

# Housing Working Party

11 July 2018



**Time and venue:**

**2.00 pm in the Telscombe Room - Southover House, Lewes**

**Membership:**

**Councillor Ron Maskell (Chair); Councillors Mike Chartier, Sharon Davy, Johnny Denis, Ruth O'Keeffe, Steve Saunders and Richard Turner**

**Quorum: 4**

*Published: Tuesday, 3 July 2018*

## Agenda

**1 Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)**

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 April 2018 (attached herewith).

**2 Apologies for absence/declaration of substitute councillors/declarations of interest**

**3 Properties in the Development Pipeline**

Verbal update by HEDP Development Project Manager.

**4 Universal Credit (Pages 5 - 8)**

Report by Functional Lead for Thriving Communities.

**5 Any other business**

**6 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Housing Working Party will be called as necessary.

## Information for the public

**Accessibility:** Please note that the venue for this meeting is wheelchair accessible and has an induction loop to help people who are hearing impaired. This agenda and accompanying reports are published on the Council's website in PDF format which means you can use the "read out loud" facility of Adobe Acrobat Reader.

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**Public participation:** Please contact Democratic Services (see end of agenda) for the relevant deadlines for registering to speak on a matter which is listed on the agenda if applicable.

## Information for councillors

**Disclosure of interests:** Members should declare their interest in a matter at the beginning of the meeting.

In the case of a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), if the interest is not registered (nor the subject of a pending notification) details of the nature of the interest must be reported to the meeting by the member and subsequently notified in writing to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

If a member has a DPI or other prejudicial interest he/she must leave the room when the matter is being considered (unless he/she has obtained a dispensation).

**Councillor right of address:** A member of the Council may ask the Leader, a Cabinet Member or the Chair of a committee or sub-committee any question without notice upon an item of the report of the Cabinet or a committee or subcommittee when that item is being received or under consideration by the Council.

A member of the Council may ask the Chair of a committee or sub-committee a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the District and which falls within the terms of reference of that committee or subcommittee.

A member must give notice of the question to the Head of Democratic Services in writing or by electronic mail no later than close of business on the fourth working day before the meeting at which the question is to be asked.

## Democratic Services

For any further queries regarding this agenda or notification of apologies please contact Democratic Services.

**Email:** [committees@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:committees@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

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## Housing Working Party

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Housing Working Party** held in the **Warren Room, Lewes House, High Street, Lewes** on **Wednesday, 18 April 2018** at 2.00pm

### **Present:**

Councillor R Maskell (Chair)

Councillors S Davy, J Denis, R O'Keeffe, S Saunders (Minutes 1 – 6) and R Turner

### **Officers Present:**

A Chequers, Head of Homes First

Z Downton, Committee Officer

Leighton Rowe, HEDP Development Project Manager

### **Also Present:**

John Langley, Tenants' Representative, Tenants of Lewes District (Vice-Chair)

Debbie Twitchen, Tenants' Representative, Tenants of Lewes District (Chair)

### **In attendance:**

One member of the public

## Minutes

### **1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **2 Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor M Chartier.

### **3 Terms of Reference**

The Committee considered a report which proposed a revised remit for the Housing Working Party. The updates reflected the informal expansion of the Working Party's remit over the past ten years to include wider housing issues, and took into account new wide-ranging legislation that required a change in the way the Council worked and its continued, changing and varied priorities in terms of housing.

## Action

The following points were clarified by the Head of Homes First:

- The Working Party was a public meeting.
- The number of representatives from the Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) group invited to meetings would remain at two, and the remit amended accordingly.

Resolved:

1. That the revised remit for the Housing Working Party, as amended above, be agreed;

Reason:

To enable the Cabinet to consider strategic proposals for the provision of affordable housing.

#### **4 New Developments**

The Committee received a presentation by the Head of Homes First in respect of the Council's Housing Development Programme 2017 - 2022. The presentation provided a brief overview of aspects such as the strategic objectives of the programme, the companies through which new developments would be delivered, and photographs of completed new developments. A handout of the presentation was tabled at the meeting and a copy of which is contained in the Minute Book.

Resolved:

1. That the content of the presentation be noted.

Reason:

To update members of the Housing Working Party.

#### **5 Properties in the Development Pipeline**

The Committee received a presentation by the HEDP Development Project Manager in respect of projects in the housing development pipeline across the Lewes District. The presentation set out the approved housing development sites (excluding larger sites such as the North Street Quarter project in Lewes), sites to be developed for affordable housing, housing being delivered with partner organisations, and affordable housing secured through planning requirements. A handout of the presentation was tabled at the meeting and a copy of which is contained in the Minute Book.

Resolved:

1. That the content of the presentation be noted.

Reason:

To update members of the Housing Working Party.

## 6 The Homeless Reduction Act

The Committee received a presentation by the Head of Homes First in respect of the Homeless Reduction Act, including a summary of national homelessness statistics, an overview of housing need comparing Lewes and Eastbourne, the challenges of dealing with homelessness faced by local government, and the new duties of the Council under the Homeless Reduction Act. A handout of the presentation was tabled at the meeting and a copy of which is contained in the Minute Book.

Members' discussion included:

- A query regarding the Council's new duty to assess homeless cases and the expected timescale to make each assessment.

Officers responded that:

- The Council aimed to assess a new homeless case within a week.

Resolved:

1. That the content of the presentation be noted.

Reasons:

To update members of the Housing Working Party.

