



Council Offices, Kiln Road,  
Thundersley, Benfleet,  
Essex SS7 1TF.  
Tel. No: 01268 882200  
Fax No: 01268 882455



**David Marchant** LLB (Hons) BSc (Hons) CEng FICE FCMI  
**Chief Executive**

## **CABINET AGENDA**

**Date:** Wednesday 18th March 2015

**Time:** 7.00pm – N.B. TIME

**Venue:** Council Chamber

**This meeting will be webcast live on the internet.**

### **Membership:**

<b>Councillor Riley</b>	<b>Chairman - Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Councillor Sharp</b>	<b>Responding to Challenge</b>
<b>Councillor Stanley</b>	<b>Resources and Performance</b>
<b>Councillor Skipp</b>	<b>Environment &amp; Leisure</b>
<b>Councillor Mrs Egan</b>	<b>Homes and Customer Engagement</b>
<b>Councillor Dick</b>	<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>
<b>Councillor Howard</b>	<b>Canvey Island, Floods and Water Management</b>
<b>Councillor Isaacs</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Safer Communities</b>
<b>Councillor Smith</b>	<b>Waste &amp; Business Liaison</b>

**Cabinet Enquiries:**  
**Reference:**  
**Publication Date:**

**John Riley Ext 2417/Ann Horgan ext. 2413**  
**8/2014/2015**  
**Tuesday 10th March 2015**

---

**AGENDA  
PART I  
(Business to be taken in public)**

---

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Members' Interests**
- 3. Minutes**  
To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2015.
- 4. Forward Plan**  
To review the Forward Plan
- 5. Public Health and Wellbeing**
  - 5 (a) Sustainable Community Garden - The Whitehouse**  
The Cabinet will be asked to consider a report.  
*(Report of the Cabinet Member Health & Wellbeing)*
  - 5(b) Update on Safer Communities Initiatives, including Safeguarding and Licensing**  
The Cabinet will be asked to consider a report.  
*(Report of the Cabinet Member Neighbourhoods and Safer Communities)*
- 6. Environment**
- 7. Transforming Our Community**
  - 7(a) Essex Community Covenant and Veteran's Portal**  
The Cabinet will be asked to consider a report.  
*(Report of the Cabinet Member )*
- 8. Efficient and Effective Customer Focused Services**
  - 8(a) Universal Credit – Update Report**  
The Cabinet will be asked to consider a report.  
*(Report of the Cabinet Member Resources & Performance)*
- 9. Matters to be referred from /to Policy & Scrutiny Committees**
- 10. Matters to be referred from /to the Statutory Committees**

---

---

**PART II**  
**(Business to be taken in private)**  
**(Item to be considered with the press and public excluded from the meeting)**

---

---

There were no items known at the time of publication of this agenda







## CABINET

18TH FEBRUARY 2015

### PRESENT:

Councillor Riley, Chairman	Leader of the Council
Councillor Sharp	Responding to Challenge
Councillor Stanley	Resources and Performance
Councillor Skipp	Environment & Leisure
Councillor Mrs Egan	Homes and Customer Engagement
Councillor Dick	Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Howard	Canvey Island, Floods and Water Management
Councillor Isaacs	Neighbour hoods and Safer Communities
Councillor Smith	Waste and Business Liaison

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors: Acott, Burch, Campagna, Cole, Cross, E.Egan, Mrs Govier, Greig, Hart, Hudson, Mrs. King, Ladzrie, Letchford, May, Varker and Walter.

### 94. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

### 95. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17.12.2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 96. FORWARD PLAN

To comply with regulations under the Localism Act 2011, the Leader of the Council presented a revised Forward Plan to the meeting which outlined key decisions likely to be taken within the next quarter 2014. The plan was reviewed each month.

**Resolved** – To note and approve the Forward Plan.

### 97. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) – 2015/16 RENT LEVELS, REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PLAN FOR 2015/16 AND 2014/15 REVISED

The Cabinet received a report on rent levels for Council dwellings and garages for 2015/16; the HRA Revenue budget for 2014/15 (revised) and 2015/16 and the HRA Capital Plan for 2014/15 (revised) and 2015/16.

#### **Resolved:**

1. That dwelling rents are increased by an average of £1.96 per week.
2. That garage rents are not increased.

3. That the draft revised HRA revenue estimates for 2014/15 and the draft HRA revenue estimates for 2015/16, as set out in Annexe A, are approved.
4. That the draft revised HRA capital plan for 2014/15 and the draft HRA capital plan for 2015/16, as set out in Annexe B, are approved.

**98. CORPORATE SCORE CARD QUARTER 3 2014/15**

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the cumulative performance figures for the Corporate Performance Scorecard for quarter 3, 1st October 2014 to 31st December 2014.

**Resolved:**

To note the reported performance in Appendix 1 to the report.

**99. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF – BUSINESS RATES RELIEF-  
RETAIL AND TRANSITIONAL RATE RELIEF**

The Cabinet considered a report setting out changes to the Council's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy which had been required to be revised as a result of announcements made in the December 2014 Autumn Statement.

**Resolved:**

To note and approve the additional amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy set out in section 5 of the report to reflect the increase in retail relief of £1,500 from 1 April 2015 and to ensure that any properties affected by the current transitional relief scheme ending on 31 March 2015 will have an extension of that relief in accordance with published government guidelines.

**100. POLICY FRAMEWORK AND BUDGET SETTING FOR 2015/16**

The Cabinet considered proposals and recommendations for the Council's Policy Framework and Budget Setting for 2015/16 for recommendation to the Special Council meeting to be held following the Cabinet meeting that evening.

**Resolved: to recommend to Council:**

**Implementation of Council policies and related spending plans**

1. To note the efficiency savings, cost reductions and additional income summarised in table 4.2.
2. To approve the continued funding of priority projects and other items of discretionary expenditure, as set out in table 9.1.

3. To note the cost pressures and other budget increases (growth) as set out in table 9.2.
4. That subject to recommendations 1 to 3 above, the revenue spending plans for 2014/15 (revised) and 2015/16, set out in section 9, tables 9.3 (summary) and 9.4 (net services expenditure) of the accompanying report, are approved.

