

## Report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive

**UNIVERSAL CREDIT**1. Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the current position with regard to Universal Credit roll out in Broxtowe.

2. Background

In February 2018, the Finance and Resources Committee received a detailed report on the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) at that point. This report detailed the significant changes announced in the Autumn Statement to UC. The most notable of these changes was the roll out of UC in Broxtowe would be halted until the Full Service Roll out commences. This means that since the 1 January 2018 there have been no more new claims for UC in the Broxtowe area. Further information is included in the appendix.

3. Financial Implications

The Council receive grants from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to help claimants of Universal Credit that require Personal Budgeting Support and Digital Assistance. The Council has been informed that it is to receive £28,546 for this in 2018/19. The Welfare Reform Group have investigated alternatives for the best use of this grant funding and consider that Citizens Advice Broxtowe (CAB) are best placed to provide the required support for those residents that are not Broxtowe tenants. The CAB will provide this support through a dedicated Welfare Benefits Caseworker working 30 hours per week at a cost of £19,550 per annum with funding from the DWP grant income. It is proposed that the position commences from 1 August 2018 for an initial one year period and that any funding not utilised in 2018/19 is carried forward into 2019/20 for this purpose.

**Recommendation**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that a supplementary revenue estimate of £19,550 in 2018/19 for the provision of Personal Budgeting Support for Universal Credit claimants through the CAB funded by DWP grants be approved.**

Background papers

Nil

**APPENDIX**Additional information

Due to the fact that there have been no new applications for UC in 2018, there has been a continued reduction in the number of people receiving UC. The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) have confirmed that there is reduction of approximately 6% per week in the number of people receiving UC in Broxtowe. Although the DWP are not able to specify the exact reason for this, it is likely to be as a result of claimants returning to work or increasing their working hours.

Although the roll out of UC has currently stopped, the Council continues to prepare for the Full Service roll out in the area. The current proposals of Full Service roll out are based on the Job Centre location and not the Local Authority. As a result of this, there will be two roll outs within Broxtowe as those that are expected to attend Heanor Job Centre will go live on 13 June 2018 and have the following postcodes:

- NG16 2
- NG16 3
- NG16 4
- NG16 5
- NG16 6
- NG16 9

Those expected to attend Beeston Job Centre will go live in November 2018.

In preparation of the Full Service roll out, a Welfare Reform Group has been established within the Council. This includes internal officers from Benefits, Rents, Housing and Quality and Control Teams. External stakeholders have also been involved, most notably from the Citizens Advice Broxtowe team. Future meetings will also include the local Job Centre Managers and the DWP UC liaison officer. The group has been established to identify the services within the borough that can assist with the roll out of UC and ensure that residents receive the appropriate support, with a significant emphasis on Personal Budgeting and Assisted digital Support. Due to the close working relationship with Erewash Borough Council, Broxtowe Borough Council will be able to utilise some of the lessons learned in their preparation for Full Service rollout.

The experience of Erewash Borough Council enables Broxtowe to estimate the number of residents that will require Personal Budgeting Support. During 2017/18, Erewash Borough Council assisted 494 residents with support and were able to assist them with claiming additional benefits or making savings of £127,705.

All relevant Broxtowe BC staff have received appropriate training on UC and will be available to support residents that are experiencing difficulty under the new process. Working with the DWP, the council will host a number of stakeholder workshops around UC as we approach the go live date.

A Member specific briefing session will take place on 17 October 2018, prior to the Full Council Meeting.