

Evington Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Thursday, 28 February 2013

**Held at: St Joseph's Pastoral Centre, 12 Goodwood Road, Leicester
LE5 6SG**

Who was there:

Councillor Deepak Bajaj

Councillor Baljit Singh

INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

Members of the public were able to talk to their ward councillors, the Police, City Warden and service representatives prior to the meeting.

At the conclusion of this informal session, members of the public were invited to take their seats and participate in the formal part of the meeting.

102. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Deepak Bajaj was elected as Chair and welcomed everyone to the Evington Community Meeting.

103. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr John Sloan.

104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

105. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Evington Community Meeting held on 6 December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

106. PLANNING APPLICATION ON GAMEL ROAD FOR A PLACE OF WORSHIP, EDUCATION CENTRE AND MINARET

The Chair agreed to an additional item of business in relation to the planning applications for a place of worship; education centre and minaret on Gamel Road. Mike Richardson, Head of Planning was present and explained that the applications had been brought to the Planning and Development Control Committee on 21 February 2013, and conditional approval had been granted for the continuation of the temporary place of worship and also for a second application for a place of worship, education centre and minaret to replace the temporary building.

Members of the community expressed strong concerns over the granting of conditional approval to the planning applications. A variety of concerns were expressed, including the following:

- Traffic, including buses travelling on Gamel Road.
- Difficulties and dangers posed to children when crossing the road.

- Problems for paramedics accessing properties.
- Parking problems including the blocking of neighbours own driveways, by visitors to the place of worship.
- The development resulting in an accident black spot.
- The impact on elderly residents.
- Visual impact on the amenity and the three storey mosque dominating the area.
- Poor visibility caused by the construction of the proposed wall.
- Intimidation experienced by members of the community.
- There was no need for the mosque as there were sufficient mosques in the city already.
- Notification of the planning application had not been received by a resident in Greystone Avenue.
- A resident had had her vehicle damaged on her street.

Other members of the community commented that the mosque would be used by local people, such as her husband and children who would walk to the centre and would not be using cars. They would no longer have to travel some distance to a different place of worship.

Mike Richardson responded to the queries raised and made the following points:

- Planning officers consult both national and local planning policies and guidance when making any recommendations in respect of planning applications. The conditions attached to the planning consent were designed to minimise inconvenience to the residents.
- The building met council guidelines.
- As part of the planning process, officers in the Highways section were consulted.
- As part of the planning conditions, the applicant was required to submit a travel plan which would need to be agreed with the council.
- There had been no complaints from the bus company. Bus companies had contacted the council in the past where they had concerns about obstruction of bus routes.

- The application had been publicised in the Leicester Mercury, notices had been placed on site and letters had been sent to people who lived in the immediate vicinity.

Councillors commented that the technical aspects of the application had been considered in considerable detail and while there had been concerns over traffic, there were requirements for a traffic management plan. The meeting heard that the facility was already open for all members of the community to use.

107. WARD COUNCILLORS' REPORT

Councillors Bajaj and Singh provided an update on the recent issues they have been dealing with as Ward Councillors in Evington. These included the following:

- Submitted a question to full council on impact equality assessments and had spoken to full council on the budget cuts.
- Spoken at Planning and Development Control Committee in relation to the application for the mosque on Gamel Road
- Submitted a petition in relation to traffic calming at Whitehall Primary School.

108. CHANGES TO WELFARE BENEFITS

Karen Wenlock, Revenue and Benefits Manager gave an update on the changes of welfare benefits. She explained that very significant changes were being made by the Government to the benefit system; however these only affected people of working age. Details of these changes are outlined in the Changes of Welfare Reform booklet, attached to the back of these minutes. A booklet providing information on the advice services is also attached.

Karen explained that major changes were being made to the council tax benefit scheme. From April that scheme was to be replaced by a local Council Tax Reduction scheme and many working age people in Leicester would have to pay something towards their Council Tax for the first time. People were being encouraged to contact the council straight away to make arrangements to pay the new bill.

Changes were also being made to Housing Benefit entitlement, for working age people, living in social housing (where the landlord was the city council or a housing association). The level of Housing Benefit was to be restricted if they were shown to be under occupying their property (generally referred to as the bedroom tax). The change did not mean that people who had a spare room would pay more but that if their household was not considered to need the number of bedrooms in the property, as children of certain ages were expected to share, then a reduction would be applied. The council did not have sufficient smaller accommodation to house everyone who was due to have their housing benefit reduced because of the under occupation rules. They were however working with Housing Options and other

stakeholders to give people relevant advice on what options are available, and a Discretionary Housing Payment could be applied for to assist in the short term while options were considered.

The meeting heard that the benefit cap would not be introduced in April 2013 as originally planned the timetable had altered to be phased in before September 2013. *Please note that subsequent to this meeting the date has been confirmed by the Department for Work and Pensions to be by 15th July 2013.* The new universal credit system was not due to roll out until October 2013.

A query was raised as to the situation if a single person was the sole occupier of a council/housing association two bedroom flat. Karen responded that he would have to pay more for this under the new regulations.

A concern was raised as to the situation if an elderly person lived on her/his own in a two bedroom accommodation, but occasionally needed a carer to stay. Karen explained that the under occupation rules applied to working age people only. (However it was noted that if a working age person needed a carer there are circumstances where a room allowance could be given if a bedroom was used for this purpose. Details would need to be given to the Revenue and Benefits section so consideration could be made)

Karen explained that details of the changes were available on the council's website at:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/search/?q=welfare%20reform%20changes&pageNo=1>

Karen added that staff were doing their best to keep the site updated as further details and changes were notified.

109. HIGHWAYS UPDATE: PARKING ON COLEMAN ROAD

Robert Bateman, Team Leader from Leicester City Council's Highway, Design and Maintenance was present to provide an update on the parking improvements in the Coleman Road area.

