



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Motion: Uplift on Universal Credit – Response from Minister for Welfare Delivery</b>
<b>Date:</b>	23rd April, 2021
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider a further response to a motion relating to Universal Credit, which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 7th January.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to consider the response and to take such action thereon as may be determined.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>At the Council meeting on 7th January, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Heading and seconded by Councillor Lyons, was passed:</p> <p>“This Council recognises the positive impact of the £20 uplift on Universal Credit implemented in April 2020.</p> <p>The Council also recognises that, since March 2020, the unemployment claimant count has doubled to at least 60,000 in Northern Ireland and with a recession expected in the Spring only to worsen the situation for many households. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has failed to provide certainty that the £20 uplift on UC will remain beyond March 2021 meaning many families are potentially facing a loss of £1,040 a year to</p>

	<p>their incomes overnight. Charity Action for Children has warned that more than one in 10 families in the north are already having to choose between paying bills and eating meals. The Council calls on the UK government to put a protective shield around struggling families by ensuring March's Budget makes clear that Universal Credit will not be cut by £20 a week in the spring. Finally, the Council agrees to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting they maintain the £20 uplift on Universal Credit in April 2021 and extending the £20 uplift to all legacy benefits.”</p>
3.2	A response was received initially from HM Treasury, on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1.
3.3	The Committee, at its meeting on 19th February, noted the response and agreed that a further letter be forwarded to the Chancellor highlighting the importance of the uplift payment, given the high levels of poverty in Northern Ireland, and urging him to extend it beyond March, 2021.
3.4	A response to that letter has now been received from Will Quince MP, Minister for Welfare Delivery, as the Minister responsible for this policy area. A copy of the response is attached at Appendix 2.
3.5	The Minister points out that, since the start of the pandemic, the Government's priority has been to protect lives and people's livelihoods. With that in mind, the Chancellor announced in the recent Budget that the Government is extending the temporary £20 a week increase in Universal Credit for a further six months, until the end of September, taking it well beyond the end of this national lockdown. Eligible Working Tax Credit claimants will receive a one-off payment of £500. He concludes by stating that it is right that the Government should now shift its focus to supporting people back into work and that it has a comprehensive Plan for Jobs which the Budget builds upon.
	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p>
3.6	None associated with this report.
	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p>
3.7	None
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Document Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Response from HM Treasury</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Response from Minister for Welfare Delivery</p>