



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of an **INDIVIDUAL MEMBER DECISION** will be held in Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **Friday 11 September 2015 at 8.30 am**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Couldrick', written in a cursive style.

Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive
Published on 3 September 2015

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website.

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council's control.

Our Vision

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

Our Priorities

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

The Underpinning Principles

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

For consideration by

Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance

IMD NO 2015.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
IMD30	None Specific	UNIVERSAL CREDIT - DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT To consider signing off on the Delivery Partnership Agreement between WBC and Department for Works & Pensions for delivering Universal Credit, including agreed levels of funding paid to the LA.	5 - 10

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER

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Agenda Item IMD30

NOTICE OF INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

ITEM NO.	IMD 2015-30
TITLE	Approval of a Partnership Agreement with Department for Works and Pensions for the delivery of Universal Credit
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance
DATE AND TIME OF DECISION	Friday 11 September 2015 at 8.30am
VENUE	David Hicks Room, Council Offices, Shute End
REPORT TO BE PUBLISHED ON	Thursday 3 September 2015

**INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION
REFERENCE IMD: 2015-30**

TITLE	Approval of a Partnership Agreement with Department for Works and Pensions for the delivery of Universal Credit
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance
ON	Friday 11 September 2015
TIME	8.30am
WARD	All
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers, Finance and Resources

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) are currently implementing the roll out of Universal Credit to all Job Centres. Universal Credit is a new “benefit” (renamed a credit) which combines payments of Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Employment & Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit into one monthly amount. The aim is to simplify the benefits system and improve work incentives.

The main change for customers will be receiving one monthly payment paid direct to them, so for some, money management will be new.

It is now known that the two Job Centres used by Wokingham residents being Reading and Bracknell, are due to go live with new claims for Job Seekers Allowance in the next tranche. These will be claims made by single claimants, without children and based on their income. Reading Job Centre goes live on 21st September and Bracknell on the 28th September.

The DWP are keen to involve Local Authorities in the rollout of, and be available to, offer support to customers in the delivery of Universal Credit (UC). The DWP have asked that all Local Authorities agree to a local Department Partnership Agreement (DPA) to enable the support to be delivered and ensure a suitable payment schedule is in place to carry out the activities detailed in the agreement.

The expected volume of customers needing support has been estimated by the DWP based on current activity. It has been estimated that we will receive approximately 65 claimant contacts that need LA support during the period 21st September 15 to 31st March 16.

Universal Credit is a central government scheme that will continue to roll out over the next 4 – 5 years, encompassing more claimant types such as couples and families. It would be in the best interest of Wokingham Borough Council residents, for the Council to provide support locally to help introduce these changes.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance approve the Departmental Partnership Agreement to be implemented from 21st September 2015.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) considers that it is in the best interests of the community to agree to the Department Partnership Agreement ensuring that support is available to residents to assist in the change-over to the new scheme.

The Department Partnership Agreement outlines the responsibilities of Wokingham Borough Council and includes:

- providing support to Universal Credit Service Centre staff (DWP) on housing cost issues
- supporting claimants to make an on-line claim to Universal Credit
- Manually processing Council Tax Reduction
- Personal Budgeting Support for customers who require help to manage their Universal Credit payments and budgets
- Working with Department for Works and Pensions to prepare landlords for the introduction of Universal Credit
- Providing management information to Department for Works and Pensions

Due to the low number of anticipated claimants (8) needing Personal Budgeting Support during the first six months, the benefits team will provide this. Appropriate training has already been delivered.

The Department for Works and Pensions are expecting no more than 10 claimants requiring on-line support, which again will be delivered by the benefits team.

Providing this support in-house will help to inform how best to provide these services going forward, particularly once Universal Credit gets rolled out to a wider customer base.

The Benefit and Customer Welfare Team are developing new procedures to cover the delivery of Universal Credit, ensuring that all staff are trained adequately, managing the Department Partnership Agreement and that proper processes are in place to gather the correct management information required by us and the department.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	The Council will receive a maximum of £17,600 (including VAT) in government funding to cover the cost of implementation Current DPA and funding covers the period until 31 st March 2016	Yes. A detailed meeting was held with DWP and relevant WBC officers on 7 th August to go over the financials	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	The Council will renegotiate funding for 16/17 before a new partnership is put in place)	To be discussed at future meeting between DWP and WBC prior to end of financial year.	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Not yet known (17/18)		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

A detailed consultation meeting was held on 7th August to determine the anticipated costs to the council of delivering the DPA. Finance officers and benefit practitioners, along with representation from DWP were present.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services and priorities?)

Other services have been made aware of the changes UC could mean to them and their customers.

DWP held an awareness session at the council on 6th August where staff from Tenant Services, Housing Needs, Customer Welfare, Financial Assessments, Benefits, Council Tax and Recovery were all given the option to attend.

In agreeing to this DPA we are ensuring that in-house support and knowledge is not only available to our residents but to other service areas within the council.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Finance and Resources	Head of Finance, relevant Service Manager and key staff, were all involved in discussions with DWP to agree funding.
Monitoring Officer	Consulted, no specific comments.
Leader of the Council	Cllr Baker fully supports the recommendations

List of Background Papers
None

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Date 11th August 2015	Version No. 1

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