

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Executive to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 22 April 2015 at 18:15.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 March 2015 (attached).
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests
To receive declarations of Disposable Pecuniary Interest or personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations made at meetings of the Executive are shown on the attachment.
- 5 Universal Credit and Local Support. Report of the Principal Benefits Officer (attached).

Reporting Officer: Mark Antonelli

- 6 Executive Forward Plan - details of forthcoming items to be considered by the Executive and the opportunity for Members to suggest further items (attached)

Bruce Lang
Assistant Chief Executive

02 April 2015

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

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Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk

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Executive Members:-

Councillor J Williams - Leader of the Council	(Leader of the Council)
Councillor J Warmington	(Portfolio Holder - Community Leadership)
Councillor V Stock-Williams	(Portfolio Holder - Corporate Resources)
Councillor N Cavill	(Portfolio Holder - Economic Development, Asset Management, Arts and Tourism)
Councillor J Hunt	(Portfolio Holder - Environmental Services and Climate Change)
Councillor J Adkins	(Portfolio Holder - Housing Services)
Councillor M Edwards	(Portfolio Holder - Planning and Transportation/Communications)
Councillor C Herbert	(Portfolio Holder - Sports, Parks and Leisure)

Executive – 11 March 2015

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Cavill, Hunt, Mrs Stock-Williams and Mrs Warmington

Officers: Shirlene Adam (Director – Operations), Mark Antonelli (Principal Benefits Officer), Chris Hall (Assistant Director – Operational Delivery), Sam Shaikh (Parks Technical Assistant), Ian Timms (Assistant Director – Business Development), David Evans (Economic Development Manager), Dan Webb (Growth and Development Programme Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: Councillors Coles and Morrell
Richard Holt and Andrew Knutt (both of the Creative Innovation Centre Community Interest Company)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

19. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Adkins, Edwards and Mrs Herbert.

20. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 February 2015, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

21. Public Question Time

Councillor Morrell referred to a Conservative Election document from four years ago which referred to the lack of investment in High Street, Taunton. He acknowledged that some limited works had been undertaken but nothing in recent months. He asked what works were planned and budgeted both in the short and medium term?

Councillor Williams stated that £500,000 had been spent on High Street since the publication of the document referred to but, due to the recession, funds for further enhancement works had 'dried up'. He claimed High Street was better than it had been and that further works had not been forgotten about. He also made reference to the significant investment in the northern end of High Street by Rockspring which had very recently been announced. This would help the general atmosphere of this part of Taunton with regard to business confidence.

22. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hunt declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council.

23. **Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability Policy and Discretionary Housing Payment Policy**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Council's approach to awarding Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and Discretionary Reductions in Council Tax Liability. Revised policies in respect of both topics were appended to the report for the information of the Members of the Executive.

With regard to Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability, the Local Government Act 2012 had created two new discounts:-

- Local Council Tax Support Schemes under Sections 13A(1) (a) and (b); and
- 13A (1) (c) which was effectively the original 13A discounts that Taunton Deane could use to increase reductions already given under the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

The implications under 13A(1) (a) and (b) had already been considered and agreed by Full Council.

In March 2013, as a consequence of the Collection Fund (Council Tax Reductions) (England) Directions 2013, the Portfolio Holder had agreed to amendments to the Councils procedures for discretionary discounts for Council Tax liability.

As a consequence of a decision made by the Valuation Tribunal for England (VTE) last year, it had been necessary to further amend Taunton Deane's policy to ensure it complied with the VTE judgment.

The regulations covering Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) were the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. This legislation had given the Council a very broad discretion. However, the Council had to make decisions in accordance with ordinary principles about good decision making and, in particular, Local Authorities had a duty to act fairly, reasonably and consistently.

Since April 2013, changes had been applied to Housing Benefit meaning that social sector accommodation had a size criteria applied, with any working age household deemed to be under occupying their home, receiving a reduced level of Housing Benefit. As a result of this and other changes, for example the Benefit Cap, the Government had increased its DHP funding to Local Authorities in anticipation of greater demand on their budgets.

