
SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds, LS1 1UR on
Monday, 19th February, 2018 at 10.30 am

(A pre-meeting will take place for ALL Members of the Board at 10.00 a.m.)

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors

B Anderson (Chair) Adel and Wharfedale;
J Bentley Weetwood;
A Blackburn Farnley and Wortley;
K Bruce Rothwell;
D Collins Horsforth;
A Gabriel Beeston and Holbeck;
P Grahame Cross Gates and Whinmoor;
G Harper Hyde Park and Woodhouse;
A Khan Burmantofts and Richmond Hill;
M Lyons Temple Newsam;
K Ritchie Bramley and Stanningley;
G Wilkinson Wetherby;

Please note: Certain or all items on this agenda may be recorded

Principal Scrutiny Adviser:
Angela Brogden
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Produced on Recycled Paper

A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 25* of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded).</p> <p>(* In accordance with Procedure Rule 25, notice of an appeal must be received in writing by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting).</p>	
2			<p>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report. 2. To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information. 3. If so, to formally pass the following resolution:- <p>RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:</p> <p>No exempt items have been identified.</p>	

3

LATE ITEMS

To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.

(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes.)

4

DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

To disclose or draw attention to any disclosable pecuniary interests for the purposes of Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 and paragraphs 13-16 of the Members' Code of Conduct.

5

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

To receive any apologies for absence and notification of substitutes.

6

MINUTES - 15TH JANUARY 2018

1 - 6

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2018.

7

UPDATE ON UNIVERSAL CREDIT

7 - 14

To receive a report from the Director of Communities and Environment presenting an update on Universal Credit and the implications for residents in Leeds.

8

INQUIRY INTO UNIVERSAL CREDIT - TRACKING OF SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

15 - 36

To receive a report from the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support presenting an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny inquiry into Universal Credit.

9

INQUIRY INTO REDUCING REPEAT CUSTOMER CONTACTS - TRACKING OF SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

37 -
54

To receive a report from the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support presenting an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny inquiry into reducing repeat customer contacts.

10

WORK SCHEDULE

55 -
60

To consider the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2017/18 municipal year.

11

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Monday, 12th March 2018 at 10.30 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.00 am)

THIRD PARTY RECORDING

Recording of this meeting is allowed to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings. A copy of the recording protocol is available from the contacts on the front of this agenda.

Use of Recordings by Third Parties – code of practice

- a) Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion that took place, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.
- b) Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2018

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, A Blackburn,
K Bruce, D Collins, A Gabriel, P Grahame,
R Grahame, G Harper, A Khan, K Ritchie
and G Wilkinson

59 Late Items

There were no late items.

60 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

61 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor M Lyons. Notification had been received that Councillor R Grahame was to substitute for Councillor Lyons.

62 Minutes - 4 December 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2017 be approved as a correct record.

63 Housing Advisory Panel (HAP) Review - Initial Proposals

The report of the Chief Officer of Housing Management presented a summary of the main outcomes arising from the recent review of Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) for the Board's consideration and comment.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Simon Costigan, Chief Officer Property and Contracts
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer Housing Management
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Ian Montgomery, Service Manager, Tenant Engagement
- John Gittos, Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board

The key issues raised were as follows:

- *Clarity surrounding the consultation responses* - the Board was informed that there were approximately 350 individuals, groups and community organisations invited to take part in the HAP Review consultation, which attracted 82 responses, with representations made across all 11 HAPs.
- *Maximising the use of social media* - whilst acknowledging the use of the Council's website and existing Housing Leeds social media sites to launch the online HAP survey, the Board stressed the need to also maximise other relevant social media community sites moving forward.
- *Improving awareness of HAPs and engaging more broadly with tenants* – the Board particularly acknowledged proposals aimed at improving awareness and engagement with younger and other under-represented tenants.
- *Clarity surrounding membership requirements and training for HAP members* – the Board was advised that HAP members are required to follow a clear Code of Conduct and are involved in a range of training events.
- *Application of HAP funding* – in discussing the proposed allocation of HAP funding moving forward, Members stressed the importance of ensuring that Council tenants are the main beneficiaries given that HAP funding is sourced via Council rents.
- *Maximising value for money* – the Board noted that, whilst no firm proposals had yet been made, Housing Leeds is liaising with Procurement to explore greater flexibility for HAPs to use framework contractors or other external suppliers.
- *Implementation and next steps* – the Board noted details of further engagement plans during January 2018 as more detailed proposals for the future of HAPs continue to be developed prior to implementation in April 2018.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report of the Chief Officer for Housing Management be noted.
- (b) That the above comments of the Scrutiny Board are reflected in the ongoing development of proposals for the future of HAPs.

64 Performance Report

The report of the Directors of Resources & Housing and Communities and Environment provided a summary of performance against the strategic priorities for the Council and city and other performance areas relevant to the Scrutiny Board's remit.

Appendix 4 of the report also outlined a proposed performance framework for Housing Leeds for 2018/19 for the Board's consideration.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Yeadon, Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability
- James Rogers, Director of Communities and Environment

- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer Customer Access
- Andrew Cameron, Head of Council Tax and Benefits
- Simon Costigan, Chief Officer Property and Contracts
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer Housing Management
- John Gittos, Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board

The key issues raised were as follows:

- *Unauthorised encampments* – the Chief Officer for Housing Management explained that reports of unauthorised encampments are dealt with on a case by case basis. However, the Board discussed the general principles and practices in place.
- *Temporary accommodation* – clarity was sought regarding the location of temporary accommodation provision across the city.
- *Housing repairs* – the Board acknowledged that Housing Leeds had encountered difficulties with the integration of the new automated information system ‘Total Mobile’ and that an action plan is now in place to address this.
- *Tackling homelessness* – the Board discussed the procedures in place aimed at preventing homelessness.
- *Annual Home Visits* – the Chief Officer for Housing Management confirmed that the latest figure (end of December 2017) for the percentage of completed visits was 84.2% and that the service was on track to achieve 100% by year end.
- *Missed bins* – in welcoming ongoing improvement in performance, the Board noted that the service continues to work with Highways in tackling particular access issues encountered by refuse vehicles.
- *Decommissioning of Siebel CRM* – the Board noted that the decommissioning of Siebel CRM had a major impact on performance as staff availability was reduced to accommodate training on the new system. Linked to this, the Board also suggested that further work should be undertaken to explore how Elected Members could also benefit from the new information system.
- *Controlled access to Community Hubs* – particular reference was made to the reduction in footfall at the Compton Centre following controlled access measures. Members therefore urged that other security solutions are explored.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the performance report and the proposed performance framework for Housing Leeds for 2018/19 (set out in appendix 4) be noted.
- (b) That the above comments and requests for information made by the Scrutiny Board are taken forward for action.

65 Financial Health Monitoring

The report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support presented the latest financial health monitoring report (month 7) as presented to the Executive Board on 13th December 2017.

However, the Chair proposed that the Board's consideration of this report be undertaken in conjunction with Agenda Item 10 'Initial Budget Proposals for 2018/19'.

RESOLVED – That the Board's consideration of the Financial Health Monitoring report be undertaken in conjunction with Agenda Item 10 'Initial Budget Proposals for 2018/19'.

66 Initial Budget Proposals for 2018/19

The report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support presented details of the Initial Budget Proposals for 2018-19, which included a copy of the Executive Board report dated 13th December 2017. The Board was asked to consider matters and proposals relating to service areas that fall within its remit and identify any comments and/or recommendations to be submitted for consideration by the Executive Board at its meeting on 7th February 2018.

As agreed, the examination of the initial budget proposals was undertaken in conjunction with a review of the in-year financial health of the authority (as at month 7).

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Yeadon, Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability
- James Rogers, Director of Communities and Environment
- Neil Evans, Director of Resources and Housing
- Michael Everitt, Head of Finance
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance
- John Gittos, Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board

The following key issues were raised:

- Clarity was sought regarding the proposed budgeted efficiencies within Waste Management. The Board was informed that this was a savings target reflecting a detailed review of expenditure budgets within the service, including a number of areas where current year trends indicated that savings could be made.
- The Board noted the proposed injection of £360k to cover the annual net cost of 3 additional garden waste routes to cover the remainder of suitable properties across the city.
- Clarity was sought around the proposed increase to bereavement charges. The Board was informed that this would equate to a general 4% increase, which would also cover the cost of additional community engagement activity in the service.
- Clarity was also sought regarding future funding for local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The Board was informed that the current funding arrangement had been secured for a further 2 years.

- Whilst the Director of Resources and Housing was asked to give an initial response regarding the implications of the recent collapse of Carillion, it was acknowledged that other relevant Scrutiny Boards were likely to pick up this matter in more detail.

In conclusion, the Chair confirmed that whilst the Scrutiny Board did not wish to make any formal recommendations to the Executive Board in relation to the initial budget proposals for 2018/19, a summary of the Board's key observations would be reported back to the Executive Board as part of a composite report produced by Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – That a summary of the Board's key observations in relation to the Initial Budget Proposals for 2018/19 be reported back to the Executive Board as part of a composite report produced by Scrutiny.

67 **BEST COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH FOR 2018/19-2020/21 - INITIAL PROPOSALS**

The report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support invited the Scrutiny Board to consider and provide any comment on initial proposals linked to a refresh of the Best Council Plan for 2018/19 – 2020/21. A copy of the Executive Board report dated 13th December 2017 was appended to provide further details of the initial proposals.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Coral Main, Head of Business Planning and Risk
- John Gittos, Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board

The key issues raised were as follows:

- In querying the removal of the 'Low carbon' priority, the Board acknowledged the intention of this being reflected as a KPI under the new '21st century infrastructure' priority, alongside other related KPIs around improving air quality and reducing noise.
- The Board focused on the consultation and engagement strategies used to inform the content of the Best Council Plan as well as raising greater public awareness. Whilst acknowledging the cost-benefits of utilising on-line routes of communication and engagement, the Board stressed the need to also make the Plan more accessible via local libraries and Community Hubs.

In conclusion, the Chair explained that the comments made by the Board would be reflected in a composite report by Scrutiny and reported back to the Executive Board at its meeting on 7th February 2018.

RESOLVED – That the above comments made by the Board are reflected in a composite report by Scrutiny and reported back to the Executive Board at its meeting on 7th February 2018.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Monday, 19th February, 2018

68 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2017/18 municipal year.