In relation to the land to the rear of 2 - 4 Woodborough Road, Robert explained that he had spoken to the landowner, and it was agreed that a contractor would cut back the vegetation there and tidy up the footpath. The landowner had also agreed to maintain the area. A member of the public commented that the footpath was too big and a gate was needed to prevent vehicles entering the footpath. A suggestion was made that a 'kissing gate' would be helpful there.

Outside 4 - 6 Coleman Road it had been agreed to put down a gravel surface in the spinney area which would enable additional parking for approximately 8 cars. The contractor would commence this work towards the end of March 2013. If extra money was available in the future, further work could be carried out which would provide an extra 7 spaces. Officers were also looking into the possibility of removing some double yellow lines to make it easier to park. A request was made for a

residents' parking scheme and the Chair advised that such schemes meant that residents had to pay to park outside their homes. A member of the public commented that in Peterborough, residents who were part of a Residents' Parking Scheme did not have to pay. Robert explained that decisions of this nature were political decisions and as such were not made by officers.

A request was made for the councillors to send a letter to the General Hospital asking them to request staff and out-patients to park in the hospital car park and not in the residential areas. The Chair responded that such letters had been sent before, but another letter would be sent.

Concerns were expressed that any additional parking spaces would be used by staff or visitors to the hospital rather than local residents.

Concerns were also raised over parking and traffic problems on Greenacre Drive. Vehicles were parked the length of Greenacre Drive, the road was used as a rat run and cars were being driven along pavements. Residents were concerned that the situation there was dangerous. Further problems were raised relating to parking problems at Angela Drive, just before Goodwood Road.

Action	Officer identified	Deadline
For a letter to be sent to the General Hospital asking them to request staff and patients to park in the hospital car park and not in residential areas.	Carine Cardoza, Member Support Officer to liaise with the ward councillors.	As soon as possible

110. IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Penny Brown, the Leicester Co-ordinator for the Royal Horticultural Society's It's Your Neighbourhood Campaign was present to provide an update on the initiative.

Penny explained that as well as Evington in Bloom, there were two 'It's Your Neighbourhood' groups in Evington. A great deal of hard work by the volunteers had resulted in beautiful flowers and displays in the area. Evington in Bloom had won a Silver award in 2012, which Penny explained was an outstanding achievement, considering it was the group's first year of entry into the competition.

Penny added that It's Your Neighbourhood was really about groups of local residents getting together to improve their community, and for community groups with roots in gardening. She asked people to contact her if they were interested in finding out more about the initiative.

111. LOCAL POLICING UPDATE

Police Sergeant David Cleaver provided an update on local policing issues in the area. These included the following:

- There had been 23 burglaries over the previous 90 days. The Police were working to reduce this figure.
- There had been 13 thefts from motor vehicles; some of which involved the removal of registration number plates. The Police were seeking funding for special screws to be made available for residents, which would make it much more difficult to remove the plates.
- Thanks were given for the intelligence and information that members of the public gave to the Police. People were urged to report anything suspicious.
- Members of the public were invited to come along to the local Beat Surgeries. A funding bid had been submitted for a proper gazebo which could be used as a mobile surgery.
- The Police would try to look into the parking issues that had been raised during the meeting.

The meeting was advised that the 'It's Your Neighbourhood Group' had a wide remit and would look at issues such as anti-social behaviour and traffic issues.

112. CITY WARDEN

There was no verbal update from the Nicole Powell, the City Warden as she was unwell. However an information sheet giving details of the work she had been involved with were distributed during the early part of the meeting.

113. COMMUNITY MEETING BUDGET

The Chair presented the Evington Community Meeting budget. The following funding applications had been considered by the councillors and their decisions on the funding bids were as follows:

Ref 2086 Proposal: Make do and Mend

Applicant: Kaine Management Ltd
Amount requested: £825

RESOLVED:

that the funding application be supported to the value of £500.

Ref 2087 Proposal: Skill and Teamwork development via 5-a-side football.

Applicant: Nindy Uppelle of Olympia Sport Academy UK
Amount requested: £500

RESOLVED:
that the funding application be supported to the value of £500

Ref 2088 Proposal: Friends of Evington's wildflower meadows for "Evington in Bloom".

Applicant: Helen Pettman
Amount requested: £490

RESOLVED:
that the application be supported to the value of £300

Ref 2089 Proposal: Christmas Tree for Evington village for the next 2 years.

Applicant: Evington Youth Club
Amount requested: £1200

RESOLVED:
that the funding application be supported to the value of £1150

Ref 2090 Proposal: Screening to provide privacy to neighbours of school

Applicant: Laura O'Brien, Chair of Governors at St Paul's Secondary, Leicester
Amount requested: £2500

RESOLVED:
that the application be unsupported

Ref 2091 Proposal: Evington Friendship Club

Applicant: Mrs Valerie Ridsdale
Amount requested: £500

RESOLVED:
that the application be supported to the value of £315

Ref 2092 Proposal: Noticeboards for Ethel Road flats

Applicant: Mrs Gwen Clifford – committee member of Friends of Evington
Amount requested: £150

The Chair informed the meeting that this funding application had been withdrawn.

RESOLVED:

that it be noted that the funding application for noticeboards for Ethel Road flats be withdrawn.

Ref 2093 Proposal: CFA Open Day and Presentation (joint bid to Evington and Spinney Hill Wards).

Applicant: Ahmed Maravia (Community Football Academy)
Amount requested: £350 - £450

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported to the value of £200

Ref 2094 Proposal: Hosting a health awareness day for women in aid of International Women's Day (joint bid between Evington, Coleman, Charnwood, Spinney Hill and Stoneygate).