### **Capital spending plans and prudential indicators**

5. That the capital spending plan described in section 11 of the accompanying report (tables 11.2 and 11.3) is approved in respect of 2014/15 (revised) and 2015/16.
6. That it is noted that as stated in paragraph 24 of section 11 of the accompanying report, and based on current plans and proposals, gross external borrowing is not expected to exceed the capital financing requirement in the current or forthcoming two financial years.
7. That as set out in paragraphs 48 and 49 of section 11 of the accompanying report, the **£1.5m** limit previously approved for affordable housing projects to be expended by the end of March 2017 be re-confirmed.
8. That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2015/16 as set out in section 12 of the accompanying report is approved.
9. That as required by section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, the following Prudential Indicators are approved as set out in the appropriate sections of the accompanying report:

Prudential Indicator	Reference to sections 11, 12 and 13 of accompanying report
Capital expenditure	Tables 11.2 and 11.3
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	Table 11.4
Capital financing requirement	Table 11.5
Authorised limit for external debt	Table 11.6
Operational boundary for external debt	Table 11.7
Incremental impact of capital investment	Table 11.8
Housing Revenue Account limit on indebtedness	Section 11 para 36
Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing - upper and lower limits	Table 12.2
Upper limits of fixed and variable interest rate exposures	Table 12.3
Maximum period and counterparty limits for specified investments	Table 13.1

10. That the Statement of Minimum Revenue Provision for 2015/16, as stated in paragraphs 37 to 39 of section 11 of the accompanying report is approved.
11. That no new capital proposals are allowed until:
  - the proposal has been evaluated in accordance with all relevant evaluation criteria;
  - the Cabinet has confirmed affordability and compliance with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities;
  - the Cabinet has considered and approved details of the proposal.
12. That the Investment Strategy for 2015/16 as set out in section 13 of the accompanying report is approved.
13. That the Pay Policy as set out in section 14 of the accompanying report is approved.

#### **Statutory report of the Head of Resources**

14. That as required by section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the report of the Head of Resources set out in section 16 of the accompanying report in respect of robustness of the estimates is noted.
15. That as required by section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the report of the Head of Resources set out in section 8 of the accompanying report in respect of the adequacy of proposed financial reserves is noted.

#### **Statutory calculations in respect of the budget requirement and Council Tax as required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended ("the Act")**

16. That as set out in section 5 of the accompanying report it is noted that acting under delegated authority and in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for Resources and Policy and the Head of Resources has calculated
  - a) a tax base for the Borough of Castle Point of **29,314** being the amount **T** required by section 31B of the Act; and
  - b) a tax base for Canvey Island to which a Town Council precept applies as **11,232**.
17. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2015/16 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:

Ref	Amount £	Item
(a)	<b>58,468,561</b>	being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish (Town) Councils.
(b)	<b>51,374,955</b>	being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
(c)	<b>7,093,606</b>	being the amount by which the aggregate at 20(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 20(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year.  (Item <b>R</b> in the formula in Section 31B of the act)
(d)	<b>241.99</b>	being the amount at 20(c) above (item <b>R</b> ), divided by item <b>T</b> (19(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish (Town) precepts).
(e)	<b>231,492</b>	being the aggregate amount of the (Parish (Town) precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
(f)	<b>234.09</b>	being the amount at 20(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 20(e) above by item <b>T</b> (19(a) above), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

18. That Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2015/16 for each part of its area and for each category of dwelling. This information is included within section 17 of the accompanying report:

Castle Point Borough Council Tax 2015/16, including and excluding Town Council precept, for each of the following categories of dwelling:

Band	Council Tax Including Town Council £	Council Tax Excluding Town Council £
<b>A</b>	<b>169.80</b>	<b>156.06</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>198.10</b>	<b>182.07</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>226.40</b>	<b>208.08</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>254.70</b>	<b>234.09</b>



<b>E</b>	<b>311.30</b>	<b>286.11</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>367.90</b>	<b>338.13</b>
<b>G</b>	<b>424.50</b>	<b>390.15</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>509.40</b>	<b>468.18</b>

19. To note that the County Council, the Policy Authority and the Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area, as indicated in the table below:

<b>Band</b>	<b>Castle Point Borough Council £</b>	<b>Essex County Council £</b>	<b>Essex Fire Authority £</b>	<b>PCC for Essex £</b>	<b>Total Excluding Town Council £</b>	<b>Canvey Island Town Council £</b>	<b>Total Including Town Council £</b>
<b>A</b>	156.06	724.50	44.28	98.10	<b>1,022.94</b>	13.74	<b>1,036.68</b>
<b>B</b>	182.07	845.25	51.66	114.45	<b>1,193.43</b>	16.03	<b>1,209.46</b>
<b>C</b>	208.08	966.00	59.04	130.80	<b>1,363.92</b>	18.32	<b>1,382.24</b>
<b>D</b>	234.09	1,086.75	66.42	147.15	<b>1,534.41</b>	20.61	<b>1,555.02</b>
<b>E</b>	286.11	1,328.25	81.18	179.85	<b>1,875.39</b>	25.19	<b>1,900.58</b>
<b>F</b>	338.13	1,569.75	95.94	212.55	<b>2,216.37</b>	29.77	<b>2,246.14</b>
<b>G</b>	390.15	1,811.25	110.70	245.25	<b>2,557.35</b>	34.35	<b>2,591.70</b>
<b>H</b>	468.18	2,173.50	132.84	294.30	<b>3,068.82</b>	41.22	<b>3,110.04</b>

20. To note that, in accordance with the requirements of section 52ZC of the Act the Council has determined whether its Relevant Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is excessive, as follows:

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Amount £</b>	<b>Item</b>
(a)	<b>234.09</b>	being the Relevant Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2014/15, excluding local precepts.
(b)	<b>2.0%</b>	being the percentage increase above which the Secretary of State has determined the Relevant Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 would be excessive.
(c)	<b>238.77</b>	being the amount above which the Relevant Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16, excluding local precepts, would be excessive (rounded down to the nearest penny).
(d)	<b>234.09</b>	being the Relevant Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16, excluding local precepts.

The Relevant Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is therefore, not excessive and the duty to make substitute calculations and hold a referendum does not apply (Chapter 4ZA of Part 1 of the Act).

**101. MATTERS TO BE REFERRED FROM/TO POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

There were no matters.

**102. MATTERS TO BE REFERRED FROM /TO THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES**

There were no matters.

