



| Report of: | Meeting | Date |
|--|---------|---------------|
| Councillor Michael Vincent, Leader of the Council and Marianne Hesketh, Director of Communities | Cabinet | 17 April 2024 |

Grant Funding for Citizens Advice Lancashire West

Key decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To recommend that the council enters into a four-year grant and service level agreement with Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW) for the provision of welfare advice services in the Borough until 31 May 2028.

2. Council priorities

2.1 This relates to the people and communities priority and the commitment to 'provide support to those who need it, including our most vulnerable and financially disadvantaged residents and our ageing population'.

3. Recommendations

3.1 To agree that the council enter into a four-year grant and service level agreement with Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW) until 31 May 2028 at a cost of £35,000 per annum.

3.2 To agree an in-kind contribution (worth an estimated £18,000 per annum) to allow the use of up to two units at Fleetwood Market to facilitate a face-to-face outreach service.

3.3 The previously allocated £8,000 for the digital kiosk trial is no-longer being progressed by the CALW and will instead be returned to general balances to support the increased annual grant at 3.1.

4. Background

4.1 The council and CALW service have had a historic working arrangement since 2011. The service provides free, confidential, impartial and independent advice and information to Wyre residents. Since 2011,

Overview and Scrutiny task groups have been commissioned to review the service level agreement and to recommend to Cabinet whether to continue to award the grant. The last agreement commenced in June 2021, where the council entered into a three-year agreement with CALW until 2024.

4.2 The latest evaluation of performance has been carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and their draft report was agreed at their meeting on 26 February 2024 and is presented to Cabinet on this same agenda as a separate earlier item. There are four recommendations:-

- That Cabinet renew the agreement between the council and Citizens Advice Lancashire West for four years.
- That Cabinet considers increasing the grant contribution payment to Citizens Advice Lancashire West from £30,000 as per previous service agreement renewals.
- That within an updated service level agreement, the use of the units at Fleetwood Market and the in-kind contribution be added to formalise their use.
- That the Council and Citizens Advice Lancashire West consider re-starting the trial of the digital kiosks, particularly for Over Wyre and for the £8,000 set aside for this in 2021 be released.

4.3 Performance information provided by the CALW shows that between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2023, they have assessed and assisted 16,883 Wyre clients with 39,244 issues across all enquiry areas. The largest enquiry areas are benefits and tax credits, debt advice and universal credit. They have assisted Wyre clients to address £11,919,034 worth of debt and access £5,980,289 worth of disability benefits.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 The grant funding will contribute towards the CALW core service which includes a five days per week call centre which operates from 9am-5pm. This provides access to advice by telephone, webchat and email. The funding also supports a general advice service delivered by the digital health centre based at Fleetwood Market, three days a week (Tuesday, Thursday and Friday). Outreach for general advice and debt is also provided by way of pre-booked appointments. All advisers are AskRe trained, which allows them to identify clients with domestic abuse issues and refer them to the appropriate support agencies.

5.2 The service level agreement has been updated and is attached at Appendix 1.

5.3 The previously allocated £8,000 for a digital kiosk trial is no-longer being progressed by the CALW, so it is proposed that this funding will instead be returned to general balances to support the increased annual grant at 3.1.

6. Alternative options considered and rejected

- 6.1** Provide no grant to CALW – this was considered and rejected. Without the grant contribution from the council the CALW would not be able to provide any service in Wyre. The key statistics above clearly show there is demand for the service.
- 6.2** Retain the level of grant to CALW at £30,000 – this was considered and rejected. The level of outreach support would reduce to two days a week and it was felt that this would not provide a sufficient level of service for our residents.
- 6.3** Increase the level of grant to £40,000 – this was considered and rejected. When factoring in the in-kind contribution from the use of the Fleetwood market units and the proposed increase to £35,000 per annum, then the level of grant to CALW is comparable with other Lancashire districts.

| Financial, Legal and Climate Change implications | |
|---|---|
| Finance | <p>The grant of £35,000 per annum will be paid in four instalments and over the four-year period represents a commitment of £140,000. It is proposed that the cost be met from general balances.</p> <p>The previously allocated £8,000 for digital kiosks will be returned to general balances to offset the increased annual grant. The Medium Term financial Plan will be updated to reflect the increased commitment.</p> |
| Legal | The grant and service level agreement with the CALW has been amended accordingly and the draft is attached at Appendix 1. |
| Climate Change | There are no climate change implications. |

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

| risks/implications | ✓ / x |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| community safety | x |
| equality and diversity | x |
| health and safety | x |

| risks/implications | ✓ / x |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| asset management | x |
| ICT | x |
| data protection | x |

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

| report author | telephone no. | email | date |
|------------------|---------------|--|------------|
| Marianne Hesketh | 01253 887350 | marianne.hesketh@wyre.gov.uk | 08/04/2024 |

| List of background papers: | | |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------------------|
| name of document | date | where available for inspection |
| None | | |

List of appendices

Appendix 1 – draft grant and service level agreement