The Government Guidance on DHPs had advised that the additional funding was intended to provide:-

- Short term, temporary relief to families;
- For those affected by social sector size criteria;
- Help for customers living in rural areas; and
- Priority customers in the following two groups:-
 - Disabled people living in significantly adapted accommodation

including any adaptations made for disabled children; and

- Foster carers whose housing benefit was reduced because of a bedroom being used by, or kept free for, foster children.
- Additional support to claimants impacted by the changes.

The Department for Work and Pensions had published a Discretionary Housing Payments Guidance Manual, included a Local Authority Good Practice Guide and the Council had followed this in formulating a revised DHP Policy.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to agree that the revised policies for Discretionary Reduction in Council Tax Liability and Discretionary Housing Payments be applied from 1 April 2015.

24. **Creation of the Somerset Building Control Partnership**

Considered report previously circulated, which sought approval to create a Somerset Building Control Partnership comprising Mendip and Sedgemoor District Councils, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council.

The Building Control Service provided by Districts Councils was one of the Council functions that was in direct competition with the private sector (Approved Inspectors).

In recent years, services had found it more and more difficult to compete with the private sector providers of Building Control for the 'fee income' from Building Regulations applications. Local authorities also had to carry out other statutory Building Control responsibilities that the private sector was exempt from, and these did not bring in income to support them.

The reduction in income was leaving most individual local authority Building Control Services with a choice between having a very small team with little resilience, or operating the service at a financial loss which then needed to be subsidised by the General Fund of the authority. This picture was being seen across the country and the Government had confirmed that its view was that the most effective way forward to alleviate the situation was for single local authority Building Control Teams to form partnerships.

A comprehensive Business Case had been developed by the four partner organisations having considered:-

- The prevailing economic and competition challenges facing Building Control;
- The requirement to maintain a resilient and competent service;
- The increasing move to form partnerships to deliver successful Building Control services;

- Options for governance of a partnership;
- Comparisons of workloads, application numbers, staffing numbers and income/budgets between the four partners;
- The ability to generate significant savings from forming a single business unit, by reducing management posts and staff numbers, and reducing office overheads and other support service charges; and
- The creation of a new partnership staffing structure, based on workloads and introducing new and more efficient ways of working.

Reported that the key business reasons for forming the partnership were:-

- (1) To secure a sustainable Building Control Service.
- (2) To reduce costs to each partner Council.
- (3) To improve competitiveness with the private (and public) sector providers of Building Control Services – to win more business and maximise income.
- (4) To increase resilience and customer service levels – a bigger core service team rather than four small teams.
- (5) To improve professional development opportunities, to make it easier to attract and retain good quality staff.

The Business Case projected a salary saving of £238,000 between the four partners in the first full year of the partnership, but redundancy costs would be incurred as part of the set-up. This scale of saving presented a sound financial business reason for pursuing the project, but significant further savings could be expected from:-

- The creation of a single IT system, rather than four separate systems;
- Rationalising support service charges from four organisations into one;
- Reducing the need for office space across four organisations;
- The reduced head count created additional savings in terms of computer licences, equipment, travel and other overheads;
- Improved systems;
- Improved efficiency and deployment of staff from managing Building Control as a single team across four Districts; and
- Expansion of the partnership to include other Councils and other ancillary services in the future to increase income.

The proposed governance would be through a 'Joint Committee' model as used for the Somerset Waste Partnership and the South West Audit Partnership. This involved pooling budgets and resources into a single service managed by a Joint Management Team with a Joint Steering Committee established under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Joint Committee would oversee the performance, budgetary control and strategic direction of the partnership with a Portfolio Holder and senior manager

from each partner organisation forming the Committee. A detailed Inter Authority Agreement would be agreed between the Councils.