Applicant: Sahara Centre
Amount requested: £307.50 from the Evington Ward,

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported to the value of £307

Ref 2095 Proposal: Global Hands Youth – CommUNITY Day (Joint bid to Evington, Coleman and Spinney Hill Wards)

Applicant: Global Hands Leicester
Amount requested: £700 from the Evington Ward.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported to the value of £500

The following funding application was submitted too late for inclusion on the agenda:

REF 2097 Proposal: Coleman Evergreen's Summer Outings

Applicant: Coleman Evergreen's
Amount requested £200 from the Evington Ward.

RESOLVED:

that the application be unsupported.

The Chair explained that once the above funding bids that the councillors had supported were approved, the Evington community meeting budget for 2012/13 would be fully committed.

Action to be taken	Officer identified	Deadline
That the funding applications that the councillors had agreed to support be submitted to Councillor Sood, Assistant City Mayor for Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities for approval.	Carine Cardoza, Partnership and Strategy Officer	As soon as possible.

114. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following community announcements were made

Bicycling Club

Helen Pettman announced that a bicycling club was being set up in Evington, and it was aimed that the club would offer a variety of different rides ranging from 6 miles to 30 miles. There would also be 'learn to ride' sessions and magical mystery rides. Young people under the age of 18 needed to be accompanied by an adult. Details of the bicycling club had been placed in the Evington Echol.

Evington Library

Val Smith, librarian at the Evington Library explained that there were plans for the Friends of Evington and the library to work closer together, with the library becoming a local hub for the community. People were invited to come along to the library to talk to the staff there or to the Friends of Evington, about what they would like to see in Evington. It was aimed to have an information board in the library giving notice of community issues. It was also hoped to have coffee mornings in the library on Saturdays. Val added that the library were also happy to support the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' initiative.

The 36 Bus

A member of the community referred to the number 36 Bus and explained that there was an article in the Evington Echo seeking support to maintain the bus service. She added that the residents depended on this bus service and they had written to the City Mayor seeking support to keep the bus service going.

Walking Sports

Pauline O'Brien announced that walking basketball sessions for all adults aged 50 plus were now being held at the Youth club on Thursdays between 10am – 11am.

115. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.03 pm.

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A Guide to the Welfare Reform Changes

Introduction

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 became law in March, introducing a wide range of reforms to the benefits and tax credits system, administered across government departments, agencies and local authorities.

Many benefits are being changed, or withdrawn and replaced by new systems. There are also complicated transitional arrangements as the reforms are phased in over the next few years, and uncertainty remains in some areas.

This guide is produced jointly by the Welfare Rights Service and the Revenues and Benefits Services, within Leicester City Council.

It aims to give easy to understand guidance around the main benefit and tax credit changes that are currently taking place, many of which will come into force with effect from April 2013. This guidance focuses on the main changes that will impact on Leicester residents however it is not an exhaustive list.

Please note we have also included some references to changes that may have already occurred, but where the effects are being felt on an on-going basis.

Most of the changes will impact upon those of working age, with residents of state pension credit age being largely protected from adverse impacts.

Please note that we are still awaiting some regulations to provide detail so they may be subject to further change.

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Benefit Cap - Phased in from April 2013

Benefits income will be capped at average earnings level, currently estimated at £350 for single claimants and £500 for lone parents and couples.

All working age benefits are included in the cap although those people claiming Disability Living Allowance / Working Tax Credit / Employment Support Allowance (support component) will be exempt from it.

There will also be a “grace period” of 39 weeks for anyone who has worked for 12 months and has recently lost their job.

The details of the cap are as follows:-

- The cap limits payments to a household to no more than average household earnings.
- Local authorities will reduce Housing Benefit payments to keep total benefits within the cap, although this may not be always possible as entitlement must remain at 50p per week. However the income cap will eventually be made through the Universal Credit.
- It mainly affects large families with several children who get higher than average Child Tax Credit and are more likely to live in large homes.
- The introduction phased in from April 2013 applies to households from September 2013 claiming Housing Benefit. Households who own their own home will not be subject to the change until they are awarded Universal Credit.

IMPACT – large families and those with particularly high rents will be disproportionately affected and will have to pay a larger chunk of their rent.

FOR EXAMPLE - a family claiming £600 in benefits including £150 Housing benefit would have their Housing Benefit reduced to £50 leaving a rent shortfall of a further £100 to be made up out of existing benefits.

Council Tax Benefit (CTB) - From April 2013

Council Tax Benefit will be abolished and replaced with a local rebate scheme – Council Tax Support.

The government have reduced the funding for the scheme by 10%, but have protected pensioners from this reduction, which will mean a higher contribution by residents of ‘working age’ who pay Council Tax. Local Authorities have discretion how to administer the scheme; part of the process is to consider the options for each authority. Each authority has to conduct a public consultation on their local scheme.

In Leicester the consultation ran between 5/09/12 – 30/10/12. The proposed scheme has been adopted and details can be found at www.leicester.gov.uk/bigbenefitchanges

IMPACT – most working age people reliant on benefits will potentially have to pay towards their Council Tax under these measures for the first time. This will affect those on the lowest incomes who are least able to pay (similar problems to poll tax).

Child Benefit (CB)

April 2011 - Rates of child benefit for the first and subsequent children frozen for 3 years

January 2013 – Child Benefit will be withdrawn where someone in household has income over £50,000.

IMPACT – It will mean that a single-income family, earning over £50k loses some, or all, the child benefit. However a couple both earning up to £50k each will keep it.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) – From June 2013

DLA will be replaced by Personal Independence Payment for new claimants of working age (16-64). The components for care will be reduced from 3 to 2 (standard & enhanced) and the assessment process will completely change to being awarded points from descriptors related to various activities in a similar way to the current system for Employment & Support Allowance. People will need to score points on the activities to pass the threshold for the 2 rates of daily living (care) and mobility. Initial claims will be made by telephone but most people will have a face to face assessment to decide if they can receive PIP.

