recommendations from this review, take into account the wider context.

Further to that review, CMT suggested that Members could consider allocating further resources to Scrutiny which might help address the operational effectiveness of and engagement with scrutiny and could include support for training.

25. A feeling was expressed that Scrutiny Members sometimes asked for generic information from specialist officers leading to time consuming discussions around data. It was suggested that factual briefings for the committee from a member of the Scrutiny team could help fill any gaps in Member knowledge prior to formal meetings.
26. The Corporate Management Team also expressed their view that there needed to be further member development on the role of Scrutiny and this was a potential area in which further resources could be allocated to the Scrutiny function, as suggested in paragraph 24 above..
27. The culture of the authority was again discussed and it was expressed that members and officers could focus more on early engagement with scrutiny on matters where value could be added.
28. Finally Officers discussed the art of work planning for Scrutiny committees and highlighted opportunities to explore ways in which the planning of Committee workloads could challenge the topics most important to York's communities and CYC as an authority.

### **Local Government Association - 'Scrutiny for Councillors'**

29. The following excerpts have been taken from the LGA's 'Scrutiny for Councillors' Workbook from 2015. Many of these points are reinforced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny's own response to the CLG's Committee Review, and identify recommendations on good scrutiny practice.

What is Scrutiny?

- The principal power of a Scrutiny Committee is to influence the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations delivering public services.

- Scrutiny committees identify where decisions and policies could be improved and recommend ways in which mistakes, and the recurrence of mistakes, could be prevented.
- Scrutiny is designed to influence positive change, rather than apportioning blame or focussing on the negatives. Scrutiny should be seen as a policy improvement tool, rather than a forum for criticism. It is a challenge, not the outright condemnation of policy.

How should Scrutiny operate?

- Scrutiny should gather evidence on issues affecting local people and make recommendations based on its findings.
- Scrutiny works best when it is seen as a 'critical friend'.
- Scrutiny is only effective when there is a positive attitude to Scrutiny from the Executive, Council officers and Scrutiny Members
- Good scrutiny involves:
  - Tackling issues of relevance to local people
  - Adding value
  - Talking to a wide range of stakeholders
  - Challenging previously accepted ways of working

## **Analysis**

### Structure

30. Further to its work and consultation, the Task Group found that the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee had too large a remit and that the current structure of Economy and Place Scrutiny and Policy Committees had not resulted in improved working arrangements for scrutiny.

### Engagement

31. It is important for senior officers, the Executive and members of scrutiny committees to better understand and embrace the purpose of Scrutiny and how this can positively contribute to decision making and improved outcomes for Scrutiny. Whilst the Task Group also felt that it was important for Members to be assigned to Scrutiny areas in which their

interest lies, it recognised there were difficulties in doing this consistently, given the current number of Committees and proportionality arrangements.

32. A Scrutiny Committee raising an issue should not be seen as a threat, but instead an opportunity for cross party discussion and early consultation, ensuring that Scrutiny contributes to balanced Executive decision making.
33. There is also an opportunity to increase engagement with the community and as a result help focus scrutiny on topical issues most important to the public, as well as take into account their views on relevant issues, through drop-ins and other methods.
34. In order for scrutiny to be truly embedded within any local authority, the Task Group felt, as the LGA guidance identifies, that proper working relationships, with the Executive continuing to embrace the value of scrutiny, are essential. Culturally, scrutiny should be regarded as a forum where the Executive and Officers can refer issues for consideration which are of significant public interest or worthy of cross party engagement. This would enable effective pre-decision Scrutiny, at an earlier stage, helping to inform Executive decision making.

#### Work planning

35. Views received indicate that closer affiliation with the Executive, corporate and Directorate priorities is important in ensuring that each committee can effectively spend its time scrutinising work appropriate to the Council's future direction, as well as reviewing performance.