Sedgemoor District Council was proposed to act as the host/administering authority for the Partnership. This meant that the staff from the other Councils would transfer to Sedgemoor District Council under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). Sedgemoor would be employing the staff, and progressively, would provide the majority of the support services such as HR, Payroll, office space, IT, financial management as part of the Sedgemoor District Council accounts, Audit and potentially Legal and Democratic Services.

The total Building Control fee income across the four Councils was £850,000 in 2013/2014, with approximately £200,000 in charges for statutory work.

Noted that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had considered this matter at its meeting on 19 February 2014. Members were supportive of the proposed Building Control Partnership.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to:-

- (a) Approve the creation of a Somerset Building Control Partnership as outlined in the Business Case, and subject to the approval of the other proposed partner Councils;
- (b) Approve the creation of a 'Joint Committee' to oversee the strategic direction, performance and budget of the partnership;
- (c) Agree that the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director - Operational Delivery be nominated to represent the Council on the Joint Committee; and
- (d) Agree that Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Assistant Director - Operational Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to finalise legal agreements, partnership budgets and cost/income sharing arrangements, shared redundancy payments and detailed governance arrangements.

25. Funding request from the Creative Innovation Centre Community Interest Company

Reference Minute No. 4/2015, reported that further information relating to the Business Plan previously submitted by the Creative Innovation Centre Community Interest Company (CICCCIC) had now been received.

The CICCCIC was a non-profit organisation that encouraged the participation and development of businesses and the creative industries; for practitioners, groups, individuals, businesses, start-ups and the local community. Through knowledge exchange, music, art, heritage and performance its events and workshops focused on the diversity and growth of enterprise, community and culture.

Therefore whilst currently based in Paul Street, Taunton the organisation itself provided wide support to the diverse businesses within the creative industries. This support was complemented by support for cultural activities both on site and across the community.

The funding request received was for a total of £60,000 to support the CICCIC over a three year period. This had been broken down into £20,000 per annum and would support a range of activities and projects in each of the financial years.

The Executive, whilst very supportive of the CICCIC, was of the view that at this stage financial support should be limited to one year rather than the three years requested. It was noted that this investment, if approved, would enable the CICCIC to 'lever in' further funds of over £250,000 into the local economy.

Noted that the application had previously also been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee where Members were generally supportive as to providing a degree of funding subject to the CICCIC supplying further financial information.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to:-

- (a) Approve a grant of £20,000 be made to the Creative Innovation Centre Community Interest Company (CICCIC), Taunton from General Reserves with the purpose of supporting the development of local businesses in the Creative Industries sector; and
- (b) Agree that the award of a grant to the company would be subject to the following conditions:-
 1. The Company entered a Service Level Agreement with the Council to deliver the outlined services for the year 2015/2016;
 2. The Company furnished the Council with a report into the size and extent of the Creative Industries sector in Taunton Deane, and the support needs of that sector; and
 3. The Company's accounts were submitted on completion of the Service Level Agreement to a suitably qualified, independent advisor to validate the use of the funding.

26. **Establishment of Somerset Growth Board**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the establishment of a Somerset Growth Board.

The Somerset Growth Plan had been developed by the six local authorities, business representative organisation and other key stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Somerset's Further Education sector.

The Growth Plan set out Somerset's plans to promote growth between now and 2020 and for laying the foundations for long term sustainable economic growth for

years after this. It had been developed to attract and guide investment into Somerset, to overcome barriers and maximise sustainable employment and housing growth from local opportunities, benefitting Somerset's communities, businesses and residents.

The LEP's first Growth Deal had demonstrated the success of working in partnership to agree initial priorities for Somerset and the ability to effectively influence the LEP's negotiations with Government to secure investment. Somerset would see around £36,000,000 of investment from the Growth Deal 1 - £18,000,000 of which would be allocated in 2015/2016.

The climate for securing investment, both within the local LEP and across all the LEPs nationally was very competitive and Somerset needed to position itself effectively to maximise success in the future.