JUNE 2013 - To start with it will only apply to new claimants.

OCTOBER 2013 - DLA claimants who report a change of circumstance, reach 16yrs old or whose award ends will be assessed for PIP.

OCTOBER 2015 - the national reassessment and transfer of working age DLA claimants to PIP begins.

IMPACT – The Government anticipate around 500,000 less will be entitled to PIP enhanced rate mobility due to the tougher rules. The Government have anticipated that nationally the caseload will reduce by around 500,000 by 2015 due to the tougher assessment process as more people are turned down.

Some of the other Welfare reform changes protect claimants on DLA, therefore if they no longer qualify for this benefit they will lose their protection from other changes.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

What is it? - It is a benefit for people who have limited capability for work because of ill health or disability and replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support on grounds of illness or disability.

STRUCTURE – It can be either contributory or income based and following medical assessment people are placed in either the work related activity group or the support group depending on level of illness or disability. People in the work related activity group are expected to attend work focused interviews.

MARCH 2011 – new tougher ‘limited capability for work’ test were introduced

APRIL 2011 – start of reassessment of all existing Incapacity Benefit (or Income Support for disability) claims to decide if they meet the criteria for Employment & Support Allowance or are fit enough to sign on for work and claim Jobseekers Allowance.

Due to be completed in 2014 approximately 40% fail to meet threshold leading to a large backlog in appeals against these decisions including over 2,000 waiting to be heard in Leicester with delays well over 6 months. Around 8,000 people are still to be reassessed in Leicester.

IMPACT – Between 20-40% of people reassessed are likely to be declared fit to work and around 40% who appeal succeed in challenging the decision.

APRIL 2012 – Contributory ESA is time limited to one year for those in the work related activity group. Time spent on this prior to April 2012 can count towards this.

IMPACT - To remove income from sick and disabled people who have a working partner unless they are in the support group.

DECEMBER 2012 – Sanctions increased for people in the ‘work related activity group’ who fail to attend work focused interviews or work related activity (Work Programme) without good reason. They will lose all their personal allowance (eg £71per week if single) until they comply. This will be followed by a fixed period sanction of between 1-4 weeks. They can apply for hardship payments immediately and have appeal rights against the decision.

IMPACT – This means greater and longer reductions in benefit for people sanctioned. Numbers sanctioned are increasing as more people are sent on the Work Programme for the first time.

Housing Benefit (HB)

What is it?

Housing benefit is a means tested benefit currently administered by local authorities for the DWP using a national scheme of regulations to help pay rent. As part of Welfare Reform there will be a number of changes and these changes will affect many people in receipt of Housing Benefit with working age families most affected. Many people who get Housing Benefit will see their benefit reduced.

Housing Benefit changes began in April 2011 with more coming through 2012-2013. So far it has mostly affected those in private rented housing with claims from April 2008 (‘Local Housing Allowance’), but further change will affect most working age groups. The benefit will become part of the Universal Credit, planned to be fully rolled out by 2017. It will then be administered by the Department for Work & Pensions rather than local authorities.

April 2011 – non dependant deductions no longer frozen but are updated on an annual basis.

IMPACT – tenants have larger reductions in HB help for adult sons, daughters or others living with them.

April 2011 – Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates for private sector tenancies reduced from average local rents to value of lowest third.

IMPACT – benefit tenants can only realistically rent within the lowest third of the private sector.

Housing Benefit payments for a maximum of four bedrooms only

IMPACT – Rates for larger households did have a maximum payment for up to five bedroom properties. From April 2011 rates were limited to a maximum of four bedrooms reducing their weekly entitlement.

More Housing Benefit for those needing an overnight carer - From April 2011

IMPACT - if a claimant or their partner is disabled and need an overnight carer, who does not normally live with them, they may get additional payment for an extra bedroom. This applies to private tenants from April 2011 and from April 2013 for tenants renting in the social rented sector.

Reduction in benefit for people under 35 - January 2012

The 'shared accommodation rate' used to apply to single people under 25 renting in the private sector. It meant they were only entitled to Housing Benefit at the same rate as someone renting a room in a shared house even if living in self-contained accommodation. From January 2012, the rate applies for people up 35 years old.

IMPACT – many under 35's have a reduced level of Housing benefit entitlement, of approximately £28.00 per week.

April 2013 – Local Housing Allowance rates will be up rated annually by Consumer Price Index, instead of reflecting actual rents.

IMPACT – this means HB/LHA increases are likely to lag behind actual rent increases, with tenants having to make up the shortfall.

The “Bedroom Tax” - April 2013

This change introduces restrictions to Housing Benefit for working age customers living in the social rented sector who are occupying a larger property than their household requires. A size criteria will be introduced to establish any ‘spare’ bedrooms.

The size criteria will restrict housing benefit to allow for one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household, with the following exceptions:

- Children under 16 of same gender expected to share
- Children under 10 expected to share regardless of gender
- Disabled tenant or partner who needs non resident overnight carer will be allowed an extra bedroom

Housing Benefit will be restricted by 14% for one extra bedroom and 25% for two or more extra bedrooms.

The Bedroom Tax will only apply to claimants of working age and any claimant or partner over qualifying age for Pension Credit (this is currently linked to a woman’s minimum retirement age and is gradually increasing) will be exempt from these rules. There will also be exemptions for shared ownership, temporary accommodation and some supported accommodation.

IMPACT – large reduction in Housing Benefit causing a shortfall in rent payment that needs to be made up. Options are to move to smaller accommodation, finding work, taking a boarder or lodger (if allowed) or asking others living in the property to contribute. It may be possible to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) but guidance says these will specifically be targeted at disabled people with specially adapted accommodation and foster carers.