In relation to the Board's next meeting, the Chair explained that this had been moved to Monday 19th February 2018 at 10.30 am.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board be held on Monday 19th February 2018 at 10.30 am
- (b) That subject to any on-going discussions and scheduling decisions, the Board's outline work schedule be approved.

69 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 19th February 2018 at 10.30 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.00 am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.25 pm).



Report author: Diane Gill
Tel: 3 7 8 9 2 1 6

Report of Director for Communities and Environment

Report to Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board

Date: 19th February 2018

Subject: Update on Universal Credit (UC)

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

- 1 Although the position regarding preparation for UC remains on course, this report provides the latest position regarding UC claims in Leeds along with any latest information to further support the council's planning assumptions for full UC roll out.
- 2 The initial limited roll out still means that numbers are low in Leeds, however, the budget announcement in November 2017 has made some important changes to the UC roll out and implementation processes which will impact on both claimants and Councils in terms of the advice and support that is available.

Recommendation

- 3 That the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board notes the information in this report and takes this information into account when considering the update on the UC scrutiny recommendations.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report sets out to provide an update on Universal Credit and the implications for residents in Leeds.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Universal Credit is the Government's flagship welfare reform which merges 6 benefits into one Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Housing Benefit (HB), Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) and is delivered by a single agency. Universal Credit went live in Leeds on 1st February 2016 and was focused only on single jobseekers from this date. This group is considered by DWP to be the simplest cohort for Universal Credit purposes and enables the Government to continue to test the delivery of Universal Credit while expanding its reach nationally.
- 2.2 There are many differences between Universal Credit and the legacy benefits it is replacing. These include:
- Claims must be made online
 - Payment is normally paid monthly to a single person in a household
 - The rent element is paid directly to the tenant
 - There was normally no entitlement to Universal Credit (including the housing costs element) for the first 7-days following a claim
 - First time claimants must wait for 5-6 weeks before an initial payment is made
- 2.3 The initial limited roll out means that numbers are still relatively low in Leeds. As at end November 2017 there were 5,710 people in receipt of UC. Of this figure 42% were in employment and 58% were not in employment. It is also estimated that 42% have a rental liability (2,400).

3 Main Issues

3.1 Autumn Statement November 2017

- 3.2 In the Governments Autumn Budget in November 2017 a number of changes were announced that will have an impact on UC. The changes are aimed at assisting people with the transition to UC and also in the administration and future implementation of the full digital service.

- 3.3 The following changes have been announced:

- 7 waiting days at the start of new claim will be abolished from 1/2/18. This means the length of time people are waiting for a first payment of UC when a new claim is made will be reduced from 6 weeks to 5 weeks.
- From 1/1/18 people can claim up to 100% of their potential UC payment as an Advance Payment (was previously 50% of their expected entitlement) Applications for advance payments should be processed within 5 days. The time in which people have to repay these advance payments has also been extended from 6 months to 12 months.
- From April 2018 anybody moving onto UC who is in receipt of Housing Benefit will receive an automatic 2 week run on of Housing Benefit. This is to cushion the

transition to UC and will give 2 weeks extra Housing costs in HB which do not need to be repaid.

- There are new flexibilities around APA managed payments for claimants in private rented sector - for those having HB paid directly to their private landlord before moving on UC. This means it will be easier for private tenants to request their UC to be paid direct to their landlord.
- Extension of 'interim period' for families with three or more children - no new claims from families with three or more children (unless been on UC within past 6 months) extended till Jan 2019. This means anybody with 3 or more children will NOT be able to claim UC until Jan 2019 at the earliest and will instead continue to claim the existing legacy benefits as normal.
- From November 2017 all UC telephone numbers are now free phone numbers.
- There is now a slowdown of Digital roll-out - new timetable that extends roll-out to end of December 2018. Leeds will now go onto the full digital service of UC on 10th October 2018 (and not June 2018 as previously advised).

3.4 The above changes are seen as a positive improvement for people claiming UC, however, it has had an impact on the ability to continue to have UC claims in the existing live service.

3.5 As a result of these changes DWP have confirmed that from 1/1/2018 there will be NO new claims to the current live service. Instead anybody who would have been eligible to claim UC (i.e. single fit for work jobseekers) will instead revert to claiming legacy benefits (i.e. JSA / Housing Benefit.) This announcement in effect reverts LA's back to the process of Housing Benefit administration before the live UC service was introduced. i.e. claims to legacy benefits.

3.6 Anybody who is already on UC will remain on UC. However, if there is a change in circumstances that means there is no longer any UC entitlement and at a later date there is a need to make a new claim for benefit again, then the NEW claim will revert back to claiming Housing Benefit/JSA etc.

3.7 This revised process will be in place until Leeds moves into the "full" service which is now October 2018. There will now be a steady reduction in UC claimants in Leeds and any ongoing issues linked to UC, especially in the full digital service, will not start to be seen in Leeds until Oct 2018.

3.8 These changes have now had a knock on effect to the UC roll out timetable and the two phases of roll out are now revised as follows:

- *Transition phase:* the transition phase rolls out the Full Service to all new claims. This means that anyone making a claim for a legacy benefit (i.e. HB, Income Support, ESA, Jobseekers Allowance and Tax Credits) will be treated as making a claim for Universal Credit. This will, therefore, roll out Universal Credit to families and more vulnerable claimants. Anybody already claiming one of the benefits that UC will replace, will remain on this benefit until the migration phase or if there is a significant change in circumstances which would require them to make a new claim for benefit which would result in a new claim for UC. The transition phase is intended to run from May 16 through to December 18 and Leeds is due to move into the transition phase in October 2018.

- *Migration phase*: the final phase of roll out is the migration phase which sees all remaining legacy benefit claimants migrated onto Universal Credit. This phase is expected to run from July 2019 through to March 22. There are few details known about this phase at this time but the process will not be a 'drag and drop' process where information and data is passed from legacy systems to Universal Credit. Instead, legacy benefits will be closed down and claimants will need to make a separate claim for Universal Credit.

3.9 Free School Meals (FSM)

3.10 Under the current legacy benefit system, pupils in maintained schools, academies and free schools are entitled to receive free school meals if they or their parents or guardians are in receipt of any of the benefits below:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (regardless of income amount, as a temporary measure during the early stages of rollout).

3.11 Since 2013, as a temporary measure to ensure that any families moving on to UC in the early stages of rollout (for example, those in pilot areas) did not lose their entitlements, all families in receipt of UC were entitled to FSM pending the introduction of eligibility criteria. This had minimal impact in Leeds as the majority of UC claims were from single people with very few families in receipt of UC and thus automatically qualifying for FSM's.

3.12 On 16th November 2017 the Department for Education (DfE) launched a consultation on the proposed eligibility criteria to FSM to replace the temporary measures that are in place for eligibility for pupils in primary and secondary education. The closing date for this consultation was 11th January 2018.

3.13 DfE are proposing new criteria that they advise would enable a greater number of children to benefit from free school meals, compared to the number receiving these meals at present. DfE estimate that the proposals would make around 50,000 more pupils eligible for free school meals by the time Universal Credit is fully rolled out nationally.

3.14 To achieve this, DfE are proposing to amend the eligibility criteria for free school meals by introducing an earnings threshold of £7,400 per annum for those in receipt of Universal Credit. It is important to note that the net earnings threshold does not represent a household's total income, as it does not include their income from benefits, which significantly increase a household's overall income.

3.15 DfE propose to introduce this net earnings threshold in April 2018. New free school meals claimants earning above this threshold after its introduction would not be eligible. DfE propose to keep the threshold constant until the end of the Universal

Credit rollout period. After that point, they will then keep the threshold under review to ensure those who most need support are benefiting.

- 3.16 In addition to the earnings threshold DfE propose to protect those families who would otherwise lose entitlement to free school meals as a result of this criteria change. Under the proposals, no child should lose their free school meal during the transition to Universal Credit. It is estimated that, these proposals will see more children benefit from free school meals than at present. In addition, any protected pupils who are still receiving free school meals once the transition is complete should continue to receive protection until the end of their current phase of education (e.g. primary, secondary school), irrespective of any income changes.
- 3.17 These proposals are seen as a welcome announcement to ensure that those families most in need of support continue to be eligible to FSM as we move into UC full service. Once the outcome of the consultation is known then processes will be agreed to ensure the relevant safeguards are put in place to identify and award FSM as appropriate.

3.18 Supporting Customers

- 3.19 Community Hubs are playing a key role in supporting people to get online and this is something that is already evident as part of the Citizens@Leeds agenda. Online claiming support is not considered to be anything new to the Community Hubs current practices and it is anticipated that any support requirements for Universal Credit claiming will be contained within the Community Hubs existing provision. Since go live on 1st February 2016, only 55 people have required support to make an online Universal Credit claim.
- 3.20 As roll out expands the demand to provide further support to help people make and manage their online UC accounts will increase. How this support will be provided is being developed as we prepare for full service from October 2018.
- 3.21 There will still be an element of Housing Benefit claims until we move into the “migration phase” and beyond and this will impact on customers and front facing services in terms of understanding and dealing with a “dual system” for some years to come.

3.22 Personal Budgeting Support (PBS)

- 3.23 The DWP will require the Local Authority to provide PBS as part of the delivery partnership. The emphasis is on helping people to deal with a monthly payment of Universal Credit made directly to themselves monthly in arrears and ensuring they are able to meet the demands of having Housing Costs in with this payment instead of being paid to the landlord. This support includes managing a basic household budget, managing a bank account, and making payments. Take up of PBS is not conditional for a Universal Credit claim and as the initial roll out is single newly unemployed people, demand has been low. Since go live on 1st February 2016, approx. 200 people have been offered PBS, with the majority being Housing Leeds tenants who have received support via the dedicated UC specialist team.

3.24 Housing Leeds – Supporting tenants

- 3.25 Over recent years we have identified the improved outcomes which can be achieved through integrating financial and personal support. We used this approach in January 2016, to establish the Enhanced Income Team, specialist officers who provide

practical support to tenants affected by welfare reform and UC. In December 2017, we increased this resource to 18 specialist officers. The Enhanced Income Team is offering additional support to affected tenants to review rehousing options, maximise income, manage budgets and debt, apply for Discretionary Housing Payments, utility accounts, and accessing training and employment. Priority is being given to tenants affected by Universal Credit, along with the Benefit Cap and Under-Occupation.