The Terms of Reference for the Growth Board had been endorsed by Somerset County Council on 14 November 2014 and were detailed in the Appendix to the report. The Growth Board would be the way in which the Somerset growth agenda would be integrated into the LEP and would give impetus to the Growth Plan.

The key purpose of the Growth Board would be to take strategic ownership of the Growth Plan, ensuring that Somerset's priorities were communicated with key partners, such as the LEP, and provide local accountability for its delivery. The Growth Board would act in an advisory capacity to the six Somerset Councils and the LEP and present recommendations from the board to individual councils for approval.

A key function of the Board would be to ensure that Somerset was in a position to respond to calls for projects should additional funding be made available. It was suggested that Somerset should have a 'pipeline', for the LEP of prioritised projects supported by evidenced business cases.

To ensure the Growth Board could effectively attract and guide investment it would need sufficient executive support. In addition, a monitoring evaluation framework needed to be developed to provide appropriate performance reporting allowing the Board to identify where further effort needed to be made to achieve the strategic targets.

Reported that there were currently no identified resources to provide this executive support to the Growth Board. To ensure its effectiveness it was suggested that each of the six Somerset councils co-fund this support and each commit to a three year financial contribution as set out in the table below:-

Local Authority	Annual Contribution
Somerset County Council (cash)	5,000
Somerset County Council (in-kind)	4,500
Mendip District Council	3,071
Sedgemoor District Council	3,277

South Somerset District Council	4,570
Taunton Deane Borough Council	3,125
West Somerset District Council	957
TOTAL	24,500

Taunton Deane Borough Council had been requested to make an annual contribution of £3,125 over the next three years to support the core costs of the Growth Board – however, it was recommended that the Council should only make this contribution initially on a one year basis (for 2015/2016). This would be funded from the anticipated over recovery of Planning income in 2014/2015.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Somerset Chief Executive's and Leader's Group proposal to establish a Somerset Growth Board be endorsed; and
- (2) The proposal to transfer the sum of £3,125 to an earmarked reserve in 2014/2015 to provide a funding contribution to Growth Board core costs for 2015/2016 be supported.

27. **Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 6.50 p.m.)

Usual Declarations of Interest by Councillors

Executive

- **Member of Somerset County Council – Councillor Hunt**
- **Employee of the Department of Work and Pensions – Councillor Mrs Herbert**

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive – 22 April 2015

Universal Credit and Local Support

Report of the Principal Benefits Officer

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Vivienne Stock Williams)

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information about the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) within the local area as part of the phased roll out of the scheme nationally.
- 1.2 Universal Credit is a new method of providing financial support, replacing a number of existing benefits currently available, which will include Housing Benefit that is administered by the local authority. Universal Credit will 'go live' in the Taunton Deane area – initially only for single working age unemployed claimants – with effect from 20 April 2015.
- 1.3 The presentation of this report at the Committee itself will be supported by a briefing from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) providing the national context and also the support that DWP are looking to local authorities to provide or commission in respect of assistance for claimants and personal budgeting support. This report sets out the preparatory work required to assist the DWP to deliver Universal Support to claimants in Taunton Deane as well as seeking Member approval for allocation of the funds.

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The DWP is introducing Universal Credit to replace six means-tested benefits for working age households. It is a new simpler, single monthly payment for people who are in or out of work and will replace:
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Child Tax Credits
 - Working Tax Credits
 - Housing Benefit

2.2 The aim of Universal Credit is to encourage more people into work and to make even small amounts of work pay. The single benefit will remove the distinction from being in and out of work, allowing increased reward from employment and simplifying the system to prevent barriers in returning to work.

3. How will Universal Credit Work?

3.1 Universal Credit is administered and paid to customers by the DWP – it is not the responsibility of local authorities to administer. The DWP state Universal Credit should not be seen as a re-working of the current welfare system. It is an entirely new benefit, and its features include:

- Most people will apply online and manage their claim through an online account
- Universal Credit will be responsive – as people on low incomes move in and out of work, they will get ongoing support, giving people more incentive to work for any period of time that is available
- Most claimants on low incomes will still be paid Universal Credit when they first start a new job or increase their part-time hours
- Claimants will receive just one monthly payment, paid into a bank account in the same way as a monthly salary
- Support with housing costs will go directly to the claimant as part of their monthly payment.