Income Support (IS)

MAY 2012 – Lone parents must have a child under 5 to qualify for Income Support otherwise they now will need to sign on and look for work and meet the conditions in their Jobseekers Agreement.

Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)

April 2011 - Mandatory work activity of 4 weeks up to 30 hours can be required to continue to receive benefit. Benefit can be stopped for 13 or 26 weeks for failure to attend without good cause.

October 2012 - sanctions increased to minimum of 4 weeks with escalation for repeat offences up to 156 weeks in some cases.

IMPACT – increased conditions and tougher application of the rules are leading to increased sanctions where benefit is stopped and hardship payments need to be applied for.

Social Fund (Community Care Grants & Crisis Loans) – From April 2013

The system of discretionary loans and grants currently paid by the DWP is to be changed with the money being provided to Local Authorities to develop their own schemes.

IMPACT – The new scheme is expected to be based on providing goods, rather than cash hand-outs, the money available will be lower than currently paid out by the DWP and will not be ring-fenced, so there is likely to be a lower budget available to meet the increasing demand.

Sure Start Maternity Grants

April 2011 – payment restricted to the first child only. The only exception is where future births are multiple (e.g. twins /triplets) then a grant can be made for each extra child in the multiple birth.

Tax Credits

2011 – help with childcare costs reduced from 80-70%

2011 – Baby element of calculation removed

April 2012 – working hours for couples increased from 16-24 to get working tax credit.

IMPACT – those who cannot increase hours lose their working tax credit.

April 2012 - Tax credit backdating reduced from 3-1 month

April 2012 – disregard of £2,500 for in year falls in income.

IMPACT – only falls in income over £2,500 per year will result in getting more tax credits

Universal Credit – From October 2013

This new means tested benefit will replace the current system of working age benefits and tax credits, by replacing them with one benefit. This will be regardless of their employment status, it is both an 'in work' or 'out of work' benefit.

STRUCTURE –

Benefits it will replace

- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Income -related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income- based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Some of the Social Fund Payments – Budgeting Loans, Surestart
Maternity Grants, cold weather payments

It is an integrated means tested benefit for working age claimants whether they are unemployed or in low paid work.

Benefits not included

- Council Tax Benefit
- Child Benefit
- Carer's Allowance
- Contributory Jobseekers Allowance
- Contributory Employment & Support Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance AND its replacement Personal Independence Payment
- Parts of Social Fund Payments – Community Care Grants, Crisis Loans
- Passported benefits (entitlements that come with certain other benefits)
- Statutory Sick Pay, Statutory Maternity Pay, Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Bereavement Benefits.

How it works

Claims will be made by households not individuals and amounts will depend on the income and circumstances of all household members. The government will ensure existing claimants do not end up worse off at the point of change.

People with savings over £16,000 will not be able to claim Universal Credit.

How much will people receive?

We do not yet have the detail on how much people will get. There will be a basic allowance with different rates for single people and couples and lower rates for younger people.

There will then be extra amounts available for those with a disability, caring responsibilities, children, childcare costs and housing costs.

Limits on amount paid

As people earn more, their benefit is reduced.

- The rate at which it is reduced is the ‘taper rate’. People can earn a certain amount of money though before tapering applies. This is called earnings ‘disregards’. The amount disregarded will be based on needs eg a couple with children will have a higher disregard than a couple without children.
- There will be a benefits cap on how much a household can receive based on the average earnings of a working family - £500 a week for a lone-parent or couple and £350 a week for a single person. Some households will be exempt.

Conditions and sanctions

There will be more conditions and tougher sanctions for all benefits. All claimants must accept a ‘claimant commitment’ and most will be subject to work-related or work-focussed requirements. Sanctions can include reduction of the benefit for up to 3 years.

How and when it is paid

It is a single payment made monthly to a household, but the Department of Work & Pensions can pay more frequently, or split the payment in exceptional circumstances.

Transition to Universal Credit

The Universal Credit will be phased in 2013-2017. It will be done gradually, starting with people whose circumstances change and new claimants.

There are also changes to benefits that will be replaced, including the following items.

TIME SCALE – New claimants will go onto UC from October 2013 with existing claimants of the relevant benefits will be transferred onto UC on a rolling programme between April 2014-2017 and transitional protection will mean existing claimants are no worse when transferred. However old rates will not be updated and if there is a relevant change of circumstance they will lose protection.

There will effectively be 2 benefits systems running for this period of 4 years

CLAIMS – there will be one application process for all elements of the benefit and they will be paid by a single agency (DWP). Claims will normally be made and administered online.

IMPACT (positive) – working claimants particularly those in part time irregular work will be better off due to higher earnings disregards and more generous reduction rates. It will be particularly beneficial for those who work less hours and have childcare as the requirement to work at least 16 hours is removed. It will also be easier to try work or change hours as benefit will not automatically stop and changes of circumstances should be implemented quicker.

IMPACT (negative) – there will be longer sanctions of up to 3 years for those who do not comply with the work seeking conditions of their claimant commitment. It will be claimed online with an online account to report changes of circumstances which may create problems of those who do not have access to a computer or are unable to use one. There is also concern that delay or faults with the computer system will affect payment. It will normally be paid monthly to the claimant so there may be budgeting issues for some people. It is also anticipated that overpayments will be recoverable regardless of who made the error.

DISABILITY – it is expected that there will be no equivalent to the current enhanced and severe disability premiums or elements, so many disabled people who are unable to work will be worse off. These premiums are worth £14.80 and £58.20 respectively so new claimants could potentially be £73 per week worse off under UC. For some disabled children the child element is expected to reduce from £56.57 to £28.15.

A Quick Guide to Benefits Staying Outside the Universal Credit

Child Benefit

What is it

A tax free payment for those responsible for a child/children, usually up to age 16, potentially longer if in education.