3.26 There have been 1400 Housing Leeds tenants who have claimed Universal Credit since go live in February 2016. Currently there are 470 live UC council tenants in Leeds. Evidence suggests that rent arrears are initially increasing for UC tenants in the first 3 – 4 month period of a claim, however, by engaging with these residents an improved outcome is being seen for tenants in terms of financial stability. Overall, there has been an increase in arrears for tenants on Universal Credit. However, it is estimated that arrears would be significantly higher if this support was not in place. Housing Leeds undertook a benchmarking exercise with other landlords last year which showed that increases in arrears due to Universal Credit were below average.

3.27 Claims for Universal Credit in Leeds have been paused following the budget announcements in late 2017, and new claims will begin under the full digital service in October 2018. We are currently reviewing and refreshing our plans for the entire housing service in preparation for the roll out of UC full service. The current support provided to tenants has proved to be effective and we are reviewing how we resource appropriate levels of support for tenants as the numbers of UC claimants grows and becomes established.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 The report is for information only and does not require consultation.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 Not applicable.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

4.3.1 Tackling poverty and deprivation remains a key council priority

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The report itself does not require any resource allocation.

4.5 Legal Implications, access to information and call in

4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report.

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 The report identifies impacts arising from the Government's UC programme. There is a risk that the impacts both on the council and on residents, may be significant. The issue of UC is a key risk on the Corporate Risk Register and continues to be monitored.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council is taking steps to prepare for the further roll out of UC and to mitigate some of the impacts on residents of the Government's welfare reform programme. Full partnership work with DWP continues to play a key role as we move closer to full digital service.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board notes the information in this report and takes this information into account when considering the update on the UC scrutiny recommendations.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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Report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Date: 19th February 2018

Subject: Inquiry into Universal Credit – Tracking of Scrutiny recommendations

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny inquiry into Universal Credit.

2.0 Background information

2.1 During 2015/16, the Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake an inquiry into the roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds. The inquiry concluded in January 2016 and a report setting out the Scrutiny Board’s findings and recommendations was published in February 2016. This report is available via the Council’s website ([Click to access inquiry report](#)).

2.2 The Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board considered the formal response to its recommendations in July 2016 and then continued to track the implementation of these recommendations. The last update report was considered in February 2017 and six of the sixteen recommendations were officially signed off at that stage. It now falls within the remit of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board to continue monitoring progress against the remaining recommendations.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to consider the position status of its recommendations in terms of their on-going relevance and the progress made in implementing the recommendations based on a standard set of criteria. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

- 3.2 This standard set of criteria is presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required.
- 3.3 Details of progress against each of these recommendations are set out within the table at Appendix 2 for the Board's consideration. However, in view of the length of time that has lapsed since the original inquiry during 2015/16 and the implications of ongoing national developments surrounding Universal Credit (as detailed in Item 7 of the meeting agenda), the Chair of the Scrutiny Board also met with relevant senior officers to discuss potential next steps.
- 3.4 Moving forward, it is therefore proposed that the Scrutiny Board ceases to formally track the recommendations arising from the original inquiry and assigns a progress category status of 1 (stop monitoring) to the remaining recommendations set out in appendix 2.
- 3.5 In doing so, it is also proposed that a general update report is brought back to Scrutiny in Spring 2019 setting out the position in Leeds once full service for Universal Credit has been in place for six months.

4.0 Recommendations

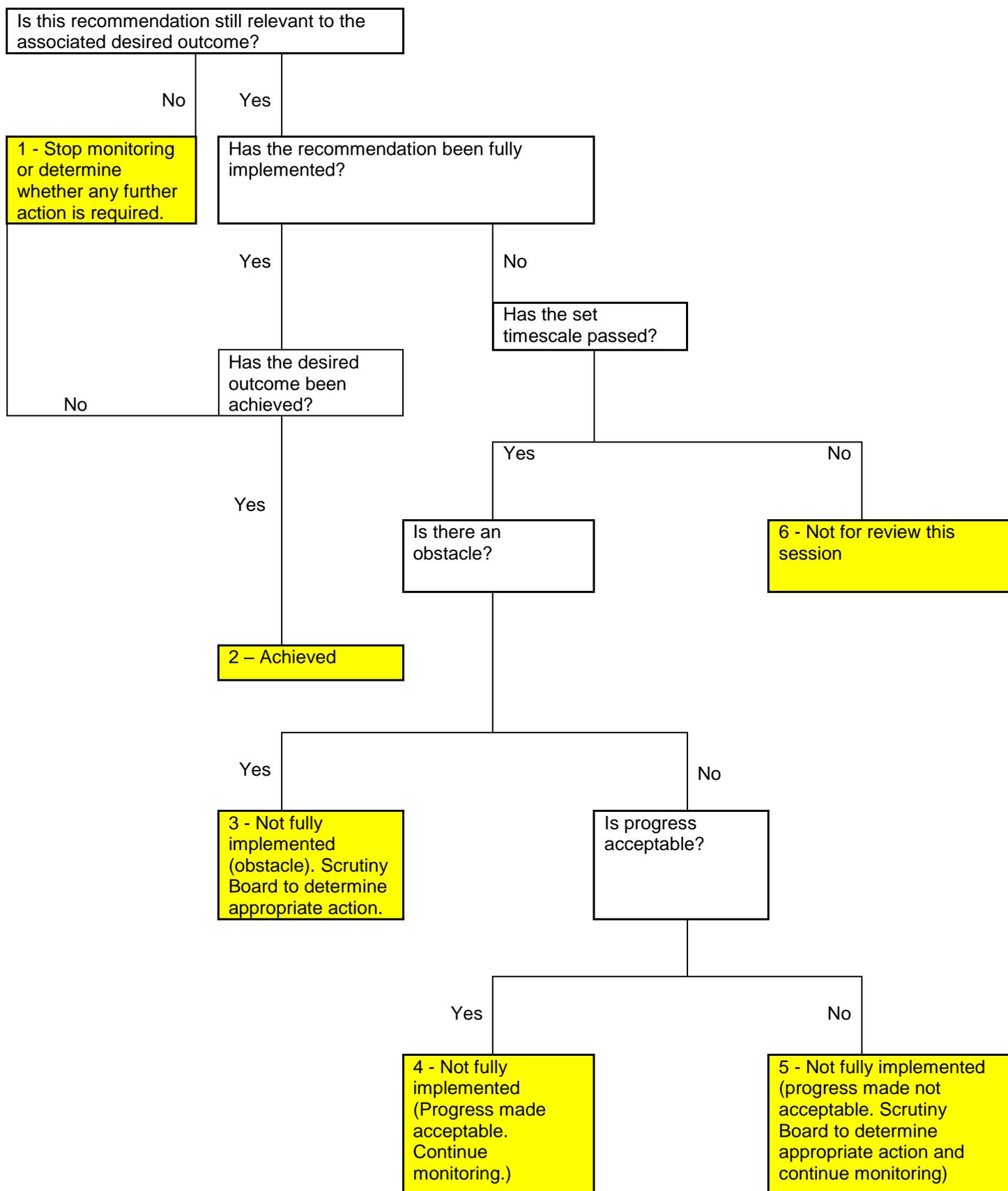
- 4.1 The Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
- (a) assign a progress category status of 1 (stop monitoring) to the remaining recommendations set out in appendix 2
 - (b) request that a general update report be brought back to Scrutiny in Spring 2019 setting out the position in Leeds once full service for Universal Credit has been in place for six months.

5.0 Background documents¹

- 5.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:
Questions to be considered by Scrutiny Boards



Position Status Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring or determine whether any further action is required
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not fully implemented (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not fully implemented (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

<p>Desired Outcome – Having clarity surrounding Transitional Protection entitlement.</p>
<p>Recommendation 1 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)² continues to seek clarification from DWP as to whether Transitional Protection will apply to those housing benefit claimants affected by the Benefit Cap when they move onto Universal Credit.</p>
<p>Formal response in July 2016:</p> <p>The rollout to Universal Credit is being done through ‘transition’ and ‘migration’.</p> <p>‘Transition’ relates to new claims for a benefit that is now dealt with under Universal Credit and in these cases there is no Transitional Protection.</p> <p>Migration falls into two areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managed migration; and - Natural migration. <p>‘Natural migration’ happens where someone in receipt of a legacy benefit (for example, Jobseekers Allowance) has a change in their circumstances that ends their existing claim or requires them to make a claim for new benefit. These cases will be migrated to Universal Credit but there will be no entitlement to Transitional Protection.</p> <p>‘Managed migration’ relates to those claimants still getting legacy benefits at the point that the Government closes down the legacy benefits. These claimants will be migrated onto Universal Credit and, if they would be worse off under Universal Credit, will be entitled to Transitional Protection. Where this occurs, and the total household Universal Credit entitlement would have been lower than their total existing award of benefit and tax credits, Transitional Protection will be applied as a cash top-up to make up the difference.</p> <p>Aside from this DWP has yet to set out its overall approach to Transitional Protection for cases moving to Universal Credit through the managed migration process. There remains considerable uncertainty around claimants affected by the Benefit Cap, who face a large reduction when they move to Universal Credit, and their right to Transitional Protection.</p> <p>The issue is formally logged on DWP’s Action Point list.</p>

² The role of Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) no longer exists. As from April 2017, this responsibility falls to the Director of Communities and Environment.

Position reported in February 2017:

The scope and details of the Universal Credit transitional protection scheme are still awaited. As indicated in the earlier response, Transitional Protection only applies to cases moving onto Universal Credit as part of the 'managed migration' programme. The 'managed migration' programme is not due to start until summer 2018 at the earliest. The lack of detail at this stage is not, therefore, critical. DWP is keen to ensure LA expertise is taken into account when designing the managed migration programme and Leeds has an officer seconded to DWP to help with this aspect.

One issue that appears to have been resolved is that Transitional Protection will not prevent the full impact of the Benefit Cap being applied when a customer migrates to Universal Credit.

Current position:**LCC update:**

Given the Government's decision to delay the roll out of the full service for UC, the managed migration is not due to commence nationally until July 2019 at the earliest.

As stated last year, Transitional Protection will not prevent the full impact of the Benefit Cap being applied when a customer migrates to Universal Credit and they will see a larger reduction in their UC. Given this, on managed migration, the council will be able to identify these customers and ensure any additional support via DHP if appropriate is advised to the customer.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – Having clarity surrounding Transitional Protection entitlement.