4. How is Universal Credit Being Implemented?

4.1 The DWP have adopted a 'test and learn' approach to delivering Universal Credit, having started the roll out process in specific areas of the country with new claims from single working age Jobseekers from April 2013. The roll out has continued and on 29 September 2014 the DWP announced Universal Credit would be rolled out in three tranches from February 2015 to November 2015. Somerset, through the Universal Credit pathfinder site in Bath & North East Somerset, was highlighted in "Tranche 1", and for Taunton Deane Borough Council the launch date is 20 April 2015.

4.2 The approach to implementation nationally means that the number of customers claiming Universal Credit is initially low and will grow over time. The number of customers were estimated at 14,170 receiving Universal Credit at 11 September 2014, projected to increase to 100,000 by May 2015, then 500,000 by May 2016, and approximately 7.7 million customers when Universal Credit is fully rolled out. Following the test and learn approach, roll out will extend to new claims for Universal Credit from couples, families with children, as well as dealing with changes in claimants' circumstances.

4.3 Based on the experience of roll out in the pathfinder areas the DWP have produced projected Universal Credit customer volumes during 2015/16 that

would require local support from the Council. These are summarised in the table below:

Types	Number of customers per year
Online support	55
Personal Budgeting Support (PBS): Straight Forward	42
Complex	14
LCTS (20% of claims)	136
Support for UC	222

5. Universal Credit Supported Locally – TDBC Support Arrangements

- 5.1 The Government has recognised that whilst the responsibility for claims administration sits with the DWP, local authorities and other local agencies can play an important role in helping customers – particularly those that need additional assistance in completing their claims or are vulnerable. The Government consulted on the introduction of Local Support Services Framework – since rebranded as Universal Credit Supported Locally. The principles are to make work pay, encouraging people that they will be better off in work and offer support to claimants to increase their capability and become more independent and socially included.
- 5.2 Whilst the DWP has the funding to support customers, they are working with and providing funding to local authorities to provide claims assistance and personal budget support. Officers have been working with DWP to determine the scope of support that is required and to negotiate the funding that will be made available to support this. Based on anticipated volumes and type of support requirements, the DWP have indicated there is a cash limit to the funding that can be provided. Officers have modelled a range of potential operating arrangements with costs ranging from close to and in excess of the funding on offer. Through negotiation the DWP is offering the full amount it can afford within cash limited funds and we have designed a service offering that fits within this affordability envelope.
- 5.3 In the first year it is proposed that Taunton Deane Borough Council will support the DWP for customers making new claims who are single working age unemployed, subject to specific eligibility criteria [Appendix 1](#). The support will be provided in line with an agreed Delivery Partnership Agreement (DPA). The DPA sets out the respective responsibilities of the DWP and TDBC in respect of local support, and the supporting governance arrangements. It is proposed that the Council delivers the following under the terms of the agreement:
- Provide support to the DWP’s Universal Credit Service Centres

- Provide assistance to customers that need additional help to complete their claim online, including extensive support for vulnerable or other customers with more complex claims
- Manual processing of Council Tax Reduction Scheme assessments
- Personal budgeting support and advice for customers to help them adapt to receiving their welfare support through Universal Credit
- Work with the Universal Credit programme to prepare landlords for implementation
- Provide regular management information to the DWP

5.4 In order to provide this support and ensure the impact of Universal Credit on the Council's services – such as Council Tax Support – the proposal is to gear up our capacity using the available funding as follows:

- Utilise online claim facilities in Deane House reception area, with plans to implement additional facilities in other locations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, job Centre, libraries and other Council outreach offices
- Provide supported claims assistance through the Benefits Service, with a number of staff being trained by DWP to obtain the necessary skills and knowledge
- Provide personal budgeting support and advice to customers adapting to Universal Credit
- Provide a signposting service to debt advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau
- Provide additional capacity within the Benefits service to backfill the additional management requirements for delivering claims assistance and personal budgeting support

6. Preparation for Roll Out in Taunton Deane

6.1 The Housing Service and Revenues and Benefits Service have been aware of and preparing for the anticipated implementation of Universal Credit for some time. Following the recent announcement of the proposed implementation of Universal Credit in Taunton Deane this April, a number of steps have been taken or are planned to prepare for this. This includes:

- The creation of a project team to progress the implementation
- A number of events to raise awareness for Members and other stakeholders including:
 - UC Brief to Village Agents – Team meeting 26/2/15
 - UC awareness session for TDBC Private Landlords – 19/3/15
 - Presentation for TDBC members for Corporate Scrutiny 26/3/15
 - TDBC - UC rollout for RSL's and Voluntary Sector – 27/3/15
 - Staff training (open to other staff) – 13/4/15 and 15/4/15
 - Quarterly Partnership meetings with Housing, Citizens Advice Bureau and Job Centre Plus

7. Finance Comments

- 7.1 The DWP have agreed to provide TDBC with funding totalling £45,510 in 2015/16, to enable the Council to provide local support for those UC customers that need it. It is anticipated the majority of claimants will 'self-serve' using the online claim facility or will be able to complete their claims with minimal input from DWP. The funding will be needed for those customers that require additional assistance. It is proposed to recommend the Executive approves the budget "virement" for costs of £45,510 and income of £45,510 in 2015/16 - this will not impact the Council's general fund reserves balance.
- 7.2 Based on national data and projections of the number of customers that will need assistance from the Council, it is considered the funding provided is sufficient to enable the Council to support the DWP as directed in the Delivery partnership Agreement. If the number of customers significantly exceeds expected volumes the Council will seek to renegotiate the funding provided by DWP.
- 7.3 The DPA and related funding from DWP for local support is currently only determined to March 2016. It is currently unclear what amount of funding will be provided in future years. The trend of UC customers is expected to increase as the roll out expands and more customers become eligible, therefore it is reasonable to expect funding in future years will increase, but this is not guaranteed. This funding risk has been taken into account in the design of the local support delivery model for the Council, so we can respond flexibly to future funding provision.

8. Legal Comments

- 8.1 As part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the UC Regulations 2013 apply for the implementation of UC by the Department for Work and Pensions.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2013/9780111531938/contents>

9. Links to Corporate Aims

- 9.1 Supporting Universal Credit for Taunton Deane residents is closely linked with 'A Vibrant Economic Environment' to ensure people are better off financially under Universal Credit leading to more available income within the borough to support local business. The principles of Universal Credit also link closely with in TDBC corporate aims to provide a vibrant, social environment – the Delivery Partnership Agreement will identify and support our most vulnerable households working alongside partners to help support customers in our community.

10. Health and Wellbeing

- 10.1 Through the authority's roll out of Universal Credit information sessions for social and private landlords, voluntary and community groups, we aim to ensure that

these organisations are able to provide support and signposting for relevant customers. Thereby helping customers to transfer seamlessly to the new single payment system will support independence and prevent barriers to work. We are also working with Taunton Citizens Advice Bureau to help those who need to develop their budgeting skills and become more empowered to take responsibility for their own resilience and wellbeing.

11. Environmental Implications

11.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

12. Community Safety Implications

12.1 There are no community safety implications associated with this report.

13. Equalities Impact

13.1 Overall administration of Universal Credit is managed by the Department for Work and Pensions who have undertaken an [Equalities Impact Assessment](#).

14. Risk Management

14.1 Overall accountability for the delivery of the UC service rests with the Department for Work and Pensions who will work with the Council to identify:

- best practice
- problems that need solving
- opportunities for improvement

14.2 The DWP will manage risks directly associated with the implementation and management of the Universal Credit regime.