Chairman







# Castle Point Borough Council

## Forward Plan

**MARCH 2015**

# **CASTLE POINT BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **FORWARD PLAN**

**MARCH 2015**

This document gives details of the key decisions that are likely to be taken. A key decision is defined as a decision which is likely:-

- (a) Subject of course to compliance with the financial regulations, to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates subject to a threshold of £100,000; or
- (b) To be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the area of the local authority.

The Forward Plan is a working document which is updated continually.

<b>Date</b>	<b><u>Item</u></b>	<b>Council Priority</b>	<b>Decision by Council/ Cabinet</b>	<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>
April 2015	<u>Universal Credit Update Report</u>	Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Resources & Performance	Head of Housing and Communities
TBA	<u>John H.Burrows</u> Report back on investigations from Place and Communities PSC once public consultation has been undertaken.	Environment	Cabinet	Environment & Leisure	Head of Environment
April 2015	<u>Equality Scheme Progress Report</u>	Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Homes & Customer Engagement	Head of Law
April 2015	<u>Resources Strategies : To note revisions</u>	All	Cabinet	Resources & Performance	Head of Resources
April 2015	<u>Housing Update Report</u>	Transforming Our Community	Cabinet	Homes & Customer Engagement	Head of Housing and Communities

Date	Item	Council Priority	Decision by Council/ Cabinet	Lead Member	Lead Officer(s)
June 2015	<u>Financial Update</u>	Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Resources & Performance	Head of Resources
July 2015	<u>Treasury Management Report</u>	Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Resources & Performance	Head of Resources
September 2015	<u>Leisure &amp; Recreation Strategy 6month Progress Report</u>	Environment /Public Health & Wellbeing	Cabinet	Environment & Leisure	Head of Environment
September 2015	<u>Budget and Policy Framework</u>	Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Resources & Performance	Head of Resources
November 2015	<u>Off – Street Car Parks Annual Review</u>	Environment	Cabinet	Environment & Leisure	Head of Environment

**CABINET**

**18 MARCH 2015**

**Subject: Sustainable Community Garden – The Whitehouse**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor W Dick  
Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

This report is to provide an update to the Cabinet on the progress of the development of the Sustainable Community Garden at the rear of the Whitehouse Community Resource Centre, in partnership with SEEVIC, SEPT, Trust Links, Carer's Choices, CAVs, The Salvation Army and CP&R Clinical Commissioning Group (all collectively members of the CP&R Sustainability Partnership, a subsidiary Partnership of the Castle Point and Rochford Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Local Strategic Partnership).

**2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives**

The initiatives described in this report are directly linked to the Council's 'Public Health and Wellbeing' priority.

**3. Recommendations**

That the Cabinet supports the project and works with the partner organisations to deliver the sustainable community garden.

**4. Background**

- 4.1 The Whitehouse building has been developed and revived over the last few years into a thriving hub for the Community. Partners in occupancy include Carer's Choices, Castle Point CAB, the Castle Point and Rochford CAB 360 lottery funded project, Wyvern Community Transport, Age Concern and most recently and completing the Hub, Marie Curie Cancer Care.
- 4.2 The introduction of Voluntary Sector organisations into the Whitehouse has brought with it various investments for the building through grants not accessible to public sector organisations. These have included sustainable heating systems, lighting, facilities for people with disabilities and more

recently the replacement of all of the building's 124 windows into double glazed sealed units.

- 4.3 As a result of this investment the building is becoming more sustainable and there are further plans for the acquisition of additional grant funding to install solar panels on the roof of the building. In addition there is a fenced and gated garden area that is currently underutilised which is being developed for the hub and the wider community into a sustainable community garden and grounds and this forms the basis of this report.

4.4 **A community garden for the use of the whole community**

The development of a community garden for Thundersley to be known as 'Growing Together Thundersley' in line with its' sister gardens 'Growing Together Westcliff' and 'Growing Together Shoeburyness'.

**Growing Together Thundersley** will provide a social and therapeutic horticulture project at a new community garden behind Castle Point Borough Council offices. The project will provide therapeutic gardening and training for adults with mental health problems, dementia, learning disabilities and students with special needs from the College. It will also be open to members of the public. See appendix 1 for full draft outline proposal and further information.

**The Silver Birch Centre – improvements to the area outside**

The project will also incorporate a new outside area for the Silver Birch Centre (which forms part of the Whitehouse) and is a fully equipped day care centre specialising in Dementia Care. Funding has been secured to improve the area outside of the Day Centre. Currently clients can sit outside however both the path area and the grass is uneven. The plans for this phase of the project are attached at appendices 2 & 3 of the report and provide an idea of what will ultimately be achieved.

4.5 **Funding secured to date**

Carer's Choices	£ 6000.00
Trust Links	£72000.00
SEEVIC	<u>£10000.00</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>£88000.00</u></b>

4.6 **Partners**

Castle Point Borough Council  
Trust Links (Lead partner)  
Carer's Choices  
SEEVIC  
CPR Clinical Commissioning Group  
SEPT  
CAVs  
Salvation Army

4.7 **Partnership Agreement**

Alongside the Licence to use the Council-owned land a Partnership Agreement is currently being prepared which will detail each of the partner

organisation's responsibilities and commitments to the project including the reestablishment of the land to its' original form if/when the project should dissolve.

#### **4.8 The Green Room Building**

The project will need to utilise a secure storage area for equipment and long term proposes to develop a small shop to sell produce and provide refreshments. Partners are aware that the use of the Green Room by the current occupier is coming to an end and have shown interest in leasing the Green Room to compliment the project.

Partners are aware that the condition of the building is not perfect and in need of some restoration and in return for its use will seek funding to restore the Green Room Building to the same condition the Whitehouse has enjoyed, if this use is desirable and viable for the Council.

### **5. Corporate Implications**

#### **5.1 a. Financial Implications**

The development of part of the land will result in a reduced proportion of the land to be maintained by the Council at public expense.

The cost of supplying water for the project is currently under consideration and partners are working together to resolve full cost recovery.

#### **5.2 b. Legal Implications**

A Licence is being drawn up between the Council and Trust Links. A Partnership Agreement is being drawn up which will hold each partner to account on their roles and responsibilities.

#### **5.3 c. Human Resources & Equality Implications**

The project is well placed to form part of the Council's volunteer scheme. Access for persons with disabilities is being taken into consideration.