Recommendation 2 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) seeks clarification from DWP as to whether existing claimants with disabilities will receive Transitional Protection, where appropriate, when moving from the current system of means-tested benefits to Universal Credit.

Formal response in July 2016:

As set out in recommendation 1 above.

Position reported in February 2017:

As set out in recommendation 1 above.

Current position:

DWP update:

All Customers will receive transitional protection regardless of the type of benefit received or their circumstances. Further guidance is to be issued regarding this.

LCC update:

As indicated in the earlier response, Transitional Protection only applies to cases moving onto Universal Credit as part of the 'managed migration' programme. Claimants with disabilities who are worse off when they transfer to UC will be eligible to transitional protection. As indicated above, further guidance will be issued on the application of transitional protection.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That measures are put in place to ensure that eligible Universal Credit claimants encounter no delays in accessing free school meals.

Recommendation 3 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Director of Children’s Services work closely with DWP to put in place local measures that will help alleviate any delays in accessing free school meals for eligible Universal Credit claimants.

Formal response in July 2016:

This initial roll out (single people) will see minimal claims for Free School Meals (FSM) as these will only arise when a single claimant becomes a family unit. The current UC process automatically entitles claimants to FSM and these claims will be identified as part of the CTS claim process. Leeds also uses a single FSM claim form for people who do not have a council tax liability and these forms will continue to be used for UC claimants.

The main emphasis initially is ensuring the continuation of FSM whilst there is a 5-6 week wait for the UC decision. Working procedures are already in place to ensure there is a short term continuation of FSM entitlement when an existing Housing Benefit claim ends. We have extended the FSM entitlement for the small number of cases where UC has been claimed. This gives both parents and schools time to adjust to the award being withdrawn ahead of any UC decision.

Agreement needs to be reached with both Childrens services and schools that this arrangement will continue once we move into a wider roll out programme

Once the final eligibility criteria is agreed then further discussions will take place as to how migration of FSM will take place.

Position reported in February 2017:

There is no change to the current position in terms of the awarding of FSM under UC. Arrangements continue to ensure FSMs are awarded to eligible UC claimants. Once the final eligibility criteria is known, arrangements will be put into place to ensure continued FSM awarding to eligible UC claimants.

Current position:

The Department for Education (DfE) has completed a consultation on a new eligibility criteria for FSM (closing date 11 Jan 2018) in which they propose to introduce a new net earnings threshold of £7,400 pa for those families in receipt of UC and which will determine the household’s eligibility for FSM (note it is only the net earnings threshold that is treated as earnings and not any other additional income received through benefits). DFE propose to introduce this new net earnings threshold in UC from April 2018. For any new UC claims earning above this net earnings threshold after the introduction in April 2018 will not be eligible for FSM.

The most welcome news from the consultation is that DfE propose that during the UC rollout existing recipients of FSM will not lose their entitlement following the introduction of this new eligibility criteria in UC. And every pupil who is eligible for FSM at the point at which the new earnings threshold in UC is introduced in April 2018 will be protected against losing their meals whilst UC is fully rolled out nationally even if their eligibility changes.

Leeds has UC claims from families that have moved to Leeds and the current position is 13 FSM claims covering 30 children. No further eligibility checks will be required for protected families during the UC roll out period and schools will simply leave their pupils flagged as protected pupils in their systems. Any protected pupils who are still receiving FSM once the UC roll out transition is complete would continue to receive protection until the end of their current phase of education (e.g. primary, secondary).

These changes do not affect the criteria for universal infant FSM which will continue to be available to all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 regardless of parental income.

Once we know the outcome of the FSM consultation and if DfE proceed with their new eligibility criteria for UC customers, then working processes will be agreed as to how entitlement to FSM will be quickly identified and awarded from October 2018. Clearly the council will learn from other LA's where UC FS is rolled out after April 2018 when the new FSM eligibility criteria is introduced.

From Oct 18 we will adopt a process for identifying and awarding FSM to brand new FSM claims as existing FSM entitlements will be protected. It is likely that this will be a triage process for all new claims to UC to identify entitlement to Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payment and Free School Meals.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That Council Tax Support claims are administered quickly and accurately for Universal Credit claimants in Leeds.

Recommendation 5 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with DWP to monitor the effectiveness of the new Local Council Tax Reduction automation process to ensure that Council Tax Support claims are administered quickly and accurately in Leeds.

Formal response in July 2016:

The DWP currently issues notifications and information regarding UC to LAs via a “Data Hub”. DWP have now completed the automation of referrals to LA’s.

The effectiveness of this automation is being monitored and currently manual intervention is taken in each of these notifications to ensure a Council Tax Support (CTS) claim is either received and then promptly processed or an application is issued to the customer. Monitoring of the numbers of CTS claims being made in line with the numbers of UC claims is ongoing and working practices are being developed to ensure CTS is maximised in UC claims.

A single CTS application has been produced to make CTS claiming linked to UC a streamlined process and this is issued by each Job Centre Plus (JCP) as part of the work coach interview

In addition to this process, data from the hub is shared with Housing Leeds to ensure Council Tenants are fully supported through the UC claim to manage their rent liabilities and also encourage CTS claiming at the tenant contact.

Position reported in February 2017:

We continue to apply processes aimed at ensuring take-up of CTS. This includes:

- DWP automation so that we receive details of UC claims;
- Issue application forms where no CTS claim received
- Working with DWP to issue simplified claim form at the face to face meeting with Work Coaches
- Working with Housing Leeds to ensure that claims are made from HL tenants on UC

As at 16th January there are 758 live Council Tax support claims from people who are on Universal Credit and, although there can be no guarantee that council tax support is claimed in all universal credit cases, changes to the council tax support scheme from April 2017 will help to make improvements to the claiming process to help ensure council tax support is maximised.

Current position:

DWP have given their full commitment to providing LA’s with automated council tax support notifications and are working with software suppliers to deliver this automation. This will allow LA’s to identify all UC claimants and target CTS take up accordingly The LA will only get the automated notification service when full service is rolled out in the LA area which for Leeds will be October 2018.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That there is an effective process for easily identifying, awarding and paying Discretionary Housing Payments linked to the administration of Universal Credit.

Recommendation 6 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with DWP to explore the feasibility of establishing an effective process for easily identifying, awarding and paying Discretionary Housing Payments as part of the preparations for the wider roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds.

Formal response in July 2016:

The revised DWP Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) guidance clarifies what LA's need to do to award DHP and what to take into account for UC.

Identification of DHP cases will continue to be driven by Housing Leeds / Social Sector Landlords and tenants (as is the case now) and in addition we will continue to identify cases affected by other Welfare Reforms which may also be linked with UC to ensure DHP is considered if appropriate

The DWP have confirmed that they will notify Councils of any UC claimant that is affected by the Benefit Cap. This will allow the Council to consider whether DHP will be appropriate in these cases

DWP have awarded additional funding to LAs for system enhancements for the DHP administration process. This module will simplify the current UC DHP award process to ensure DHP claims are maintained accurately within the system.

Position reported in February 2017:

An updated module has now been applied to the Academy Benefits system which supports effective delivery of Discretionary Housing Payments for Universal Credit cases. This will continue as roll out expands and will provide continued accurate DHP claims linked to UC within the system.

As at the end of December 2016, Discretionary Housing Payments were in place for 74 Universal Credit cases.

Current position:

DHP is now claimed online and is accessed through the Council's website at www.leeds.gov.uk/dhp. The DHP online claim supports LCC readiness for UC full service and managed migration.

In readiness for full service roll out the DWP have issued new guidance which sets out the process LA's must follow when requesting information for DHP. LA must check the DWP's Customer Information system (CIS) to confirm UC entitlement and/or request details of the UC award direct from customer as the award and payment details are available in the customer's UC online Journal. DWP permit LA's to use the Council Tax Support data share information to support any DHP award. The DWP have updated their DHP guidance manual for UC.

In addition a Landlord portal is being introduced to simplify and speed up the process for rent verification and requesting alternative payment requests (APAs) for Landlords in the

Social Rented Sector. A landlord will be able to request an alternative payment arrangement (APA) or third party payment and view the status of this request using the portal. If the APA request is approved, this will trigger action to generate a conversation with the customer about Personal Budgeting Support and which will also include a check to see if DHP is appropriate.

At the end of December 2017 Discretionary Housing Payments were in place for 109 UC cases.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That access to Jobcentre Plus Work Coach services is maximised through the Council's Community Hub model.

Recommendation 7 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works with the DWP's West Yorkshire Work Services District Manager to explore the feasibility of co-location of other services, such as Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, with the Council's Community Hub model to improve accessibility of services and maximise resources linked to the administration of Universal Credit.

Formal response in July 2016:

Agreement has been made to continue with the current JCP secondee. This role will help to resolve any issues that are raised via the LA Local Hubs, to increase staff understanding and to provide a resource for Customer Service Officers to help resolve issues quickly. The JCP officer has access to the DWP systems. We expect the role to continue to evolve as we move forward with UC.

Discussions have taken place with Jobcentre Plus West Yorkshire District Manager about the potential for co-location of other services, such as Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, with the Council's Community Hub model.

The West Yorkshire District Manager is considering co-location activity but will need to undertake further investigation.

Position reported in February 2017:

There is also a connection here with the work around the Personal Work Support Package element of the CTS scheme and dialogue continues with Jobcentre Plus.

Both parties are keen to eradicate any duplication in provision and/or conflict in obligations for the jobseeker. In relation to the PWSP programme, this is acknowledged within the Claimant Commitment. Ensuring consistency of practice remains a challenge. Nevertheless, this issue remains a priority and joint working to review process and practise will remain in place.

As Universal Credit moves from a partial 'Live' service to the 'Full' service, there will be additional requirements in supporting people to manage Universal Credit claims. It is important that appropriate arrangements are in place between the Council and Jobcentre Plus when Full service rolls out to Leeds in 2018.

Current position:

DWP update:

On-going as above.

We currently (and have in the past) worked closely with the Customer Services Team. An Implementation Group has been set up, there are dates scheduled throughout the year. We have also shared the Local Authority Hand Over Pack and we will continue to work together to ensure that Universal Credit does not have a detrimental impact on our joint Customers.

Supporting people to make UC claims will be part of joint working for full service roll out. Co-location is not currently under consideration by DWP. Chief Officer Customer Access and Welfare, will keep in mind any possibilities which might arise in the future for co-location, but this does not seem to be a possible option in the immediate term.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That DWP identify a key role for the Council to play in actively engaging the Private Rented Sector in the roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds.