Main changes

- Frozen for 3 years from Apr2011
- From Jan2013, withdrawn where someone in household has income over £50,000. It means a single-income family earning over £50k loses some or all the benefit, but a couple both earning up to £50k each keeps all the benefit.

Social Fund

What is it:

Government scheme to help people with costs difficult to meet on a low income. With most you have to be receiving other benefits to qualify.

Main changes:

- The Council will be given responsibility for discretionary payments from the Fund – Community Care Grants, Crisis Loans.
- Those elements which can be automated will become part of the Universal Credit – Budgeting Loans, Surestart Maternity Grants, cold weather payments

Pass ported Benefits

What are they:

Entitlement to certain benefits (eg Income Support) gives automatic entitlement to Passported Benefits such as free school meals and free prescriptions.

Main changes:

More detail to be announced. It is suggested that entitlement will be income related – as income rises, benefits will be gradually withdrawn.

Contributory Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)

What is it:

A benefit for people not in full-time employment who are capable of and are looking for a job. Paid for up to 6 months to those who have paid enough National Insurance.

(Income-based JSA is paid to those with low income and savings, with no time limit and even if they have not paid National Insurance. It is being replaced by the Universal Credit.)

Main changes:

- Further detail to be announced. Some people will be entitled to both Contributory JSA and Universal Credit so JSA will adopt the same rules where appropriate.

Contributory Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)

What is it:

Money for people who have limited capacity for work because of sickness or disability but do not get statutory sick pay. Paid for up to a year to those who paid enough National Insurance.

(Income-related ESA is paid to those with low income and savings below £16,000. It is being replaced by the Universal Credit.)

Main changes:

- Contributory ESA in youth to be abolished.
- Further detail on ESA to be announced. Some people will be entitled to Contributory ESA and Universal Credit, so ESA will adopt the same rules where appropriate.

Pension Credit

What is it:

An income related benefit for pensioners. Made up of two parts – guarantee credit to top up pensioners' income to guaranteed level and savings credit to reward those who have saved.

Main changes:

- Pension Credit is intended to support pensioners not in work and Working Tax Credit helps who are in work.
- As there will no longer be Working Tax Credit, the Government is considering extending Universal Credit so that it covers not only working-age people but also pensioners who choose to carry on working.

Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment

What is it:

A benefit for disabled adults and children to help with extra costs because of disability.

Main changes:

- Disability Living Allowance will be replaced by Personal Independence Payment from April 2013.
- It is being phased in 2013- 2016.
- Entitlement is not based on disability, income or savings, and is paid whether in work or not.
- Entitlement is based on personal circumstances and impact the disability or condition has on ability to live independently.
- There is no change for Disability Allowance children under 16.
- Those over 65 will continue to get Disability Living Allowance if they meet the entitlement conditions.

Carer's Allowance

What is it

Payment to those who care for someone for at least 35 hours a week. The person being cared for must be getting a benefit because of their disability.

Main changes

No changes yet announced by government, although the intention is that recipients will be offered support to maintain links with the world of work, if they are not currently in work.

Council Tax Benefit

What is it:

Help with council tax for people on low incomes. It is a government benefit, administered by local council authorities.

Main changes:

- In April 2013 it is being replaced by a new local scheme, Council Tax Support, which the Council is developing.
- In Leicester, it is expected approx 20,000 people will have to pay an extra £200 as Council Tax Support will be less than Council Tax Benefit.

Other Issues:-

Appeal Rights – April 2013

The right of appeal, for DWP benefit decisions, may only be allowed after a revision has been considered by the DWP.

Legal Aid – April 2013

Most Government legal aid for welfare benefits, debt and housing is being abolished, drastically reducing advice provision in the city as many of the changes start to take effect and demand for advice and representation increases.

IMPACT – capacity for specialist welfare rights cases in the city will be lost with the reduction in advisors at a time when demand due to the changes will substantially increase.

Pension Reforms and Pension Credit

People or couples where one meets the qualifying age for State Pension Credit are excluded from most of the changes and can claim Pension Credit instead of Universal Credit. However the qualifying age is gradually increasing to 66 and when Universal Credit starts the Pension Credit qualifying age for couples will start when the youngest reaches it instead of the oldest.

IMPACT – people will be subject to many of the cuts for longer than they are now and will have to look for work and meet the claimant commitment into an older age.

Pension Credits may be changed to cover pensioners who work, or the government may decide to extend the Universal Credit to cover working pensioners. The state pension age is also going to rise at dates still to be announced.

Simple Payment' Service

Under a new 'Simple Payment' service, those claimants with no bank or Post Office card account will be issued with a card to get their benefits from Paypoint outlets in shops, garages and similar instead of receiving benefits cheques. It starts this summer, and those affected will be sent an information pack.

Benefits uprating

APRIL 2011 – indexation of most benefits and tax credits changed to Consumer Price Index (CPI) from Retail Price Index (RPI).

IMPACT – CPI usually increases at a slower rate leading to smaller annual benefit increases

APRIL 2013 – Most working age benefits and tax credit uprating frozen at 1% rather than by prices for 3 years. It will not apply to premiums within these benefits for disability, caring, or pensioners. It also does not apply to Disability Living Allowance, support group component of ESA or the disability elements of tax credits. The State Retirement Pension and Pension Guarantee Credit are protected from these changes.

IMPACT – the Government estimates around 30% of households will be affected losing on average £3 per week. Lone parents are expected to lose £5 per week.

Leicester City Council advice & support:

Please refer to the "Advice Services in Leicester" booklet for full details of Free advice available in Leicester.

The Booklet can be found at <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/social-care-health/adults/about-our-adult-social-care-services/social-welfare-advice-services/>

Further information

With the scale and breadth of the changes, the array of organisations responsible for effecting them, and the range of people who will feel their impact, locating easily digestible information is quite a challenge. There is no succinct and readable summary looking across the piece.

