

URGENT ITEM**POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE****7 DECEMBER 2011****REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS****CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU- NEXT STEPS****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update members on the actions taken to mitigate the services lost following the closure of the Citizens Advice Bureau office in Melton (Melton CAB) and to seek member's approval on the next steps proposed both in the short and medium term.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members note the actions taken to mitigate the loss of services following the closure of the CAB office in Melton.**
- 2.2 **Members approve the short term service solution proposed by the South and West Leicestershire CAB, which will begin in January 2012, which includes the provision of 2 desk spaces for back office services at Parkside. (Appendix 1)**
- 2.3 **Members note the longer term proposals identified to begin in April 2012, and September 2012 respectively and authorise officers to work with the CAB and appropriate stakeholders to develop these proposals further and bring back to an appropriate meeting of the Community & Social Affairs Committee, but no later than the end of March 2012.**
- 2.4 **Members approve that the remaining amount of the 2010/11 CAB grant (£16,667) be earmarked for the South & West Citizen Advice Bureau, on the basis of:**
1. **Payment of 50% to support recommendation 2.2- .**
 2. **In Principle approval of 50% as a contribution to the capital investment needed to implement the longer term proposals, following successful conclusion of recommendation 2.3**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Melton CAB offered practical, up-to-date information and advice on a wide range of topics, including; debt, benefits, housing, legal, discrimination, employment, immigration, consumer and other problems. It is a very well recognised brand for the local community.
- 3.2 On the 11th November 2011, the council received an e-mail request from the Network Development Manager for the National CAB to arrange an urgent meeting to discuss the Melton CAB. A meeting was arranged for Monday 14th November 2011, which was attended by the Chief Executive, Strategic Director (KA), the CAB Network Development Manager and the Chair of the Melton CAB Trustee Board. The council were made aware of the financial difficulties of the organisation and were advised of the Melton CAB Trustees' decision to close their operations from 30th November 2011 and to appoint an insolvency practitioner.

- 3.3 From that date officers from the Council have been working with the National CAB Network Manager and officers from South & West Leicestershire CAB, who currently provide CAB services to 5 of the 7 districts in Leicestershire.
- 3.4 The meetings have been productive and the [South & West CAB] organisation has been able to draft some short term and medium to longer term proposals which provide a service for Melton residents from January 2012 and a more sustainable service from April 2012, with an expanded service from September 2012. The details, which still require some further development, are attached in Appendix 1 and Richard Evans from South & West CAB will be present to clarify any points members may wish to make.
- 3.5 Whilst these proposals are a good starting point, officers still need further time to develop a more joined up service, which is related to recommendation 2.3 and in particular the establishment of an officer working group.
- 3.6 Part of the remit for ongoing officer discussions will be to review the court desk service previously provided by Melton CAB, until the Melton Court closure (September 2011).
- 3.7 There is an expectation that through the proposals the working group will identify efficiencies as well as shaping a service that meets customers' needs, and these will be incorporated into the Service Level Agreement developed and reported back through CSA as per recommendation 2.3

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is clear that through the wide range of services delivered by CAB's there will be direct implications on some of the council's priorities, some of which are:
- Improving the well-being of vulnerable people
 - Improve quality of life for people living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Within the Grants to Community & Voluntary Organisations budget £50,000 has been budgeted for 2011/12 of which £25,000 has been paid to date. A further £8,333 will be paid to the insolvency appointment for Melton CAB, which will cover the council's liabilities up to 30th November 2011.
- 5.2 In regards to the remaining £16,667 from the 2011/12 grant allocation members are asked to approve 50% to support the short term provision from January 2012 until the end of March 2012 and to in' principle' support 50% to act as some capital support for the longer term proposals suggested. Members are also asked to note that subject to the council tax setting committee meeting in February an amount of £50,000 has been budgeted in the 2012/13 budget for Melton CAB, which will be considered as part of recommendation 2.3

The Court Desk Funding is a specific grant and dependant on the outcome of recommendation 2.3 a more detailed report highlighting the service provision and financial implications will be provided in line with recommendation 2.3

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

- 6.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report, as the council will meet the 'debtor' obligations that covered the service until 30th November 2011

6.2 A Service Level Agreement will be developed as part of the working groups' terms of reference.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 No direct implications have been identified, however, links between debt, family breakdown and housing are issues that relate to the causes of offending and re-offending.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be developed when details of the sustainable service are agreed, however, at this stage, as the report seeks to introduce services for vulnerable people as soon as possible any equality issues are seen as being positive.

9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 **Probability**

↓

Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D		2		
Very Low E			1	
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic

→
Impact

Risk No.	Description
1	Members do not approve proposals
2	South & West CAB unable to deliver the [short & longer term] services

10.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 Meetings with the National CAB contact and South & West Leicestershire CAB have led to the recommendations identified in this report

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All

Contact Officer

Date: 29 November 2011

Appendices: Appendix 1 South & West Leicestershire CAB Proposals for a CAB service in Melton

Background Papers: None

Reference : X : Committees\PFA\2011 12\071211