## 7 Any other business

Members discussed that a meeting of the Housing Working Party should be scheduled around July to consider the impact of the Universal Credit system, and to receive an update on projects in the housing development pipeline.

The Head of Homes First requested that any further suggestions of agenda items for that meeting should be sent either to him, or to the Committee Officer.

## 8 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed and noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Housing Working Party will be held on Wednesday, 11 July 2018 at 2.00pm in the Telscombe Room, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes.

**All to  
note**

The meeting ended at 3.50pm.

R Maskell  
Chair

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**Report to:** Housing Working Party

**Date:** 11 July 2018

**Title:** Universal Credit

**Report of:** Bill McCafferty

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose of report:** Update on the roll out of the Full Universal Credit in Lewes

**Officer recommendation(s):** (1) Note the contents of the report

**Contact Officer(s):** Name: Bill McCafferty  
Post title: Functional Lead for Thriving Communities  
E-mail: bill.mccafferty@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk  
Telephone number: (01323) 415171

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 This report is an update on the roll-out of the Full Universal Credit Service in Lewes District.

## **2 Background**

2.1 Universal Credit brings together six state benefits into one monthly payment for people of working age. Those benefits are:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Working Tax Credits
- Child Tax Credits

2.2 There are two versions of Universal credit. The Live Service, which has been in place for over two years nationwide, and was only for single claimants with no disabilities and no dependants and the Full Service which is being rolled out gradually and is available to most people of working age. The main exceptions at present being those who live in Supported or Temporary Accommodation and those with three or more children.

### **3 Full Universal Credit**

- 3.1 The Full service has been in place in three small areas of Lewes District for several months, Saltdean, Falmer and Ditchling/Hassocks. It will go live across the whole of Lewes District on 26 September 2018.
- 3.2 The Full Service is the digital service which means that people have to claim, and manage their claim via a journal, online.
- 3.3 From 26 September the Council will no longer be able to take new claims for Housing Benefit, apart from the exceptions above, and, instead, people will have to claim Universal Credit.
- 3.4 In addition, certain changes in claimants' circumstances, for example starting work, will mean that they have to claim Universal Credit rather than claiming in-work Housing Benefit.
- 3.5 In order to claim UC residents will need a bank account, an email address and access to the internet.
- 3.6 People will receive a monthly payment of UC and will be responsible for managing their budget and paying their rent. This may be challenging for some residents.

### **4 Support for residents**

- 4.1 The Council recognise that some residents will need support to make and manage their claim on-line, help in opening bank accounts and, in some cases, help to manage monthly payments.
- 4.2 The Council have contracted, using grant funding from the Department for Work and Pensions, with Lewes CAB to deliver Assisted Digital Support and Personal Budgeting Support for those who need to claim UC or who need help managing their budgets
- 4.3 In addition, the Council have awarded £30k to Brighton Housing Trust (BHT) who will recruit a benefits advisor to work 25 hours a week alongside the Homes First team to identify those people most in need of support to claim Universal Credit and will provide practical 1:1 support to customers through the whole claims process and to ensure they are able to maintain their claim in the longer term.
- 4.4 The service will be focused primarily on homeless people living in temporary accommodation, people at risk of homelessness, and council tenants who are claiming Universal Credit and struggling to pay their rent. The adviser will be co-located with the Council's Homes First staff but the service will be made available from a range of venues including and people's own homes and take account of the particular needs of people living in rural areas.

## **5 Impact on the Council**

- 5.1 Experience from local authorities that have gone live with the Full service suggests there are four main areas of concern. They are:
- An increase in rent arrears
  - Delays in receiving payments of the Housing Element of UC where they have requested direct payments
  - An increase in customer contact
  - A large increase in workload for Council tax Support cases due the monthly re-assessment of UC
- 5.2 The Housing Benefit working age caseload will reduce over time as people naturally move to UC. In Eastbourne, where the Full service has been in place since October 2017, there has been a 17% reduction.
- 5.3 There are currently c4,240 working age HB claims. 1,000 being from Council Tenants with an annual HB cost of £5.5m, c440 from Registered Social Landlords with a cost of £6.0m and 2,800 from the Private Sector with a cost of £22m.
- 5.4 Eventually, there will be a managed migration of all working age HB claims to UC. This is due to start in 2019 and be completed by 2023. Although, as there have been 16 delays to UC deadlines, this end date may change.

## **6 Council actions**

- 6.1 Building on the experience of Eastbourne going live with the Full Service plans are in place for the go-live date in Lewes. A project group has been established which will look at training for staff, awareness for members, communications with landlords in both the Private and Registered Social sector, Lewes Council tenants and the voluntary sector.
- 6.2 The Jobcentre Plus Relationship managers are delivering an Introduction to UC sessions to staff on 24 July and to RSLs and the Voluntary sector on 25 July.
- 6.3 We will write to all working age Lewes tenants prior to the go-live date to advise them of UC and the circumstances in which they will need to claim UC. We will also let them know where they can go for help and advice.
- 6.4 There will be regular meetings between Council and Jobcentre Plus managers to resolve any issues. We know from the Eastbourne experience that there will be issues, but the key to resolving them is a to have a good relationship with the Jobcentre Plus managers which, I'm pleased to say, we already have.
- 6.5 Regular, initially monthly, meetings will be held with the Voluntary Sector to discuss issues that arise.
- 6.6 JCP will be invited to present at the next private landlords forum. If they are unable to attend officers from the Council will present.