Recommendation 11 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Director of Environment and Housing³ works with DWP to explore how the Council can be given a greater role in engaging the Private Rented Sector in the roll out of Universal Credit in Leeds.

Formal response in July 2016:

Housing Leeds response

As with Recommendation 9, Housing Leeds will work with Citizens and Communities to consider the most effective way of engaging with DWP to strengthen the Council's role in engaging with the Private Rented Sector.

The Private Sector Housing (PSH) Team have been liaising with both the National Landlord Association (NLA) and the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) for the past 2 years+ regarding Universal Credit implementation. This has included providing briefing sessions and encouraging them to update all their members which they do on a regular basis. Universal Credit discussions have been held at our quarterly Strategic meetings with representatives from the Private Rented Sector – this includes the RLA and NLA but also local landlord representatives and local landlord forums.

The PSH team have sent out regular updates on Universal Credit (supplied by colleagues in Benefits and from DWP) via our email alert system – this reaches nearly 3,000 separate private landlords. DWP spoke at the annual landlord conference November 2015 to explain the impact of Universal Credit on the Private Rented Sector in Leeds which was also followed by a Q&A session at the end of the conference.

There are website links for Universal Credit on our PRS pages on the Council website and refer landlords to this information.

The PSH team also hold regular training sessions for licenced HMO landlords and the Universal Credit is included as part of the course. A leaflet was produced for Private landlords as part of the initial roll out to advise of the implications for them and their tenants.

Managed Migration

There are limitations as to what information can be shared with Private landlords. DWP have not yet made a decision on what role the Council will play in this. It is anticipated that where a landlord receives Housing Benefit direct for their tenant the council will be able to advise that the HB payment will be ending once a UC claim is made. This issue will continue to be raised at Transitional Working Groups.

It is intended that as part of managed migration further work with private landlords will take place to ensure they understand the "transition and migration" phase and how best to support their tenants.

³ The role of Director of Environment and Housing no longer exists. As from April 2017, this responsibility falls to the Director of Resources and Housing.

Position reported in February 2017:

The Private Sector Housing Team continues to liaise with the landlord associations and raise awareness at the PRS Housing Forum. In addition, updates are provided on a regular basis through the private sector email alert which goes out to over 4,000 private landlords and agents.

At the annual landlord conference, held in November 2016, we made the impact of Universal Credit one of the headline topics for the day. The DWP attended and gave a full update to over 200 landlords and agents on the progress with Universal Credit, impact to date and how it was likely to affect the private rented sector. Key to this was the processes in place and advice to landlords on how they could obtain further information to help them support their tenants sustain the tenancies.

The private sector housing service will continue to provide information and advice to the sector as and when it is available and maintains an up-to date link on our website which allows landlords to access the latest information and advice from DWP and partners.

There is no further work the Council can undertake at this stage with landlords.

Further general information will be provided to landlords in relation to the roll out of Full Service in the summer of 2018. There will also be a need for Councils to work with landlords around the migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit once the 'managed migration' programme starts.

However, once claims have been migrated to Universal Credit, there is little, if any, support the Council will be able to provide to landlords around individual tenants' Universal Credit claims.

Current position:**DWP update:**

DWP already have a good working relationship. The Leeds DWP Partnership manager has strengthened this further by engaging and meeting on a regular basis with Housing Options, who are the link between the homelessness agenda and the Private Sector Landlords Forum.

A meeting has already been arranged for June with the Private Sector Landlords Forum, we will be delivering an awareness and understanding of UC. This has been agreed with Chris Towns who runs the Forum.

LCC update:

Further information will be provided to private landlords in relation to the roll out of Full Service in October 2018 and we will work with landlords around the migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit once the 'managed migration' programme starts. We are working closely with the DWP to develop a strong approach to information sharing and support for Private Landlords to ensure that vulnerable tenants within the private sector are supported.

However, once claims have been migrated to Universal Credit, there is little, if any, support the Council will be able to provide to landlords around individual tenants' Universal Credit claims.

Other than full service communications to private landlords, there is no further work that LCC can progress in this area.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That Universal Credit training to frontline staff addresses the wider implications associated with Universal Credit.

Recommendation 13 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) ensures that the Universal Credit training provided to frontline staff considers the wider implications associated with Universal Credit, including other cohorts such as couples and families, from the outset. This should take into account the DWP Training material which has been handed over.

Formal response in July 2016:

Housing Leeds response

Also links to the Director of Environment and Housing and the front line staff delivering Housing Services across Leeds. Housing Leeds have procured external training from Housing Benefit Systems and sessions have been delivered in July, August and October to key members of front line staff, and Senior Managers. In addition to this all front line Area Housing Teams have had staff briefings during September and again in January with some final sessions taking place in February 2016. The DWP also delivered 2 sessions to Housing Leeds in December 2015. Regular communications, updates and guides have been produced and circulated via Housing Hot Topics newsletter sent to all Housing Staff. Going forward refresher training will be provided with additional training for new staff members, and more in depth training will be scheduled in conjunction with the migration phases as Universal Credit rolls out, but the Council is waiting on more details from DWP in relation to the specifics for the next roll out phase, currently expected in late 2017.

It is anticipated that the transition timetable will be made available in September 2016. Once details are known then a program of training for front line staff will be developed to ensure adequate online claiming support and relevant Personal Budgeting Support for the new cohort is provided.

Front line staff will include: Childrens Services / Adult Social Care / Customer Services / 3rd Sector partners / Social Sector Partners and Private Landlord forums

Training will include:

- Making a claim as a couple
- How Free School Meals will be paid un UC
- What support can be given to couples and families during transition to UC
- Updated written briefings

A full go live training plan was implemented for LCC/ 3rd sector and other stakeholders/ partners to ensure UC awareness was maximised. It is intended that this area will be revisited once a transition timetable is available. The transition phase will bring new challenges for the council to ensure front line staff are equipped with the relevant information in order to advise customers and a programme of delivery will be determined.

Position reported in February 2017:

Housing Leeds staff are provided with regular updates relating to the roll out of UC when information is released. Full Service will be introduced in Leeds in July 2018; all staff have been made aware of this. Housing Leeds is developing an updated implementation plan for

the introduction of Full Service in through the citywide Universal Credit Operational Group.

This will include the delivery of timely updates to teams and further training for front line staff in the months leading up to July 2018.

An updated transition and migration timetable was provided to the Scrutiny Board. This addresses the issues arising from the next 2 stages of UC roll out (transition and migration) This will include the need for front line services to be equipped with the necessary skills to support people to make and manage an online UC account.

Current position:

DWP update:

A claimant with complex needs is usually someone who is experiencing difficult life events or personal circumstances, which could include difficulties when dealing with the demands of our processes at the time they need to access and use a service

They may be unlikely to be able to use normal channels to access the service, and are likely to benefit from extra or face-to-face support. Some customers will have obvious physical disabilities which mean they may need extra personal support, or that adjustments are required to enable them to access services. Other customers may have conditions that are less obvious. We do recognise that complex needs are not always a static state. To ensure that individuals complex needs are supported we have a 'Complex needs plan' in every Office across Leeds, which is updated and reviewed regularly.

We have also put in place Social Justice Work Coaches that are out in the community to support the most vulnerable and in Leeds we also have a bespoke service for the Syrian refugees

LCC update:

DWP will supply a full service training pack which will be tailored to the requirements of the council in terms of front line staff training.

Customer Access are in the process of developing a training timetable for Customer Service Officers who will be dealing with all initial front facing queries. Housing Leeds will link into the training delivery processes to ensure consistent messages are delivered ahead of full service. By the time of full service all front facing staff in Customer Access and Housing Leeds will have received appropriate training.

Housing Leeds have planned UC training sessions into their training calendar. Housing Leeds has increased the specialist Housing Officer resource from 16 to 18 in order to prepare and implement the full service, these Officers along with all front line staff will be provided with varying levels of training to ensure we have a flexible workforce that can meet the demand of the required UC support for tenants.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That there is a high take-up of Universal Credit frontline staff training to ensure staff are equip with the knowledge and capacity to identify and support eligible claimants and particularly vulnerable claimants.

Recommendation 14 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with other directorates to actively raise the profile of Universal Credit amongst key frontline staff and encourages the uptake of staff training to ensure they are equip with the knowledge and capacity to identify and support eligible Universal Credit claimants, and particularly vulnerable claimants.

Formal response in July 2016:

As set out in recommendation 13 above.

Position reported in February 2017:

See Recommendation 13

Current position:

See Recommendation 13

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

Desired Outcome – That employers across the city are being actively encouraged to identify and assist eligible employees to claim Universal Credit.

Recommendation 16 – That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) reports back to Scrutiny in relation to progress made in working in collaboration with the Trade Unions; Leeds, York & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce; and the District Manager of DWP to help raise the profile of Universal Credit and encourage other employers across the city to identify and assist eligible employees to claim.

Formal response in July 2016:

Internally steps are being taken to ensure that the Council, as an employer, understands the type and degree of support needed for its employees in making and managing a Universal Credit claim. This will be used to develop information guides for large employers in the city on supporting employees through the Universal Credit process

Discussions have also taken place with Jobcentre Plus West Yorkshire District Manager to jointly meet with Leeds Chamber of Commerce to discuss the implications of Universal Credit for employers and employees. This is expected to take place following confirmation of the timescale for roll out to Full Service for Leeds.

WY District Manager has also agreed to attend the next West Yorkshire Revenues and Benefits Managers meeting to discuss this and other issues around Universal Credit.

Position reported in February 2017:

Exploratory work has been undertaken to look at how some employees within the Council might be affected by Universal Credit. Key issues are around frequency of payment, access to online systems and hours worked.

These issues are particularly relevant under the Full Service and it is important that information provided to Chamber of Commerce is timely and takes place when a) the roll out of Full Service in Leeds is confirmed and closer and b) DWP has had the opportunity to benefit from the experience of rolling out Universal Credit to people already in work.

Current position:

DWP update:

We work with Employers Locally to update them on Universal Credit. If there are any redundancies in Leeds we have a package of support which we use with the Employees and the Employer, so they can fully understand what they need to do if they have to make a claim. If additional support is required we will put this in place. We always endeavour to find Employment for individuals before they have to claim any benefits.

