

Report of:	Meeting	Date	Item No.
Cllr Peter Gibson, Leader of the Council and Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation	Cabinet	18 January 2017	6

<b>Grant Funding for Citizens Advice Bureau</b>
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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1** To consider a three year extension to the current agreement with Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW) for the provision of welfare advice services in the Borough until 31 May 2020.

**2. Outcomes**

- 2.1** Access to a free, confidential, impartial and independent advice service for local residents via telephone, email and letter with the provision of additional outreach services in those areas of greatest need.

**3. Recommendation**

- 3.1** Members are asked to agree a three year extension to the current service level agreement with Citizens Advice Lancashire West (CALW) ceasing 31 May 2020.

**4. Background**

- 4.1** The Council originally entered into a two year service level agreement with Lancashire West Citizens Advice Bureau in June 2011. Following an evaluation by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2012, a report was agreed by Cabinet to extend the service for a further two years to 31 May 2015.
- 4.2** A second evaluation of the performance of the CALW was undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of their 2014/15 work programme. A report was agreed by Cabinet in January 2015 to extend the service for a further two years to 31 May 2017.

**4.3** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has recently undertaken a further evaluation to consider the possibility of extending the SLA once again. A Citizens Advice Bureau scrutiny review group was convened which met on 31 October and 14 November 2016 and their report will be considered by Cabinet at the January 2017 meeting. The main conclusions of the task group were that:

- ✓ The CALW has met the terms of the agreement from 2015, however, it was noted that the number of 'primary presenting problems' and 'other problems' for which advice is sought and was supported by Cabinet on 21 January 2015 had not been included in the SLA but it was felt that this information would be useful.
- ✓ The services provided by CALW are comprehensive and well-managed. There is evidence that a high percentage of interventions are positive and clients are, on the whole, very pleased with the service that they receive;
- ✓ The service has provided good value for money, enabling a much higher number of residents to access advice services than would be possible for the council to deliver with the same level of funding;
- ✓ The review group felt that extending the commissioning arrangement to three years would better assist the CALW for longer term planning and development;
- ✓ The review group was confident that the evidence demonstrated that the CALW can provide an improved service throughout Wyre.

## **5. Key issues and proposals**

**5.1** The CALW service includes a 5 day a week call centre which operates from 9.00 – 5.00. The funding also supports a three days a week general advice service delivered by the volunteer hub based at Fleetwood Town Council offices, Poulton Road. An outreach service is provided for three weeks each month on a Thursday, operating from Vincents solicitors, Garstang. Specialist debt advice is also provided at Poulton Road.

**5.2** Quarterly performance information is provided by the CALW which indicates they have supported 7,334 cases over the last 18 months. Of these 4,103 (56%) were face to face contacts and 3,231 (44%) were telephone contacts.

**5.3** It is proposed that a further three years funding be agreed and that the SLA be amended to reflect the following:-

- (i) Provide the numbers of people seeking advice from CALW who were referred by Wyre Council
- (ii) Prioritise referrals from Wyre Council according to agreed criteria
- (iii) Provide the numbers of people seeking advice from CALW in person and by telephone, respectively

- (iv) Provide the number of 'primary presenting problems' and 'other problems' for which advice is sought
- (v) Provide a breakdown of clients seen, according to benefit type
- (vi) Meet with Wyre Council officers six monthly to review performance within the context of the service level agreement

<b>Financial and legal implications</b>	
Finance	The grant of £30,000 per annum is paid in three instalments and over the three year period represents a commitment of £90,000. It is proposed that the cost be met from an overprovision on court costs in respect of a case that has now been settled (estimated at £60,000) and revenue savings identified during the Revised Estimate process (estimated at £30,000). The proposals will be reflected in the Revenue Estimates which will be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 15 February 2017.
Legal	The service level agreement with the CALW will be amended accordingly.

#### **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
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
climate change	x
data protection	x

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<b>List of background papers:</b>		
name of document	date	where available for inspection

#### **List of appendices**

None

arm/ex/cab/cr/171801mh1