#### **5.4 d. Timescale for implementation & risk factors**

Work to create the garden will commence in Spring 2015.

### **6 Conclusions**

- 6.1 'Growing Together Thundersley will complement the Whitehouse Community Resource Centre providing a plethora of health and social benefits to the community. Residents will be able to utilise the space in a supervised and secure environment. Partners will work together to maximise the potential of the space and create a garden to be valued by the whole community.

**Report Author: Mel Harris**

Head of Partnerships & Safer Places/Acting Head of Licensing and Transportation





# **Growing Together Thundersley**

## **Project Outline**

**6th March 2015 – Melanie Harris**

# Growing Together Thundersley

## Partners:

Castle Point Borough Council  
Trust Links  
Carer's Choices  
SEEVIC  
CPR Clinical Commissioning Group  
SEPT  
CAVs  
Salvation Army

## The project

The Growing Together Thundersley project is based on the established and evidence-based model at Growing Together Westcliff, which has been in operation for fourteen years. The Growing Together Shoeburyness project was established in 2013 and works with a variety of school groups as well as adults with mental health problems and learning disabilities from the locality. The evaluation of Growing Together Westcliff by Dr Pauline Lane (2014) demonstrated the following outcomes:

- Improves quality of life
- Improves level of physical activity
- Improves knowledge and skills in horticulture
- Improves experience of social inclusion and social interaction and creates a sense of community
- Offers autonomy, choice and control in project activities
- An opportunity to work in and with nature
- Offer training and qualifications that have the potential to improve employment prospects
- Supports mental health and wellbeing
- Impacts the wider community by sustaining individuals and by transferring knowledge and skills into the wider community

The Growing Together Secondary Schools Programme evaluation (Dr Darren Sharpe, 2014) found that it improved confidence and self-esteem, improved engagement with education through applied learning, improved school attendance and behaviour, built team-working skills and enabled pupils to learn about health and safety.

The space outlined for use for the project in Thundersley is currently vacant and is a blank canvas for the community garden. Trust Links will coordinate the project and work with Carers Choices, SEEVIC College, new clients and volunteers in the design of the site to ensure it is accessible, appropriate and meets the needs of all of its users. The design is likely to include a tool shed, a polytunnel, and raised beds for those with mobility issues, an arbour as a space for tea breaks and a vegetable patch.



The site will be open to the community to visit and will therefore provide a point of interest and pride in the local community making it unique in the area. The project is fuelled by and will fulfil the ambition of the Castle Point and Rochford Sustainability Group, who have been keen to develop a new therapeutic community garden in the area over the last year.

Growing Together Thundersley will enable people with mental health problems, dementia, special needs and learning disabilities to enjoy good health and wellbeing and have healthy lifestyles. There is a strong evidence base that working outdoors with nature improves both physical health and mental wellbeing. The project will be based on the Social and Therapeutic Horticulture approach and in line with Sempik's research (2007; 2008) it will embody the following characteristics: therapeutic intent and practice; location specific; working with nature; democracy and involvement; social coherence and community; production; routine and attendance; and therapeutic dimensions.

A recent evaluation of the similar Growing Together project in Westcliff run by Trust Links (Lane, 2014) found that the project benefits adults with mental health and learning disabilities and specifically it improves levels of physical activity, supports mental health and wellbeing and improves quality of life. Members (service users) report that Growing Together helps reduce stress and anxiety and provides meaning, purpose and hope in their lives. The project also promotes social interaction and social inclusion, reducing loneliness and isolation.

### **Statistics for Castle Point and Rochford**

According to Public Health England (2014) there are more than 3,000 people in contact with secondary mental health services in the Castle Point and Rochford area. 10.6% of the population report moderate or extreme anxiety or depression and 3.4% report a long-term mental health problem (Public Health England, *Community Mental Health Profile 2014*). One in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives and one in six has a mental health problem at any one time (DH, 2011).

According to the JSNA (2014), in Castle Point 72.8% of adults are classified as overweight or obese, which is the highest proportion out of all Essex districts. Castle Point also has the lowest proportion of green space of any of the Essex districts at 51% (compared with 93% in Uttlesford). Unemployment stands at 5.8% of the over 16s population. According to NOMIS (2015) there were 2,400 working age adults on ESA or incapacity benefit in May 2014.

The Mental Health Chapter of the Essex JSNA (2010) outlines 'the need to promote positive mental health, to prevent mental illness and to intervene early when people become unwell. It is important that the general population see mental health in the same light as physical health, and that those who require mental health services are supported to achieve their full potential.' Ways to support positive mental health include social inclusion, voluntary activities, exercise and learning opportunities, all of which would be provided through the Growing Together Thundersley project. Castle Point ranks the third highest district for the prevalence of mental illness in Essex, behind Harlow and Basildon.



## Projected Outcomes

It is anticipated that the project will support at a minimum:

- 25 adults with mental health problems or learning disabilities for one day per week
- 10 adults with learning disabilities from Carers Choices for one session per week
- 10 adults with dementia from Carers Choices for one session per week
- 15 young people with behavioural difficulties and special educational needs from SEEVIC College

All of these 60 clients will have improved physical and mental health as a result of attending the project. The majority will experience a reduction in emotional distress, an increase in physical activity and better choices to improve health and wellbeing. The clients will have better social and community networks as a direct result of attending the project.

We will know this has been achieved by undertaking an individual review with each service user, recording the impact through the Recovery Star, Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale or appropriate tool.

All clients with mental health problems and learning disabilities accessing the one day per week will have a dedicated key worker from the team. They will have access to the Mental Health Practitioner and Support Worker and will be supported to manage their own health and social care needs. Using the Recovery Star assessment tool, our staff will empower individuals to access community resources and support to improve wellbeing and self-management.

Peer support is an essential aspect of the Growing Together ethos. By coming to the project each week, service users will develop a network of people that will support them through their feelings and advise them of other support that is available. Many will make friends with one another on the project, reducing loneliness and isolation and dependence on statutory services. By accessing ongoing mental health support, needs are identified sooner and issues dealt with, rather than allowing them to escalate and this often prevents the needs to access secondary mental health services and inpatient services.

Reviews will be undertaken and also focus groups and evaluation surveys to ascertain the impact of the project on individuals that are accessing it.