#### The 'Calling in' processes

36. Whilst acknowledging that the existing pre-decision 'call in' process was a genuine organisational commitment to providing an additional opportunity and route for Scrutiny Members to get involved in future decision making at an early stage, practical experience had given rise to a strong feeling that it was neither beneficial nor effective. The working arrangements and associated timescales of pre-decision 'call in' linked to the Forward Plan as it currently is, often resulted in its purpose not being fulfilled. Removing this mechanism ought to encourage both Scrutiny Members and Officers to engage with more genuine pre-decision scrutiny, freed from the restrictive timescales of the Forward Plan. This is where greater scrutiny familiarity with directorate and corporate priorities would be helpful.

The Task Group believe that the current working arrangements for post-decision 'call in' via CSMC should continue as presently operated.

### Support and Development for Scrutiny Members

37. The importance of enhancing support for Members in relation to Scrutiny was raised by both Members and Officers, having particular regard to the complexity and wide-ranging issues discussed by each committee. The Task Group feel that further support could help improve both Member and officer engagement, ultimately improving the quality of the discussion and the outcomes achieved.

### **Conclusions**

38. As stated at the beginning of this review, altering the committee structure was not a key objective. However, the need to review the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Committee came from significant feedback from Members and Officers, who agreed this committee currently has too wide a remit to function effectively. It was felt that health issues were being marginalised and the burgeoning housing agenda was being afforded little capacity.
39. Based on the consultation the Task Group had undertaken, there was a feeling that the scrutiny function was not necessarily perceived to be a useful experience for either Members or Officers involved. A shift in the Council's cultural approach would be necessary in order for Scrutiny to become a valued resource in delivering effective and efficient services for its residents as well as providing considered and measured future policy and strategic direction.
40. In coming to this conclusion, the Task Group acknowledged the proper and constitutional role of the democratically elected ruling Administration in making key decisions and delivering its manifesto. Further to that, however, the Task Group also recognised the LGA and CfPS key principles relating to effective scrutiny and that Members working in cross party scrutiny could provide support in policy development and checks and balances to an Executive.
41. In achieving greater engagement with scrutiny, the Task Group recognised that the way in which Scrutiny currently plans its workload is flawed. In order to work effectively, Scrutiny ought to have early information on planned decisions and work so that it can review issues as it feels necessary. Pre-decision 'calling in' was added to the working arrangements of Scrutiny to help positively influence this, but due to the

limited time involved in an item appearing on the forward plan, prior to a decision being made, this process is ineffective. As referred to elsewhere in this report, scrutiny work plans ought to be considered alongside, and in conjunction with, the Executive Forward Plan and Directorate priorities. This will help to ensure scrutiny is valued as a resource and has the necessary information to review executive decision making and provide appropriate advice and support to decision makers.

42. The subsequent recommendations focus on practical ways to influence cultural and collective change.

### **Consultation**

43. The Task Group has consulted with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Council's Policy and Scrutiny Committees and members of the Corporate Management Team. In addition it has taken into account the Local Government Committee's recommendations to Central Government on the Effectiveness of Local Government Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Local Government Association's 'Scrutiny for Councillors' Workbook 2015.

### **Review Recommendations**

44. Structure:

- i. That the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy and Scrutiny Committee be split into:
  - Health and Adult Social Care policy and Scrutiny Committee;
  - Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

Reason: The Committee's extended remit is too large to allow effective scrutiny.

- ii. That the Economy and Place Policy Development and Scrutiny Committees are rejoined.

Reason: To end the uncertainty around the roles of each committee and to provide Economy and Place with a comprehensive scrutiny function

## Engagement

- iii. In support of the work undertaken by scrutiny, that the Executive continue to formally respond to all Scrutiny Reviews, implementing recommendations it considers appropriate and reporting back to Scrutiny on any it considers inappropriate, explaining its reasons.

Reason: To demonstrate that the work of scrutiny is valued and to keep it informed of the implementation of review recommendations

- iv. That the relevant Chief Officers attend appropriate Scrutiny Committee meetings as a matter of course.

Reason: To fully engage with scrutiny members and to present and assist with detailed reports.

- v. That the Chief Executive and other Chief Officers actively promote involving scrutiny in the development of policy to their teams and encourage that issue be brought early to scrutiny for discussion.

Reason: To give scrutiny a greater opportunity to add value and bring greater transparency to policy development.