We are currently awaiting advice on the process with regards to tax Credit recipients who will need to transition over to UC.

LCC update:

Training sessions have been delivered to key services within the council (catering / cleaning services) to raise the profile of UC and help managers understand the implications of UC for LCC staff. Key issues are around frequency of payment, access to online systems and hours worked.

DWP will lead on raising the profile of UC to other employers across the city and will have more in depth information when they have had the opportunity to benefit from the experience of rolling out Universal Credit to people already in work. Employer's organisations will be provided with appropriate DWP information prior to full service roll out.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

1 - Stop monitoring

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Report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Date: 19th February 2018

Subject: Inquiry into reducing repeat customer contacts – Tracking of Scrutiny recommendations

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny inquiry into reducing repeat customer contacts through tackling failure demand.

2.0 Background information

2.1 Last year, the Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake an inquiry into reducing repeat customer contacts through tackling failure demand. The inquiry concluded in March 2017 and a report setting out the Scrutiny Board’s findings and recommendations was published in April 2017. This report is available via the Council’s website ([Click to access inquiry report](#)).

2.2 It now falls within the remit of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board to continue tracking the implementation of the recommendations arising from this inquiry. In July 2017, the Board considered the formal response to these recommendations and agreed to receive a further update during today’s meeting.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to consider the position status of its recommendations in terms of their on-going relevance and the progress made in implementing the recommendations based on a standard set of criteria. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

3.2 This standard set of criteria is presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has

been completed, and if not whether further action is required. Details of progress against each of these recommendations are set out within the table at Appendix 2.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to:

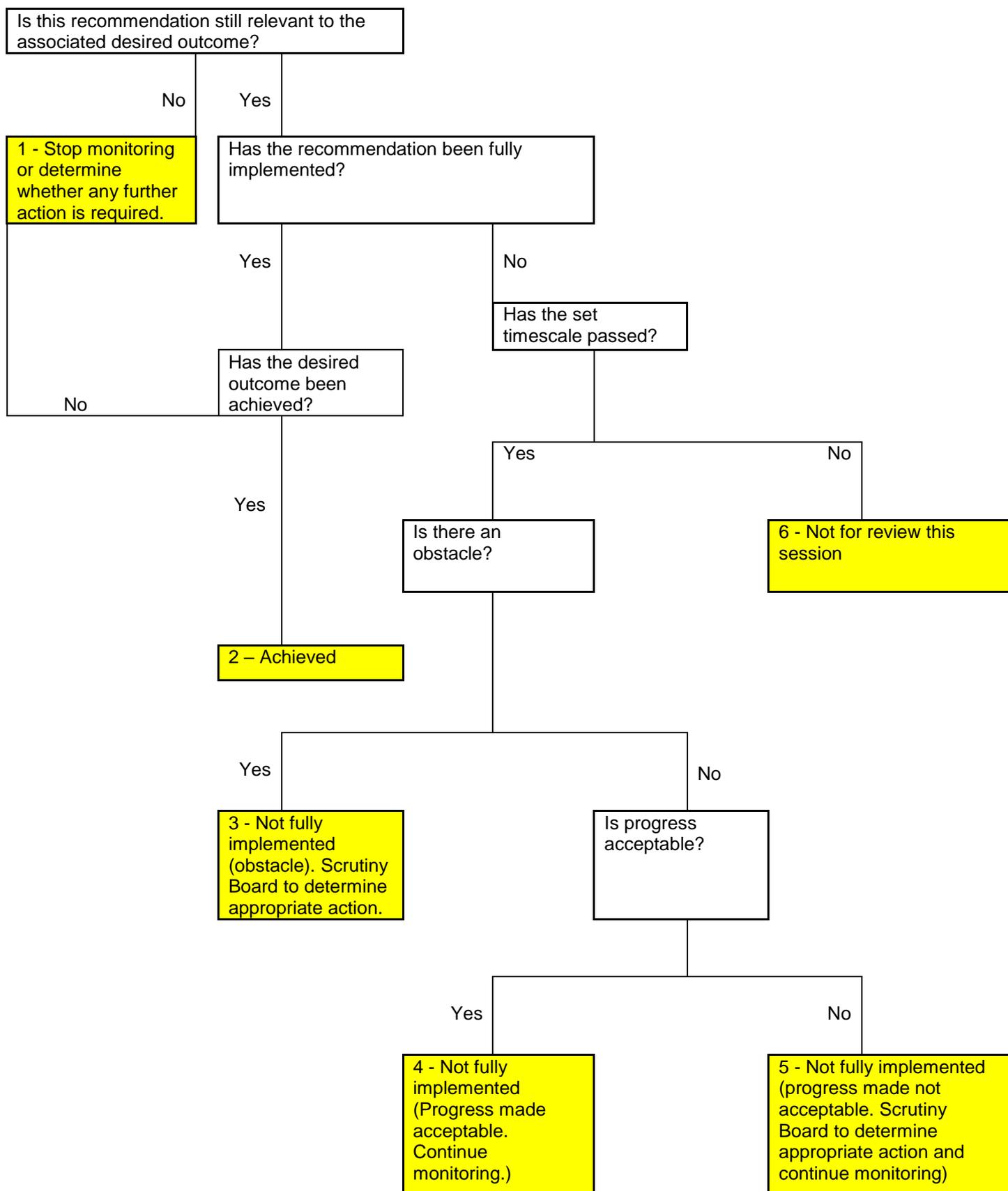
- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

5.0 Background documents¹

5.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:
Questions to be considered by Scrutiny Boards



Position Status Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring or determine whether any further action is required
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not fully implemented (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not fully implemented (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

Desired Outcome – That an effective process is developed to ensure that customers receive the right housing repair work first time.

Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Communities and Environment engages with Scrutiny on the findings arising from the co-location pilot scheme involving housing repair specialist staff at the Contact Centre and in determining longer term options for ensuring that customers obtain the right housing repair work done first time.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

- The initial three month period for the co-location pilot scheme has been extended for a further three months. There has already been a reduction in work queues to responsive repairs as CSOs are able to access specialist advice and service updates while the customer is still on the phone.
- A plan is in place to train CSOs in booking damp inspections, which are currently the biggest single reason for a CSO contacting responsive repairs. The customer will get the correct appointment (either a repair or an inspection) at first point of contact and there will be less follow up work for responsive repairs.
- Work is underway with Mears looking at the high number of repairs booked with incorrect SOR codes and how this can be improved through a mixture of better diagnostics by CSO (see below) and correct codes accessible in Orchard.
- Officers from Customer Services and Officers from Responsive Repairs are meeting regularly to improve the repairs guidance in the workbook. Move from team/ council focused to customer/diagnostic focused.

Current position:

Two members of staff from the responsive repair team in Housing Leeds have been working in the contact centre since July. As a result of this co-location there has already been a reduction in work to the responsive repairs team as Customer Services Officers (CSO's) are able to access specialist advice and service updates while the customer is still on the phone.

This Housing tier 2 support work has shown the percentage of calls to the housing

repairs line, that resulted in a work request from the contact centre to the responsive repairs team, has reduced to around 2% (138 work queues) it was 5-7% (520 work queues) before the introduction of Tier 2 support.

Training for the CSO's to be able to raise surveyor inspections themselves to reduce the impact on the responsive repairs team further was completed in December. The IT changes necessary for CSO's to raise these requests were then made at the beginning of January and staff are now booking these inspections in. This now ensures that the customer will get the correct appointment (either a repair or an inspection) at first point of contact and there will be less follow up work for responsive repairs.

Meetings will take place in the next few weeks to assess the impact of this and will look to see how this work can be extended.

Work is underway with Mears looking at the high number of repairs booked with incorrect SOR codes and how this can be improved through a mixture of better diagnostics by the CSO and correct codes accessible in Orchard (the Housing IT System).

A Development Officer from Customer Services and the Maintenance Contract Officer from the Responsive Repairs team have met regularly to improve the repairs guidance for frontline staff to use. They have reviewed the information to ensure that it is customer/diagnostic focused so that staff can find the information quickly and easily to resolve the repair.

Customer Access are also working with the Responsive Repairs Service Manager on a pilot for a new rechargeable repairs process which we are hoping will generate income and provide a more transparent and upfront service for the customer. The pilot will focus on replacement locks for lost keys only in the first instance and CSOs will try to obtain payment up front rather than through a costly and long recovery process.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That Customer Service Officers and customers are kept regularly informed of progress in dealing with service requests and are notified immediately of any significant changes that may impact on initial service expectations.

Recommendation 2 – That the Director of Communities and Environment leads on undertaking a review of existing customer service processes and procedures, including the use of the Contact Centre workbook scripts, to identify potential improvements that will better align service processes with communication links to Customer Service Officers and also directly with the customer.

It is expected that the key targeted service areas be prioritised as part of this review and that particular focus is also given to maximising the use of modern communication technologies when communicating with customers.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

- We are working closely with the project team for the new customer portal to ensure that customers and CSOs will have access to timely updates and progress. When reviewing procedures greater consideration is now given to customer communication and ensuring that this is captured within scripts.
- Work is underway to find a replacement platform for the workbook which will feature time sensitive and temporary updates alongside permanent guidance.
- A list of areas that are scheduled for planned works are now available online for customers and CSOs.

Current position:

Recently we have decommissioned our Customer Relationship Management System (CRM Leeds) which recorded our customer contact information and replaced it with another system(Contact 360).

As part of this work we have used the opportunity to re-engineer our work queue processes to ensure that information goes to the correct teams in Housing Leeds. For example in respect of tenancy breach reports we now ask appropriate questions through the Contact 360 system to ensure that service requests which are appropriate for the Housing Leeds teams are sent to them directly to deal with and those that are relevant to the Anti-Social Behaviour Team are escalated to them to deal with.

We are working closely with the project team for the new Housing Leeds online customer portal to ensure that customers and CSOs will have access to timely service updates and information.

We have re-developed the Housing Leeds workbook to ensure all relevant information is now provided through a system called “Hoot” which is the main online resource that all Customer Access staff use to access guidance on service provision. Previously staff

used CSI Leeds and the Housing Leeds workbook to access housing process guidance. With the implementation of “Hoot” CSO’s no longer have to look at two different systems to get this information, so it is easier and simpler for them to use.