The most accessible information tends to be available from organisations who represent particular interest groups (e.g. young people, disabled people) and information is therefore slanted toward them. However, the following are useful starting points for further detail:

Turn2Us - Benefit changes news, timetable and information sheets on main benefits

http://www.turn2us.org.uk/information__resources/benefits/benefits_news_and_changes.aspx

Leicester City Council – Housing Benefit & Council Tax Changes

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/housing/housing-and-council-tax-benefits/big-benefit-changes/>

Child Poverty Action Group - Universal Credit (factsheet)

<http://www.cpag.org.uk/universal-credit-factsheet>

DWP - Policy, draft regulations, policy briefing notes (very detailed)

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/>

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/legislation-and-key-documents/welfare-reform-act-2012/welfare-reform-draft-regulations/>

Direct.Gov – Benefit Cap Guidance

- An online calculator is available to use at www.direct.gov.uk/benefitcap.
- Claimants can use this to get an estimate of how much their HB could be reduced by if the amount of benefit they receive is more than the cap limits; and their circumstances remain the same until the cap is applied.
- The helpline number is 0845 605 7064 or textphone 0845 608 8551 for people with hearing or speech impairments. The helpline is open 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

ADVICE SERVICES

in Leicester



What kind of advice do you need?

W Welfare benefits

- I need help to claim benefits and tax credits
- I need advice about how to challenge a benefits decision

H Housing and Homelessness

- I'm worried about losing my home
- What can I do if I become homeless?

CC Community Care

- I need advice about how to apply for equipment and services so that I can live independently
- I think my community care assessment is wrong

D Debt

- I have taken out a loan and I can't afford the repayments
- I can't pay my bills
- My benefits have been cut

E Employment

- I'm having problems at work
- I've lost my job

I Immigration

- I need advice about my right to remain in the UK
- I need help with my application for British Citizenship
- I need to claim benefits

F Family

- I have separated from my partner and I want to see my children
- I'm thinking of getting divorced

CP Consumer problems

- I'm not happy with something I bought
- I want to change my mobile phone contractor/gas/ electricity provider

Services available to everyone in Leicester

Community Legal Advice Centre (CLAC) **W, H, CC, D, E, F, CP**

Tel 0845 456 0074 or (0116)242 6720

Drop in sessions: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday:

9.00am – 4.30pm; Wednesday 9.00am – 2pm.

Outreach sessions at community venues: appointments available

60 Charles Street, 3rd Floor, Leicester LE1 1FB

E-mail: leicester@communitylegaladvice.org.uk

Website: www.clac.leicester.gov.uk/leicester/

Welfare Rights Service, Leicester City Council **W**

Tel (0116) 256 8211

Advice line: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 1.00pm – 4.00pm

Appointments available in Children's Centres

E-mail: welfare.rights@leicester.gov.uk

Website: www.leicester.gov.uk/council-services/welfare-rights/

Community Advice and Law Service **D, W, H, E**

Tel (0116) 242 1120

Appointments available at Epic House and at outreach sessions at community venues

County Court desk 10.00am – 1.00pm, 2.00pm - 4.00pm daily

1st Floor, Epic House, Charles Street, Leicester LE1 3SH

E-mail: enquiries@cals.uk.net

Website: www.cals.uk.net

Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project (SHARP) **W, H**

Tel (0116) 254 6064

Emergency drop in and advice service: Monday – Thursday

10.00am – 4.00pm; Friday 10.00am – 3.30pm

13 Welford Road, Leicester LE2 7AD

Website: www.leicestershelter.org.uk/

Citizens' Advice Bureau H, W, F, I, E, CP

Tel (0116) 217 1852

4th Floor, Apex House, 74-76 Charles Street, Leicester LE1 1FB

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Revenue and Benefits, Leicester City Council W, H, D

Advice for Council Tax, business rates, housing and Council Tax benefit.

Tel (0116) 252 7006 (Housing benefits);

(0116) 252 7005 (Council Tax)

Advice line: Monday to Friday: 8.00am – 6.00pm

Drop in sessions: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 8.30am - 5.00pm;

Wednesday: 9.30am - 5.00pm; Friday: 8.30am – 4.30pm

Wellington House, 22-32 Wellington Street, Leicester LE1 6HL

Website: www.leicester.gov.uk/housingbenefits

Housing Options, Leicester City Council H, D

Advice on housing and homelessness

Tel (0116) 252 7008

Advice line: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm;

Tuesday 1.00pm – 5.00pm; Friday 9.00am – 4.30pm

Drop in sessions at Welford Place: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm; Tuesday 1.00pm – 4.00pm

Phoenix House, 1 King Street, Leicester LE1 6RN

Website: www.leicester.gov.uk/applying-for-council-housing/

Advice Services for particular groups or communities

Mosaic: shaping disability services W, CC

Who can we help? Disabled people and carers

Tel (0116) 231 8720

Advice line: Monday – Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm;

Friday 9.00am – 4.30pm

2 Oak Spinney Park, Ratby Lane, Leicester LE3 3AW

Website: www.mosaic1898.co.uk

Age UK W, CC

Who can we help? People over 50 years of age

Tel (0116) 299 2233

Advice line: Monday – Thursday 1.30pm – 4.30pm;

Friday 1.30pm – 4.00pm

Clarence House, Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 3PJ

Website: www.ageukleics.org.uk

Highfields Centre CC, D, F, H, I, W

Who can we help? Primarily Highfields and St Matthews residents

Tel (0116) 253 1053

Drop in sessions: Monday 9.30am – 12 noon;

Tuesday 9.30am – 12.30pm; Wednesday 4.00pm – 6.30pm;