The Growing Together Thundersley project will:

- a) Provide specific support for the vulnerable elderly with dementia through therapeutic gardening and providing a respite for their carers
- b) Providing preventative and personalised care for people with long term conditions such as mental health, learning disabilities and dementia
- c) Support the emotional wellbeing of children and young people, by providing positive activities and therapeutic horticulture opportunities for young people from SEEVIC College
- d) Deliver parity of esteem for Mental Health by providing a specialist community resource that supports adults with a range of mental health problems alongside their physical health problems. The project will also raise the profile



of mental health in the area, encouraging people to talk about and address their mental health problems and seek appropriate support from primary and secondary services

The Growing Together Thundersley project will be an empowering and enabling project, building the confidence and capacity of those accessing it. In the project evaluation, a service user of the Westcliff site said "I think it is the sense of community in this place... You have a supportive network around you. I know where I used to live I felt quite isolated really and with depression, living without community does not help on your own you are inwardly focussed" (Lane, 2014: 18).

The project will enable adults with mental health problems and learning disabilities to participate in a community project, meeting others and getting peer support. Many of the service users regard it as 'work' and the gardening project gives service users an opportunity to contribute to the project by helping with gardening, construction, cleaning and getting refreshments. They will also organise a community event during the year to provide an opportunity for service users to show the garden off to the general public, serving teas and cakes and raising funds for the project.

The spirit of independence and responsibility fostered at Growing Together is taken into the rest of the lives of service users. One member commented on the Recovery Star:

"I found that doing the Recovery Star was quite good. In yourself, you might think that you are not doing very well but when we went through the star chart I actually realised that I was coping with things better than I thought I was. By looking at the different categories it helped me to look at different bits of my life. Because of the way it is broken down it helped me look at different areas that may need to focus on. In the past I have found that I got overwhelmed with stuff so if you can break it down to see what is not going so well then that is good..." (Lane, 2014: 20).

Service users will have the opportunity to undertake accredited vocational qualifications in health and safety, food hygiene, manual handling and horticulture through the Adult Community College and training opportunities are also available at SEEVIC.

Peer support is an essential component of the project. "You know, you can talk to people who have travelled on the same road as you. So you know they understand. I try to look out for the new ones, you know, just a quick word can make all the difference to how you feel" (Lane, 2014: 17).

The Growing Together Thundersley project will build individual and community resilience, helping to build independent thinking and stronger community links between individuals and groups. The project will also link people up to existing provision in the statutory and community sectors, ensuring they access appropriate support to meet their needs before problems escalate and become more critical and substantial.



## **Accessibility**

It is clear that a project for the Castle Point and Rochford CCG should be located in Castle Point as there is greater need in that area – the project is easily accessible by bus. The project will also support adults that are overweight and obese, encouraging them through positive physical activity (not just whilst at the project but for example through referral and sign posting to swimming and other activities available near by at the Council's leisure facilities and many activity groups that take place in the Council's halls.

The garden is also well placed at the Whitehouse vicinity because users will be able to also access support and advice from the CAB, gain increased accessibility and enablement through the use of Wyvern Community Transport, not to mention Carer's Choices, SEEVIC and the of course the Council.

As there are a large number of unemployed adults and many are on ESA or incapacity benefit, the project should be designed to promote the development of skills that may lead to employment. There is a high proportion of mental health problems in the area and a project that openly addresses this will be greatly valued in the locality.

It is anticipated that clients will travel from across Castle Point and Rayleigh to the project. If there is a high demand for the service, partners will consider expanding capacity to support members on an additional day of the week, subject to funding from personal budgets or other sources.

## **Partnership Working**

Partnership is at the heart of the approach. Carers Choices will co-deliver the garden one day per week with adults with learning disabilities that will participate in the social and therapeutic garden. On another of the days the students with special needs from SEEVIC College will attend the project and participate in a range of activities, whilst learning new skills and getting an accreditation. Castle Point Council's Community Safety Team will apply for PCC funding to enable the project to accommodate supervised offenders in order to rehabilitate them in conjunction with the Probation Service.

Trust Links, SEEVIC, Carers Choices, Castle Point Borough Council, SEPT, Castle Point and Rochford CCG, CAVs and other partners will continue to work together to assess need, develop the project to respond to identified need and access funding from the statutory sector, trusts and corporate bodies to sustain and develop the project over the coming years.

Service users will be involved in the design and delivery of the Growing Together Thundersley community garden from its inception. This will include the layout, elements and structure of the site. A members committee will be established for the day per week that adults with mental health attend and there will be regular members meetings to ensure key issues are discussed. The Garden Co-ordinator will work with groups across the three days of delivery to ensure that ideas and plans are aligned and co-ordinated and the needs of each of the groups are met.



Service users will be involved in the evaluation of the project. The member committee will provide an opportunity for service users and volunteers to review progress as well as the benefits and impact of the project on their lives. One to one reviews with individuals that access the project will also be undertaken measuring wellbeing and progress throughout participation in the project.

Volunteers will be recruited to support the project on each of the three days of delivery. There are already twenty plus local residents who have expressed an interest in volunteering in the project. There is also the prospect of opportunities for organisations to enable various staff to volunteer to work on the project under Corporate Volunteering Day Schemes. All Volunteers (where appropriate) will be interviewed, DBS checked, references will be taken up and they will receive induction, training and ongoing supervision.

Volunteers will be key to the success of the project, providing much needed capacity to ensure each day runs smoothly and to support the delivery of activities through the day. The volunteer centre at CAVS will be integral for the recruitment of appropriate volunteers for the project and the project will link into the already successful CP&R Befriending Scheme overseen by CAVs.

This project will complement the existing service at Carers Choices and SEEVIC as it will provide stimulating and therapeutic activities and learning opportunities for their clients. It will also provide a new service for adults with mental health problems that is not currently available in the Castle Point and Rochford area. Growing Together Thundersley will work with the Community Mental Health Teams in Rayleigh and Canvey Island to ensure clients with mental health problems access the service appropriately and receive the specialist clinical support when they need it. Partners will also work with primary care and DWP Jobcentre plus to ensure appropriate referrals are made into the project.

When clients of the project are ready to move on, they will be signposted to mainstream volunteering opportunities through CAVS and RRAVS. They will also be supported to get into work, having the opportunity to attend a local Job Club and support to apply for appropriate paid employment.