- vi. That Executive Members are encouraged to attend relevant scrutiny committee meetings on a regular basis.

Reason: To give scrutiny a greater opportunity to add value and bring greater transparency to policy development.

- vii. That public engagement with scrutiny is reviewed to better promote its aims and outcomes.

Reason: To improve public awareness of and engagement with the role of scrutiny

## Work Planning

- viii. That the Executive's Forward Plan be used to guide scrutiny as a matter of course and help inform its own work planning.

Reason: So scrutiny is involved in early consultation and discussion on issues due for decision

- ix. That Directorate priorities are shared with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the relevant scrutiny committees and that regular meetings take place between these members and the relevant Chief Officers



in order to help inform the business of their Committees.

Reason: To help Scrutiny plan its programme of work.

- x. That scrutiny committee meetings are held monthly.

Reason: To respond to the increased workloads experienced by some scrutiny committees and to allow for more pro-active and extensive scrutiny.

- xi. That scrutiny committees be aware of relevant opportunities to scrutinise the activities of external bodies providing public services affecting the city and its residents (Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee already actively performing this role given its statutory obligations).

Reason: To enable scrutiny to maintain a watching brief on organisations providing services that affect members of the public.

#### Calling-in process

- xii. That the Pre-Decision Call-In process be removed from the Constitution.

Reason: To encourage a more timely and pro-active approach to pre-decision scrutiny.

#### Support and Development for Members

- xiii. That current scrutiny resource is reviewed with consideration being given to additional support for scrutiny to enhance support for Members and help improve the organisational quality of Scrutiny and its outcomes in the context of the wider governance review identified in the report

Reason: To further improve engagement with and the delivery of the scrutiny function in York.

- xiv. That Scrutiny Members receive factual briefings on areas of chosen interest or review in relation to their Committees, to ensure they are better and adequately equipped to undertake allocated work.

Reason: To improve the quality of scrutiny.

## CSMC

- xv. That the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee review the work and functionality of Scrutiny on an annual basis.

Reason: To ensure the scrutiny function improves and develops.

## **Options**

- 45. After considering the information provided in this draft final report Members can:
  - a) Identify any further areas that need exploring;
  - b) endorse the recommendations set out above, including referral of recommendations 44 (i), (ii) and (xii) to Full Council;
  - c) agree the report be taken to the meeting of the Executive on 18 March 2019, or not.

## **Council Plan**

- 46. As Scrutiny has an overarching function within CYC activities the recommendations in this report will at some stage be linked to all the priorities in the Council Plan.

## **Implications**

- 47. There are no direct implications associated with any of the recommendations, other than:
- 48. **Financial:** If, following future review, additional resources were to be provided within the Scrutiny Team, it would be necessary to identify the budgetary implications associated with any increase in staff resources.
- 49. **Human Resources:** In light of any future review of resources within the Scrutiny Team, clearly, the Council's appropriate HR procedural rules would need to be applied in relation to any increase in staffing complement and to any subsequent recruitment process
- 50. **Legal:** Whilst there are no direct legal implications arising from any of the recommendations, recommendations 44 (i), (ii) and (xii) would require constitutional change if endorsed and as such would require consideration and approval by Full Council, prior to any implementation.

## **Risk Management**

51. There are no direct risks associated with the recommendations in this report. However, it should perhaps be noted that if none of the recommendations are implemented and none of the identified steps are taken to address the generic issues of engagement with and commitment to scrutiny, there is a danger that both Officers and Scrutiny Members will continue to feel that the Council's scrutiny function is not best placed to add value to the organisation or to get suitably involved in scrutinising the Council's decisions or contributing to its future direction of travel.

## **Recommendation**

52. Having considered the information in this report Members are asked to:
- (i) consider the review recommendations at paragraph 44 and refer the report to the meeting of the Executive on 18 March 2019, for consideration;
  - (ii) refer recommendations 44 (i), (ii) and (xii) specifically to Full Council for approval in accordance with constitutional requirements, should these be endorsed.

Reason: To complete this scrutiny review in accordance with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 19/2/2019

**Wards Affected:**

**All** 

**For further information please contact the author of the report**