

Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision (if necessary)

Peter Oliver, Head of Landlord Services

Officer Making the Decision

Geoff Parker, Chief Executive

Recommendations

To create a new Universal Credit Officer post at Grade 5 /SCP 22 for 37 hours per week on a temporary 12 months' contract from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The post will report directly to the Income Management Team Leader, and the appointment will be funded from the approved budget in cost centre H015.

Reason

To manage the impact of the implementation of the Universal Credit full service in the Charnwood Borough from July 2018.

Authority for Decision

Section 8.1 of the Council's Constitution gives the Chief Executive delegated authority to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major service or policy implications, affecting no more than 5 posts (irrespective of their post number) in any single case. This proposal falls within that delegation.

Decision and Date

APPROVED



06 APRIL 2018.

Background

In July 2018 the Universal Credit 'full service' will be implemented in the Borough. Universal Credit (UC) replaces six working-age benefits including housing benefit.

Housing Benefit is currently paid directly and automatically to the landlord without it ever touching the tenant. UC is a completely different benefit in that the entire benefit, including the element that covers housing costs – in our case, rent – is paid

directly to the claimant and monthly in arrears. This represents a fundamental change to the way in which the welfare benefits system for working-age people operates.

UC is currently only being paid to new, single, people claiming job seekers' allowance. This is called 'live service'. Apart from its limited scope, it is also a predominantly manual system.

Universal Credit 'full service' will mean that all new working-age claimants and those on existing working-age benefit reporting a change in circumstances will have to claim UC. Moreover, this is a fully digital service and requires claimants to have an e-mail address and bank account. Many of our tenants have neither at the moment. When a tenant makes a Universal Credit claim, they will have to wait for five weeks before being paid.

We currently have fewer than 100 tenants claiming UC through the 'live service'. Already, however, we have seen those cases increase by 50% this year compared to last and the total UC debt increase by 119%.

Many areas throughout the country have already moved to 'full service'. Almost without exception, landlords have reported significant increases in rent arrears and reductions in rent collection rates.

The appointment of the one Universal Credit Officer on a 12 months' contract will help to support those tenants currently on UC and those moving on to UC in the coming year.

Human Resources

HR Advisor: Anna Cairns (29/3/18)

Summary of Comments from HR: This new post has been independently Job Evaluated at Grade 5. The normal recruitment process should be followed.

HR seen recommendations (both draft and final, if amended): Y

Financial Implications

The cost of this post in 2018/19 is approximately £29,200. The post was budgeted for at scale 6 and was included in the budget pressures at £33,200 meaning a small saving will be made. The costs of advertising the post and staff travel have also been included in the service pressures for the year. If the 12 months' contract ends in 2019/20 then the unspent vacancy budget for this post in 2018/19 will be carried forward to cover the cost in the following year.

Risk Management

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
Rent arrears continue to rise and rent collection continues to fall or arrears do not fall sufficiently or collection does not increase sufficiently to cover the cost of employment.	H	H	To ensure through training and partnership working that the new officer is able to offer a level of support to tenants on UC to help them maintain their claim and avoid receiving a sanction (i.e. reduced UC payment for a set period), which ultimately would impact on the rent collection and arrears performance.

Key Decision:

No

Background Papers:

Cabinet Minutes 15 February 2018