This will be the only project of its type in the area. Hadleigh Farm (Salvation Army) and Roots and Shoots (Hamelin Trust) cater specifically for adults with learning disabilities and the garden site is not open to the public in the same way that Growing Together Thundersley will be.

### **Funding the project**

The project represents excellent value for money. Volunteers will be supportive in the running of the project and we will ensure there are a minimum of two volunteers each day.

The unit cost for clients is £500 per person, which is very cost effective for the level of input. This equates to approximately £10.00 per person per day for a year round project.

All partners will seek additional funding from other sources in the development of the Growing Together Thundersley from the outset. In particular Trust Links will be seeking investment in the development of the infrastructure of the garden and will along with other partners apply to Essex Community Foundation, Veolia Trust, other grant making trusts and local businesses for support with this.

In years two and three of the project charges will be introduced as those individuals with severe and enduring mental health problems and learning disabilities will be able to buy into the project from their personal budgets/self directed support. This is a similar model to the running of Growing Together Westcliff and Growing Together Shoeburyness. Funding will also be sought from grant making trusts and Trust Links has a good record of accessing grant making trusts to enhance service provision and delivery

Detailed consideration has been given as to the use of staff in the project, ensuring that there is no unnecessary expenditure. The Garden Co-ordinator will work across the three days of the project, whilst the Mental Health Practitioner will work on the day that mental health clients will attend the project and the Support Worker will work on the mental health delivery day plus some additional hours to undertake follow up paperwork and meetings. On the days with SEEVIC and Carers Choices clients, the Garden Co-ordinator will work in partnership with team members from these services to deliver the project.

Grant Funding already secured as below:

<b>3 Year - Grant Fund – Trust Links for the Garden Co-ordinator (Secured)</b>	
<b>Year 1</b>	<b>01/04/2015 – 31/03/2016</b>
Project Cost (£) <sup>1</sup>	<b>30,000</b>
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>01/04/2016 – 31/03/2017</b>
Project Cost (£) <sup>2</sup>	<b>27,000</b>
<b>Year 3</b>	<b>01/04/2017 – 31/03/2018</b>
Project Cost (£) <sup>3</sup>	<b>15,000</b>
<b>Total Project Cost (1+2+3)</b>	<b>72,000</b>

<b>Silver Birch Garden Zone – Carer's Choices (Secured)</b>	
<b>Year 1 – one off investment</b>	<b>01/04/2015 – 31/03/2016</b>
	<b>10,000</b>

<b>Start up investment for the garden – SEEVIC (Secured)</b>
--



<b>Year 1</b>	<b>01/04/2015 – 31/03/2016</b>
	<b>10,000</b>
<b>Year 2/3</b>	<b>01/04/2016 – 31/03/2017</b>
	<b>Similar amounts (more than £10,000) available in Years two and</b>

## About Trust Links – Lead Partner

Trust Links has been providing social and therapeutic gardening projects for disadvantaged people since 2000. We have supported more than 1,000 clients over this time from the Southend area. Client groups include adults with mental health problems ranging from anxiety and depression to schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Trust Links also supports adults with learning disabilities, children disengaged from formal education and young people at risk of antisocial behaviour.

Founded in 2000, the Growing Together Westcliff project transformed an unused wasteland into a productive community garden. Growing Together Shoeburyness was launched in March 2013 and is developing into a thriving and well used community garden catering for a range of needs.

In 2014 researchers from Anglia Ruskin University published a qualitative evaluation of the Growing Together project (Dr Pauline Lane, 2014), which found that the project improves quality of life, physical activity, mental health, social inclusion and employment prospects. Independent evaluations of the schools programmes were also published (Dr Darren Sharpe, 2014) and demonstrated that programme with vulnerable children and young people improve independent thinking, engagement with education, confidence, social skills and team-working skills. The schools programmes have contributed to improved school attendance, behaviour and educational attainment.

Quality is at the heart of all we do at Trust Links. We have just been awarded the PQASSO Level 1 accreditation, which demonstrates high quality service user involvement, governance, management, strategy and communication. Our work is recovery and user focussed, aimed at improving outcomes for the client group.

## Safeguarding Statement – Trust Links

We have an up-to-date Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Code of Practice and a Safeguarding Children Policy and Code of Practice in line with the SET procedures. This is implemented by all staff and volunteers and reviewed annually and changed as necessary.

We work hard to ensure that it is applied in every area of our work and have a named person responsible to ensure this happens. All staff and volunteers are DBS checked and receive information about safeguarding and the relevant procedures at their induction, receive appropriate training and through supervision, appraisals and reviews. Safeguarding is especially important with our vulnerable client group and the open access nature of our Community Garden, so staff are very mindful of safeguarding risk assessments and reviews. All individuals accessing the service will have a risk assessment, looking at risks to themselves and potential risk to others when accessing the project. We will also develop an individual plan with each service user and ensure they are referred on to other services as appropriate.

Trust Links staff will work closely with partner agencies SEEVIC College and Carers Choices to respond to the specific safeguarding concerns with their clients, ensuring concerns are recorded and appropriate referrals are made.

We have two social workers on our board of trustees plus a Consultant Psychiatrist. Another of our trustees is the Chair of the Safeguarding Board in Thurrock and provides oversight of our safeguarding policies and procedures.

The Chief Executive Officer is the named senior manager with responsibility for safeguarding.



# THE SILVER BIRCH CENTRE

## BY TIMOTAY PLAYSCAPES

5. Wheel accessible outdoor activity table

2-3. All weather grass surface  
Natural turf option available

Reflection sphere

4. Raised timber walkway

## SENSORY REFLECTION GARDEN



# THE SILVER BIRCH CENTRE

## BY TIMOTAY PLAYSCAPES



**CABINET**

**18 MARCH 2015**

**Subject: Update on Safer Communities Initiatives, including Safeguarding and Licensing**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor G Isaacs  
Neighbourhoods and Safer Communities**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

**To inform Cabinet on current community safety initiatives carried out by, or supported by the council.**

**2. Links to Council Priorities**

**This report is linked to the Council's Priority Public Health and Wellbeing**

**3. Recommendation**

**That Cabinet note the contents of this report.**

**4. Background**

The Council is an integral partner in a number of key partnerships across the Borough.