N.B Staff in the contact centre do not use “scripts” when speaking to customers. Due to the number of different enquiries a CSO may get, in respect to a Housing Leeds tenant, although they receive full training the “Hoot” system provides back-up guidance on the current process to follow for reference.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – These mechanisms are put in place to ensure that customers receive timely notifications of any service assessment appointments and planned works.

Recommendation 3 – That the Director of Communities and Environment leads on undertaking a review of the Council’s automated systems of sending notification letters and also seeks to maximise the use of modern communication technologies, including text alerts or emails, to speed up notifications to customers in relation to any assessment appointments and planned works.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

- It was acknowledged during the enquiry workshops that repair confirmation letters for emergency repairs are particularly unhelp to customers as they arrived after the repair is completed. This function has now been turned off in the repairs ordering system.
-
- Right to Repair legislation requires confirmation letters for repair appointments to be sent out and therefore the function will not be turned off for non-emergency repairs. However, through the project to replace the current repairs ordering system, the use of more innovative notifications (text and email) is being developed.

Current position:

The new Housing IT solution (Civica) offers the opportunity to streamline processes and minimise handoffs. As part of this benefits realisation Housing Leeds are cleansing data as well as reviewing all letters (Housing Registration, CBL, Repairs etc) as modules are developed for implementation. Housing Leeds are also looking to maximise the use of texting and email functionality available within systems.

Customer Services will have access to future planned works, repairs raised and letters will be linked to housing applicants or accessible on e-files

There are proposals to have much more information available online for the tenants to self-serve. The new Civica Cx product links letters to tenants and properties thus enabling many queries to be resolved at first contact, provided the information is up-to-date.

In relation to repairs operatives, Mears system already sends out automated, ‘we are on our way’ text messages to the next job and we are working with LBS to implement a similar approach.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That appropriate resources are put in place to undertake the task of effectively simplifying benefit notification letters to customers.

Recommendation 4 – That the Director of Communities and Environment leads on looking at the feasibility of establishing a task force with the appropriate software and legal expertise to focus on finding an effective means of simplifying existing benefit notification letters that will not be open to legal challenge.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

A clear objective was set to review all key customer letters and notifications and make appropriate changes to simplify the wording, in order to reduce avoidable and repeat contact. This work is progressing well. A target has been set to reduce avoidable contact where we can, by April. A major piece of work been undertaken to overhaul Benefit notifications. Examples of the changes that have been made are as follows:

- 37 paragraphs have been amended, fixing either faults or to make the notification simpler for the customer and less confusing.
- All letters now only (and rightly) request that customers tell us about their income changes when the claim is still “live and in payment”.
- Appeal rights on all letters are now consistent for each tenure type.
- An “age related” program review has been carried out and this has resulted in a reduction of 8,000 notifications being issued per year. Most of these were issued where there was no change to entitlement and legislation did not force us to notify the customer. These letters have also being reviewed to make them more understandable for the customer.
- Extensive work has been completed on the landlord letters. Information on overpayments is much clearer and explains why recovery is being made from them. The landlord notifications now promote a link to the council’s website, enabling landlords to access additional information held for their tenants.
- In addition to the above, a number of changes have been made to the Council Tax Bills to help reduce avoidable contact (e.g. nil balance bills), help explain how their bill is calculated and signpost charge-payers to additional information.

Further work is intended to actually summarise the benefit notification but this is subject to a much wider piece of work around customer self-service. Whilst provisional work is underway, realistic progress is not likely to be made until the second half of this financial year. As this will require extensive testing, go live of such may not actually be until 2018/19.

Good practical examples of changes made include:

- Previously notification letters were sent out to customers informing them that there was no change to the amounts payable. This caused confusion amongst customers and caused unnecessary telephone contact. These “no change notifications are no longer sent out, which will have a big impact on reducing avoidable contact.
- The wording in letters to customers regarding Council tax support and housing benefit has been improved so that they are much clearer. For example:

1. Council tax support and housing benefit statements were often confused by customers as a bill they needed to pay the wording has been changed to state “This is not a bill, this is a statement, and you have nothing to pay”.
2. Letters regarding changes to benefit calculations and customers entitlements which is changing in accordance with bedroom requirement policies. For example the amount of benefit payable when children reach five and ten changes, these letters are now much clearer, giving customers a good understanding of why their benefit amount have been altered.
3. The wording in letters regarding the “single room exemption” and effect on customers has also been simplified.

Current position:

Following on from all of the work detailed above, a number of the paragraphs in the year end notifications have also been amended and customers should find the notifications clearer than in previous year. Examples of this are the end paragraph which explains a customer’s appeals rights – it now advises them to only tell us of a change in circumstances if they still receive payment. The changes in wording have been applied to both customer and landlord notifications.

We will not see the full benefits of these changes until the notifications are issued in March.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That the Council's Interactive Voice Response telephony system continues to be development and remains fit for purpose

Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Communities and Environment undertakes a review of the Council's current Interactive Voice Response telephony system to identify possible improvements, including the feasibility of introducing a voice telephone input option as part of the system.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

The current IVR menu has been amended to ensure that we direct customer calls quickly and easily to the appropriate officer within the contact centre.

Changes:

- The Leeds Housing Options(LHO) IVR menu has been merged with the main Housing Leeds menu to ensure that all housing contact is delivered via one IVR process and enables all call types to be captured and directed quickly and concisely.
- The Housing Leeds menu now includes divert out to LHO, Benefits and Choice Based Lettings options preventing unnecessary transfer for customers and ensuing these are dealt with by the dedicated trained staff where needed
- The new LHO menu ensures emergency cases are informed of correct concise steps to follow, now promotes additional contact methods of drop in sessions and advises of timescales for cases
- The Choice Based Lettings menu option links direct to information capture for housing forms. This releases CSO time on the phone lines as these form requests can be completed out of hours
- The wording has been updated on all areas of the menu with clear advice and information for a better customer experience
- There is also appropriate signposting to the website for further information where appropriate
- Unnecessary information has been removed and transferred to the web with qualifying audio links
- Further work has been planned in to review the contractor information that is provided as part of the IVR menu.
- The option to provide a voice-activated system to direct customers to the appropriate menu options and person to speak to is been explored. The facility is available, but we are assessing the costs and associated benefits

with installing such a feature.

- There is a greater customer focus with less recorded information and options are based on identifiers that customers will understand (postcode), rather than what is meaningful to council (contractor).

Current position:

We have secured funding to procure a voice controlled menu system as discussed with Scrutiny.

Customers will be asked to name the individual or service they wish to speak to and will be automatically directed to the right place.

The biggest challenge will be in getting a reliable database of individuals and phone numbers which is maintained

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That the Council progresses to implement an electronic application form for Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit and Free School Meals that will enable more claims to be dealt with at the first point of contact.

Recommendation 6 – That the Director of Communities and Environment progresses to withdraw paper benefit claim forms once an electronic form is in place and an effective customer service support network is also in place to ensure that customers have access to appropriate support with their online claim applications which leads to more claims being dealt with at the first point of contact.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

- Work is underway to implement an electronic application form for Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit and Free School Meals.
- A project board has been set up to create a Digital Centre of Excellence for Council Tax and Benefits. The first three priorities being looked at are: e Claim for benefits, landlords online and Council Tax discounts and exemptions product.
- “Benefits e-claim” software has been procured and the Council’s preferred provider is expected to commence work from 10th July 2017. It is planned that the software be deployed into “live” by the end of September 2017.

Current position:

We have now procured a Benefits e-claim from the Council’s preferred provider IEG4.

E claim testing was delayed for 6 weeks (Sept 17 to Nov 17) due to issues with the system not being able to submit a fully completed e-claim. Progress of the e-claim was further impacted by a server upgrade in January.

System Security testing of the system was delayed from December to January where Issues identified have now been referred back to the supplier.

Further security testing will be required before the e- claim can be deployed.

It is planned that the e-claim will be deployed by April 2018 enabling benefit customers to make their claim on-line.

Staff on the front line will be available to assist customers with the transition from paper to on-line claiming.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That all landlords are effectively using the Landlord Portal to access relevant information.

Recommendation 7 – That the Director of Communities and Environment progresses to adopting a mandatory self-serve approach for all landlords to access relevant information through the Landlords Portal and not via the Contact Centre.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

- Within the next two to three months, the telephone support line that assists landlords on direct payment with queries regarding housing benefit of their tenants will only give advice to landlords on how to access the information they need online. Advice calls regarding tenants' payments and benefits will no longer be provided over the phone. Improvements in promoting the landlord portal are being made to facilitate this channel shift so landlords are aware of the information they can access online.

- **Landlord Portal:**

The landlord portal has been in use for a number of years, a number of landlords already subscribe to this. The aim is to promote the portal, by means of changes to the webpages and creating a user guide to assist landlords in registering and using the portal.

- In order to ensure a smooth channel shift of enquiries an effective marketing plan is in place to enable effective communication to all landlords so they are fully briefed and adequately prepared for this change. An overview of the portal functionality has been provided for telephone customer service officers and further overviews are planned for front-facing customer service officers. This will ensure that it is suitably promoted at the point a landlord contacts the Council. A user guide has been drafted and web content has been redesigned (but not yet put to "live"). The process for a landlord registering for the portal has been improved to allow speedier access. The email auto response system which sign posts landlords online will remain in place.
- **IVR:** An IVR message which will be on the landlord line which will divert landlords to go online for their queries is being developed. This will make it clear that the phone line is only for online support and not for general advice on tenant's information. The IVR will include sign posting information for non-online enquires e.g. where landlords can access support via the LCC website for further information. A briefing will be provided to all CSO's who currently deal with landlord enquiries so that they are fully aware of the channel shift etc.
- **Improvements to correspondence to landlords (letters and notifications regarding council tax and benefits):** Some improvements have been made to the notifications sent to landlords to simplify the processes and information they receive. Examples of these improvements are as follows;
- **Landlord adjustment notification:** Landlord notification has been amended so that the reason for the adjustment/ cancellation is at the top of the letter, and all duplication for the reason for the overpayment or underpayment has been removed.
- **Landlord Cessation notification:** Landlord cessation notification previously only displayed overpayments which were made recoverable from the landlord. However, where the landlord has been overpaid they will now be notified of this and advised who we will be seeking recovery from e.g. landlord or tenant.

- **Landlord cessation letter:** Has now been amended to say the claim has been cancelled rather than stopped.

Current position:

The above changes were put in place to increase landlord use of the landlord portal and came into effect from the middle of September 2017.