Thursday 9.30am – 12.30pm

96 Melbourne Road, Leicester LE2 0DS

Website: www.highfieldscentre.ac.uk

Saffron Resource Centre W, H, D

Who can we help? Freeman, Eyres Monsell and Aylestone residents

Tel (0116) 283 7212

Appointments available: Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

423 Saffron Lane, Leicester LE2 6SB

E-mail: info@srcentre.org.uk

Website: www.srcentre.org.uk/

The Race Equality Centre W, H, I

Who can we help? Refugees

Tel (0116) 299 9807 or (0116) 299 9800

Drop in sessions: Monday – Friday 10.00am – 4.00pm

3rd Floor, Epic House, Lower Hill Street, Leicester LE1 3SH

Website: www.theraceequalitycentre.org.uk/

Somali Development Services W, D, H

Who can we help? Refugees and other migrants

Tel (0116) 285 5888

Drop in sessions: Monday – Friday 9.00am – 2.00pm

39 Abingdon Road, Leicester LE2 1HA

Website: www.sds-ltd.org

Welfare Rights (Mental Health) Leicester Partnership Trust W

Who can we help? Telephone advice for people with mental health conditions and their carers

Tel (0116) 225 6222

Advice line: Tuesday – Friday 9.30am – 12.30pm

Brandon Mental Health Unit, Leicester General Hospital,

Gwendolen Road, Leicester LE5 4PW

Website: www.lampdirect.org.uk

The Income Management Team, Leicester City Council D, W

Who can we help? Council tenants only

Tel (0116) 252 7007- ask for Income Management Team

Who can they help? Leicester City Council tenants Advice line:

Monday - Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm

No public address but appointments can be arranged

Legal Aid Private Solicitors in Leicester

The following list includes private solicitors who have a contract with the Legal Services Commission.

Free advice is only available for people who are eligible for legal aid. To see if you qualify for legal aid the link below is to a legal aid calculator: www.legalaidcalculator.justice.gov.uk/calculators/

Immigration Advice I

- **Midland Immigration Services**
255 Melton Road, Leicester LE4 7AN
Tel. 0800 0304 998 or (0116) 266 9697
Website: www.misuk.org/contactus.html
- **Thaliwal Bridge Solicitors**
298 Welford Road, Leicester LE2 6EG
Tel. (0116) 274 5252
Website: www.thaliwalbridge.co.uk/

Family Advice F

- **The Smith Partnership**
14 York Road, Leicester LE1 5TS
Tel. (0116) 247 2000
Website: www.smithpartnership.co.uk
- **Bray and Bray**
36-42 Humberstone Road, Leicester LE5 0AE.
Tel. (0116) 254 8871
Website: www.braybray.co.uk
- **Scutt Beaumont**
102 New Walk, Leicester LE1 7EA
Tel. (0116) 254 4200
Website: www.sbs-solicitors.co.uk

- **Emery Johnson Solicitors**
3 & 5 Welford Road, Leicester LE2 7AD
Tel. (0116) 255 4855
[Website: www.emeryjohnson.com](http://www.emeryjohnson.com)
- **Johar and Company**
66 London Road, Leicester LE2 0QD
Tel. (0116) 254 3345
[Website: www.johars.com](http://www.johars.com)
- **Nelsons**
Provincial House, 37 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TU
Tel. (0116) 222 6666
[Website: www.nelsonslaw.co.uk](http://www.nelsonslaw.co.uk)
- **Dodds Solicitors**
32 Friar Lane, Leicester LE1 5RA
Tel. (0116) 253 8585 or (0116) 262 8596
[Website: www.dodds-solicitors.co.uk](http://www.dodds-solicitors.co.uk)
- **Jones and Duffin**
142 Narborough Road, Leicester LE3 0BT
Tel. (0116) 222 1555
[Website: www.jonesduffin.co.uk](http://www.jonesduffin.co.uk)
- **Cartwright King**
31 Horsefair Street, Leicester LE1 5BU
Tel. (0116) 253 9222
[Website: www.cartwrightking.co.uk](http://www.cartwrightking.co.uk)

Key Website Addresses for Information on Welfare Law Advice

Community Legal Advice Direct

www.legaladviserfinder.justice.gov.uk

Tel. 0845 345 4345

National Debt Line

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Tel. 0808 808 4000

Citizens Advice Consumer Service

www.oft.gov.uk/consumer

Tel. 0845 4040 505

Benefits Advice

www.turn2us.org.uk

Tel. 0808 802 2000

ACAS (advice and guidance)

www.acas.gov.uk

Tel. 0845 7474 747

Shelter Housing Advice Line

www.shelter.org.uk

Tel. 0808 800 4444

How much do these telephone calls cost?

0800 or 0808 Freephone Numbers

A number of organisations use Freephone numbers including some helplines and charities such as those above.

Calls are normally free of charge from landlines but charges may apply from mobile phones. However, the operator must make an announcement before the call is connected telling the caller that they will be charged (the announcement does not state the exact charge). Calls from mobiles typically cost up to 40p per minute.

0845 Numbers

Calls are typically charged at between 1p and 11.5p per minute depending on the time of day for landline customers. Calls from mobile phones generally cost between 20p and 41p per minute.

This booklet has been prepared in partnership by the Social Welfare Advice Forum and Leicester City Council.

Its aim is to provide people in Leicester with information about the free social welfare advice services available in the city.

Contact with most services has to be made by telephone. Only a few services offer drop in sessions where no appointments are necessary.

The information in the booklet gives the key areas of advice that services provide. Many also may have specialist areas of expertise.

Most services provide free advice. However some can only be provided free with legal aid and this is subject to an eligibility test.

The information in this booklet will change after April 2013.

For further assistance with this booklet please call Customer Services at Leicester City Council on (0116) 252 7000.