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Castle Point and Rochford works as an overarching strategic body ensuring the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy. In particular the "Feeling Safer" ambition involves the police, probation officers and other partners.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a statutory partnership established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. It is a partnership between the police, local authorities, the probation service, health authorities, the voluntary sector, local residents and businesses. The Council is a leading partner in the Castle Point and Rochford CSP.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all Council employees to have regard to the safety and well-being of children in the course of their Council duties. The Council also has a duty to protect vulnerable adults, who are people aged 18 and over receiving care, whether residential or at home, as

well as those who require assistance in the conduct of their affairs and those who have been detained, as all these groups are at risk of abuse. In many cases abuse of vulnerable adults may result from their disability, mental health, age or illness.

## **5. Progress and activities**

### **5.1 2015/16 Priorities for the CSP**

The priorities for the Castle Point and Rochford CSP have been agreed as:

- Dwelling Burglary
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Violent Crime including Domestic Abuse
- Reducing Reoffending

Activities and use of funding will be targeted around these main areas of concern.

### **5.2 Police and Crime Commissioner Funding**

For 2015/16 the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has established a Community Safety Fund. This is to provide grant-funding to local Community Safety organisations, including local community and voluntary groups and statutory organisations, to support and encourage them to develop and deliver effective and/or innovative approaches to preventing and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. These approaches must deliver against the priority areas set out in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan.

The PCC outlines his 8 areas of focus within his Police Crime Plan, as follows;

- Ensuring local solutions meet local problems
- Reducing hidden harm
- Supporting victims of crime
- Reducing youth offending and all types of re-offending
- Tackling the consequences of alcohol and drugs abuse and mental health issues
- Improving road safety
- Improving crime prevention
- Increasing efficiency in policing through collaborative working and innovation

The total allocation of the fund for 2015-16 will be £300,000 and the fund will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. Further information will be available on the PCC website.

### **5.3 PREVENT**

As part of its statutory safeguarding obligations, the council is required to have a 'Prevent Strategy' in place to deal with the threat of terrorism and the protection of vulnerable people. A joint strategy for Castle Point and Rochford is currently in development through the CSP.



## **5.4 Safeguarding and Child Protection**

In light of the reports into child sexual exploitation (CSE) at Rotherham and Oxford the Council takes CSE very seriously and is undertaking a campaign to ensure that current good practice is embedded across the Council organisation and in other areas of community life. This will be achieved through well planned and well organised publicity campaigns and the involvement of local media and partners to ensure that local communities and businesses are aware of child sexual exploitation and know what to do if they suspect that a child is at risk.

Partnership working is key to preventing CSE and the findings from the two recent reports outlined the importance of information sharing particularly between staff working in the areas of Community Safety, Safeguarding and Licensing. And this Council is well placed to discharge this duty because crucially Safeguarding, Partnerships, Licensing and Community Safety teams are all 'one team' working alongside each other within one directorate and effectively sharing intelligence, information and skills.

There is also wider partnership working taking place and all organisations, public, private and voluntary sector, have a named Child Sexual Exploitation Champion who has been fully trained about CSE and these officers work together to provide a network of prevention strategies. The CSE Champion for the Council is the Head of Partnerships and Safer Places.

Awareness-raising will be targeted at people working in taxi companies, licensed premises, restaurants and fast food outlets. The Licensing Committee has already received a presentation on the issue of CSE and staff from Licensing, Community Safety and Partnerships will be attending a Rotherham Lessons Learned Serious Case Review Partnership Conference in April to be held in the Council Chamber.

Licence holders and taxi drivers will further receive a handbook which is currently in development and be provided with mandatory professional training on CSE, free of charge and as a requirement for paid employment. This will help to generate a real sense of involvement and extend the intelligence network in a way that will help to safeguard and protect children and young people who are vulnerable.

## **6.**

### **a. Financial implications**

- 6.1 Costs will arise for training and publications and be utilised from existing budgets and external funding where possible.

### **b. Legal implications**

- 6.2 Council's have a statutory duty to protect Children and Vulnerable Adults from harm.

### **c. Human resources and equality implications**

- 6.3 There are no human resource or equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **d. Timescale for implementation and risk factors**

6.4 The projects described in this report are on-going matters.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1 The Council is continuously working to ensure that our residents are as safe as possible.

### **Background Papers:**

None

Report Author: Melanie Harris

Head of Partnerships and Safer Places/Acting Head of Licensing and Transportation



**CABINET**

**18th MARCH 2015**

**Subject: Essex Community Covenant and Veteran's Portal**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor W Dick**  
Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

**This report is to inform the Cabinet about a number of new initiatives that the Council is undertaking in order to support our Veterans.**

**2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives**

**The initiatives described in this report are directly linked to the Council's Public Health and Wellbeing priority.**

**3. Recommendations**

**That the Cabinet supports the delivery of the Portal and will continue to deliver the aims of the Community Covenant.**

**4. Background**

**4.1 The Essex Armed Forces Community Covenant was formally signed in November 2012. It is one of the largest-ever Armed Forces covenant pledges made by the public, private and voluntary sectors including the leaders of Essex County Council, Essex's city, borough and district councils, the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, representatives of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, Essex Police, Essex Fire Service, the NHS, the business community and Armed Forces charities.**

**4.2 The aims of the Community Covenant are to:**

- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces communities in their areas**
- Recognise the local and national role of the Armed Forces community**
- Remember the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces community and their families**

- Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life
- Encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community.

#### **4.3 The Essex Civilian Military Partnership Board**

Following the historic signing of the Essex Armed Forces Community Covenant a Civilian Military Partnership Board has been established to further cement the commitment made to support and improve the lives of Armed Forces personnel in Essex and their families. In addition each partner organisation now has a nominated Armed Forces Community Champion who attends the Board and the representative for CPBC is the Head of Partnerships and Safer Places.

The Partnership Board will provide co-ordination of the Essex-wide activities relating to the Armed Forces and will oversee progress of joint civilian and military community projects to ensure that pledges outlined in the Covenant are met.

The Civilian Military Partnership is currently engaged in generating a comprehensive programme of work that will focus on:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Economy and Skills
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Education, Children and Young People
- Environment and Infrastructure
- Re-settlement of service personnel

#### **4.4 Veteran's Portal**

One such initiative currently in development is the Veteran's Portal. The aim of the portal is to allow service veterans to register on the portal in order to access services and support available under the Community and Corporate Covenants.