14.3 Implementing Local Support for Universal Credit customers in line with the Delivery Partnership Agreement will mean that the Council will need to plan for and mitigate risks in relation to:

- Service delivery – the DWP will refer customers to the Council for additional assistance with claims; the council will have ongoing service delivery obligations under the terms of the DPA
- Staff – the Council will need to recruit, train and manage staff to deliver the local support arrangements
- Reputation – although Universal Credit is the responsibility of the DWP, the Council will provide associated services to customers and its reputation and customer satisfaction levels may be affected directly or indirectly as a result of the support provided and the impact on Universal Credit on customers' personal circumstances

14.4 Funding – the DPA and funding agreement is only confirmed until 31 March 2016; it is unclear what funding and service expectations will follow in future years however there is a risk that funding will reduce, cease, or fail to keep pace with service demand in future.

15. Partnership Implications

15.1 Under the terms of the DPA the Council is expected to support the implementation of Universal Credit working with the DWP and recognised partners within the Borough.

16. Recommendations

16.1 The Executive is requested to note the preparation to date and the proposed arrangements to provide local support for Universal Credit claimants in Taunton Deane.

16.2 The Executive is also requested to approve the addition of £45,510 expenditure and income in 2015/2016, with no impact on the Council's Net Budget.

Mark Antonelli
Principal Benefits Officer
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Universal Credit Eligibility Criteria as at 20 April 2015

To claim UC you must be single, working age, unemployed and:

- be a British Citizen who has not left the United Kingdom (UK) for a continuous period of more than four weeks in the last two years
- have a UK National Insurance number
- be aged between 18 and 60 years 6 months
- have a bank, building society, Post Office account or a current account with a credit union
- not have to rely on an appointee or have any person acting on your behalf in relation to the claim
- not have any dependent children living with you who are adopted, fostered or being looked after by a local authority
- not have any dependent children living with you who are getting Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or who are blind
- not be pregnant
- not be a registered foster carer (even if no foster children currently live with you)
- be fit for work and not have a current fit note or have applied to get one
- not be a company director or in a limited liability partnership
- be either out of work or it isn't expected that you or your partner will individually receive take-home pay of more than £330 in the next month
- be either out of work or if you have a partner, you and your partner not expected to receive joint take home pay of more than £525 in the next month
- not expect to receive any earnings from self-employment in the next month
- not have a member of your household who is in the armed forces (regular or reserves) who is away in connection with that role

You will not be able to make a claim yet if either you or your partner if you have one:

- are receiving Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, DLA or PIP
- are awaiting a decision on a claim to Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Housing Benefit
- are appealing a decision against Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Housing Benefit
- are homeless or live in supported or temporary accommodation
- own or partly own the home in which you live
- are a carer for someone with a health condition or disability
- are in any form of education or training or about to start a course of education or training within the next month
- have more than £6,000 worth of savings, shares or capital (total of all capital whether held individually or jointly)

22/04/2015, Report:Universal Credit and Local Support

Reporting Officers:Mark Antonelli

10/06/2015, Report:Community Asset Transfer Policy – Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council

Reporting Officers:Tim Child

10/06/2015, Report:General Asset Management Issues

Reporting Officers:Tim Child

10/06/2015, Report:TYCC Trustee Fund Allocation

Reporting Officers:Angela Summers,Alison North

10/06/2015, Report:Social Value and Revised Procurement Strategy

Reporting Officers:Mark Leeman

08/07/2015, Report:Review of Deane Helpline

Reporting Officers:Chris Hall

Contains exempt information requiring private consideration: Yes

Exempt reason:The report may contain some commercially sensitive information.

09/09/2015, Report:Deane House Relocation Business Case

Reporting Officers:James Barra

04/02/2016, Report:Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Annual Investment Strategy and MRP Policy 2016/17

Reporting Officers:Paul Fitzgerald

Report:Smoke Free Zone Pilot Scheme

Reporting Officers:Angela Summers