Week commencing 18th September landlord information on the portal was accessed 57 times. By week commencing 30th October this had gone up to 192 instances per week. We can therefore see that the change in the IVR and improvements to guidance on how to use the portal, Landlords were reviewing this option and being successfully shifting online.

The volume of calls from landlords reduced from 158 a week at the beginning of the changes to 48 a week now.

The dedicated landlord telephone line was switched off on 30th October and the dedicated landlord e-mail address was switched off on the 1st December.

Landlords can still obtain telephone or email support for issues that they cannot get resolution for via the portal.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That Customer Service Officers are empowered to use their discretion and seek additional advice when dealing with potentially complex cases.

Recommendation 8 – That the Director of Communities and Environment takes the lead in undertaking a review of existing Contact Centre procedures to provide a greater degree of flexibility in the approaches taken by Customer Service Officers so that they feel empowered to use their discretion and seek additional advice when dealing with potentially complex cases.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

- Work is underway with service managers in both housing and council tax & benefits to identify escalated calls / complaints which are generated through the inability of a CSO to carry out a particular task. We are challenging those areas where we feel more discretion should be given to CSOs, and we have escalation procedures for dealing with complex cases. The Head of Customer Contact meets with other heads of service and chief officers on a regular basis to address issues and immediate problems can generally be dealt with through a phone call.
- Examples where we have empowered Housing CSOs:
 - Increasing rent arrears that CSOs can deal with from £200 to £400
 - All CSOs to book their own damp inspections (in progress)
 - CSOs to take upfront payment for rechargeable lock repairs (in progress)

Current position:

This has been introduced and we are promoting this with staff, but have had the odd set-back. Housing have agreed CSOs can use their discretion.

We have recently amended the process for how we deal with suspected gas leak calls to ensure CSO's feel empowered to deal with complex enquiries.

When CSO's receive a call from a Housing Leeds tenant about a suspected gas leak or carbon monoxide, it is our responsibility to report this to Northern Gas Networks. CSOs have historically been provided with a list a questions to go through with the tenant, they then needed to record the answers and then put the tenant on hold and ring through to Northern Gas Network (NGN), relaying the info provided by the tenant.

The process has now been changed so that CSOs now use the conference facility on their phones, allowing them to call through to NGN then introduce the tenant to a conference call. The tenant can then provide the answers to NGN directly while the CSO is still on the line to fulfil our responsibilities as a landlord and get the info we need for our own contractors.

Going through the questions once instead of twice saves time, thereby improving our performance and providing a quicker response to a potentially dangerous situation.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That an appropriate options appraisal is undertaken regarding the introduction of a dedicated route of communication for Elected Members to escalate complex cases that have come to their attention.

Recommendation 9 – That the Director of Communities and Environment leads on undertaking an options appraisal based around the suggestion of introducing a dedicated route of communication for Elected Members to escalate particular complex cases that have come to their attention. Once completed, this is to be shared with Scrutiny for further consideration.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

- There is currently a dedicated route of communication for elected members who wish to escalate any complex housing cases:
Housing.leeds.mp.and.members.enquiries@leeds.gov.uk
- Related process flows for Housing Leeds to deal with enquiries to this inbox were agreed with Cllr Coupar approximately 18 months ago and shared with members along with full contact list of Housing Managers. This list has since been updated and recirculated.
- We await further recommendation if options appraisal is still required.

Current position:

CSOs can now respond much more pro-actively to member queries, recognising that they have already been escalated. We will monitor to ensure we are not raising inappropriate emergencies.

From December 2017 the Out Of Hours service split across the Contact Centre and Leeds Watch with the Contact Centre covering calls to 11pm and then taking them back from 8am. We are aware that there was an issue in December due to a newly trained member of staff not following the procedure. This has now been addressed.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Desired Outcome – That appropriate investment is made into robust customer service data collection and analysis to inform longer term strategic planning.

Recommendation 10 – That the Director of Communities and Environment works with the Director of Resources and Housing to explore opportunities for further investment into robust customer service data collection and analysis to assist with longer term strategic planning.

Formal response in July 2017:

Accept the recommendation.

Investment into this will be developed and done so by gaining feedback from customers via the “Voice of the Customer work”. This work will commence once the work is complete on providing a replacement system to prepare for the decommissioning of Seibel.

Current position:

Customer Access are using information they receive from customers looking to use this information to get a more holistic view of our customers’ wants and needs. Intelligence will be brought together from a number of sources with our initial touch points being feedback from Customer Service Officer’s, web chat, telephone, compliments and complaints, emails, LCC Webpages, web forms and Contact360 online forms.

We will be assessing how we can better utilise this information to change and improve service delivery to all customers regardless of their contact methods.

We are aware that there is information which we are not using to its full “customer insight” potential. The work on the Voice of the Customer is to better understand this information and how we could utilise this to improve our service delivery to customers.

During the next 12 months we will be:-

- Changing the ‘Contact Us’ web page to ensure that we are providing links to online forms for customers to use.
- Updating the IVR. This is to have clearer messages for our customers which are simplified, reduce the amount of information and match the information on our web pages for consistency
- Developing ‘dashboards’ which pull together information from across several different areas to enable assessment to be carried out which will provide enhanced details to allow decisions on change to be made
- Developing and managing a pilot to trial how we can quickly respond to customer comments.
- Re-configuring our telephone survey technology to allow customers to choose if they wish to participate
- Updating our survey questions

Position Status (categories 1 – 6) *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Report of Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Date: 19th February 2018

Subject: Work Schedule

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the Scrutiny Board’s work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

2 Main issues

2.1 At its initial meeting in June 2017, the Scrutiny Board discussed a range of matters for possible inclusion within the overall work schedule for 2017/18. The areas discussed included a range of matters which were then used to help formulate an outline work schedule.

2.2 The latest iteration of the work schedule is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration and agreement of the Scrutiny Board – subject to any identified and agreed amendments.

Developing the work schedule

2.3 The work schedule should not be considered a fixed and rigid schedule, it should be recognised as something that can be adapted and changed to reflect any new and emerging issues throughout the year; and also reflect any timetable issues that might occur from time to time.

2.4 However, when considering any developments and/or modifications to the work schedule, effort should be undertaken to:

- Avoid unnecessary duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue.

- Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.
- Avoid pure “information items” except where that information is being received as part of a policy/scrutiny review.
- Seek advice about available resources and relevant timings, taking into consideration the workload across the Scrutiny Boards and the type of Scrutiny taking place.
- Build in sufficient flexibility to enable the consideration of urgent matters that may arise during the year.

2.5 In addition, in order to deliver the work schedule, the Board may need to take a flexible approach and undertake activities outside the formal schedule of meetings – such as working groups and site visits, where deemed appropriate. This flexible approach may also require additional formal meetings of the Scrutiny Board.

Developments since the previous Scrutiny Board meeting

2.6 At the time of agenda publication, there are no significant developments to report since the previous Scrutiny Board meeting.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Members are asked to consider the matters outlined in this report and agree (or amend) the overall work schedule (as presented at Appendix 1) as the basis for the Board’s work for the remainder of 2017/18.

4. Background papers¹

4.1 None used

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council’s website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2017/2018 Municipal Year

June	July	August
Meeting Agenda for 26/06/17 at 1pm.	Meeting Agenda for 24/07/17 at 10.30 am.	No Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled.
Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference and Sources of Work (DB)	Air Quality in Leeds - Consultation Preparations (PDS) Reducing repeat customer contacts through tackling failure demand – formal response (RT) Revised Safer Leeds Plan 2017/18 (PDS) Performance Update (PM)	
Working Group Meetings		
		Inquiry into Leeds’ response to Grenfell - scoping meeting (PSR) 16/07/17 @ 3pm Horticultural maintenance in cemeteries - review of existing challenges (PSR) 30/08/17 @ 1pm Roll out of Community Hubs Phase 3 (PDS) 16/08/17 @ 10 am
Site Visits		

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Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response

Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2017/2018 Municipal Year

September	October	November
Meeting Agenda for 11/09/17 at 10.30 am.	Meeting Agenda for 09/10/17 2017 at 10.30 am.	Meeting Agenda for 06/11/17 2017 at 10.30 am.
<p>Inquiry into Leeds’ response to Grenfell - agree terms of reference (PSR)</p> <p>Migration in Leeds (RT)</p> <p>Development of Community Hubs (RT)</p> <p>Roll out of Community Hubs – update (PSR)</p> <p>Future Provision of CCTV – update position (PSR)</p>	<p>Review of Horticultural Maintenance in Cemeteries - summary note of Scrutiny WG meeting (PSR)</p> <p>Development of Community Committees (RT)</p>	<p>Update on the delivery of the Multi-Storey Strategy (PSR)</p> <p>Review of the leeds.gov.uk website (PSR)</p>
Working Group Meetings		
	<p>Informing the development of a Selective Licensing approach and maximising the Rouge Landlord Unit (PDS) 23/10/17 @ 10.00 am</p> <p>Locality Working Review - background and current position (PDS) 30/10/17 @ 9.00 am</p> <p>Inquiry into Leeds’ response to Grenfell (PSR) Session 1 – 02/10/17 @ 10.45 am Session 2 - 09/10/17 @ 10.30 am</p>	
Site Visits		

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response

Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2017/2018 Municipal Year

December	January	February
Meeting Agenda for 04/12/17 2017 at 10.30 am.	Meeting Agenda for 15/01/18 at 10.30 am.	Meeting Agenda for 12/02/18 at 10.30 am.
Inquiry into Leeds’ response to Grenfell - agree Scrutiny report (PSR) The future of the waste and recycling strategy for Leeds (PDS)	Review of Housing Advisory Panels – initial proposals (PDS) Performance report (PM) Financial Health Monitoring (PSR) 2018/19 Initial Budget Proposals (PDS) Best Council Plan Refresh for 2018/19-2020/21 – Initial Proposals (PDS)	Universal Credit – General Update (PSR) Universal Credit (RT) Reducing repeat customer contacts through tackling failure demand (RT)
Working Group Meetings		
Air quality solution for Leeds – stage 1 consultation preparations (PDS) 15/12/17 @ 1.30 pm		
Site Visits		

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Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response

Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2017/2018 Municipal Year

March	April	May
Meeting Agenda for 12/03/18 at 10.30 am	No Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled.	No Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled.
Development and implementation of the locality working approach (PSR) Refuse collection re-routing update (PSR)		
Working Group Meetings		
Site Visits		

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
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