These services are grouped under the pillars of 1 - education, employment and training, 2 - health and welfare, 3 - finances, 4 - housing, 5 - products, discounts and services. It also allows those providing services and support to be able to reach out to the Veterans in a more targeted manner. There is also a possibility that a 6<sup>th</sup> pillar "Family Support" will be added, this is still being scoped.

All Essex Councils have been requested to register for inclusion on the portal to provide better access to public services for our Veterans.

#### **4.5 Silver Award**

Finally the Council is pleased to announce that it was recently awarded the Employer Engagement Silver Award in recognition of our support for staff who serve in HM Reserve Forces. Indeed at present one member of staff is currently on a short term training team deployed to Bosnia.

## **5. Corporate Implications**

### **a. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The initiatives described in this report have been funded from existing budgets.

### **b. Legal Implications**

- 5.2 Under employment law it is discriminatory to treat reservists differently from other employees.

### **c. Human Resources & Equality Implications**

- 5.3 There are no implications of this kind arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **d. Timescale for implementation & risk factors**

- 5.4 It is recommended that the Cabinet should receive further updates on the progress of the Community Covenant initiatives and the development and implementation of the Veteran's Portal.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The Council takes pride in supporting its serving soldiers, sailors and airmen, service families and reservists and the many Veterans who reside in our Borough.

## **Background Papers**

The Community Covenant

**Report Author: Melanie Harris**

Head of Partnerships and Safer Places/Acting Head of Licensing and Transportation



## **THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom  
Her Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of  
the Crown

And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.



**CABINET**

**18 MARCH 2015**

**Subject: Universal Credit – Update Report**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor J Stanley – Resources and Performance**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

To inform Cabinet of the progress being made with implementing Universal Credit in Castle Point.

**2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives**

This work is explicitly linked to the Public Health and Wellbeing and Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services priorities.

**3. Recommendation**

**That Cabinet note the contents of the report.**

---

**4. Background**

4.1 The introduction of the welfare reforms commenced in 2012 and since that time we have seen:

- The introduction of Local Council Tax Support
- The cap of £26,000 on welfare benefits
- The loss of spare bedroom subsidy

4.2 The welfare reform programme has been focussed on the introduction of Universal Credit across the country and this was introduced in pilot areas in 2013. Since that time there has been a gradual process of introducing the replacement system for welfare benefits nationwide.

4.3 At the present time Universal Credit is operational in 96 Job Centre areas who now process Universal credit claims for singles, couples and families. As at 12 February 2015 54,380 claims had been received at those centres with around 32% of claimants being in work.

- 4.4 A person who is awarded Universal Credit retains their Universal Credit status for life and it will be adjusted to reflect any changes in circumstances i.e. a move, change in family status, in and out of work.
- 4.5 Universal Credit will be paid direct to the claimant as a single monthly payment with very limited exceptions.
- 4.6 The national expansion of Universal Credit was announced in the Autumn of 2014 to take effect from February 2015. This is to be phased across all remaining areas from February 2015 to March 2016 and is split into 4 tranches. Tranche one is February to April 2015, Tranche two is May to July 2015, Tranche 3 is September to November 2015 and Tranche four is December 2015 to April 2016.
- 4.7 This is the first phase of the roll out and will only be for single non-householders who would otherwise have been eligible for Job Seekers Allowance.
- 4.8 The current timetable indicates that by 2020 all new claims, including those who have a break in their benefit, will be processed via Universal Credit and at that time the phase of transferring all remaining existing claims to Housing Benefit will commence.
- 4.9 Further information on the expansion to families and the current live sites is available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## **5. Implementation in Castle Point**

- 5.1 Castle Point is in Tranche 2 of the national roll out meaning that our go-live time is between May and July 2015.
- 5.2 The Job Centre at Canvey will go live with Universal Credit for single people on 18 May 2015. The Job Centre at Rayleigh will not go live until Tranche 4 and there are many mainland applicants in Castle Point who come within that boundary.
- 5.3 The DWP are planning to change the Job Centre boundaries to match the local authority but the dates for this are not yet available.
- 5.4 The DWP have provided a forecast of numbers for Castle Point following the introduction. It is anticipated that there will be 468 claims during the 2015/16 financial year.
- 5.5 It should be noted that Basildon Borough Council will be going live on 16 March 2015 and Southend Borough Council will be going live on 13 April 2015 as both are in Tranche 1. A person awarded Universal Credit in either of those areas who moves to Castle Point will bring their Universal Credit award with them. This means we could have Universal Credit claimants prior to our official go-live date.
- 5.6 Partnership working with the Job Centre Plus has been on-going since the Partnership Agreement was put in place in August 2014 and recently staff have been shadowing between the two sites.



- 5.7 Work is underway to provide publicity for benefit claimants approaching these offices to ensure that they are aware of the changes that are due to take place. This includes refreshing information on the Council website, preparing flyers to distribute to new claimants, and preparing posters and information for public display and newsletters.
- 5.8 Regular meetings are being held with DWP staff at local and regional levels to ensure that all available information is shared as quickly as possible.
- 5.9 The DWP will be sharing information later this month on the availability of some funding to enable the Council to consider the options to provide welfare and budgeting support to claimants from these offices. Further information on this is not yet available.

## **6. Corporate Implications**

### **a. Financial Implications**

The actions outlined in this report will be carried out within the current resources of the Benefit Service. The full financial implications of this change in relation to available funding and future subsidy are not yet available.

### **b. Legal implications**

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 aims to promote work and personal responsibility and to make the benefit system fairer, more affordable and better able to tackle poverty, worklessness and welfare dependency. These aims are to be achieved through Universal Credit.

Universal Credit will replace Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income based Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance.

The provision of benefits is a statutory service.

### **c. Human resources and equality**

The actions outlined in this report will be undertaken within available operational resources.

There are no direct equality implications at this stage from the information provided in this report. Equality implications resulting from the implementation of the Universal Credit have been considered at a national level.

### **d. Timescale for implementation and risk factors**

The phased introduction of Universal Credit is as set out in this report. However, this timetable is subject to change.

## **8. Background Papers:**

None

**Report Author:** Wendy Buck, Head of Housing & Communities