

| Report of: | Meeting | Date |
|--|---------|-----------------|
| Cllr David Henderson, Leader of the Council and Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities | Cabinet | 15 January 2020 |

Grant Funding for Citizens Advice Lancashire

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To consider a one year extension to the current agreement with Citizens Advice Lancashire (CAL) for the provision of welfare advice services in the Borough until 31 May 2021.

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 one year extension to the current service level agreement with Citizens Advice Lancashire (CAL) ceasing 31 May 2021.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Council originally entered into a two year service level agreement with Lancashire West Citizens Advice Bureau (now known as Citizens Advice Lancashire) 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 CAL 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 A further evaluation was carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October and November 2016 and their report was subsequently approved by Cabinet in January 2017 and this was for a further three year extension to May 2020.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 The CAL service 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 volunteer hub based at the Fleetwood Town Council offices in Poulton Road. This comprises two days a week where an open door drop-in service is available (Tuesday and Thursday) with dedicated specialist appointments, including form filling support, being available on the other three days. All advisers are AskRe trained, which allows them to identify clients with domestic abuse issues and be able to refer to the appropriate support agencies. Outreach for general advice and debt is provided by way of pre booked appointments for up to three weeks each month on a Thursday depending on demand. This currently operates from the Library in Garstang. Digital assistance and simple advice queries are also dealt with at Cleveleys (Friday mornings) and Knott End Library (Mondays). Further expansion into other locations such as Over Wyre Medical Centre are currently being investigated.

5.2 Whilst not part of this funding, CAL also operate the successful Digital Help Centre which is based at Fleetwood Market and this has been an invaluable resource to Fleetwood residents to help them to get online and access a range of benefits. This operates on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

5.3 Quarterly performance information is provided by the CAL which indicates they have supported 4021 cases over the period 1 October 2018 – 30 September 2019. Debt advice and advice and guidance relating to benefits and tax credits are the largest areas of cases that are dealt with.

5.4 Funding has been included in the budget for a one year extension of the service, so it is proposed that the SLA is extended for a further one year to May 2021. It is suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee add a review to their 2020/21 work programme and then recommendations can come back to Cabinet in January 2021 to consider any further extensions and how these will be funded.

| Financial and legal implications | |
|---|---|
| Finance | The grant of £30,000 will be paid in June 2020 and funded from the remaining Repossession Prevention funding not utilised since 2011/12 owing to lack of demand. This grant is suitable for funding Debt Advice and. his has been reflected in the latest Medium Term Financial Plan. |
| 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 |
| 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 | 12/12/19 |

| List of background papers: | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| name of document | date | where available for inspection |
| | | |

List of appendices