

## COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2012

### CITIZEN ADVICE BUREAU

#### REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods to submit a report outlining the current CAB service in Melton and seeking Members approval to continue with the current arrangements.

##### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members note the current CAB service in Melton and approve to extend the current service until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013, when a further update report outlining the longer term proposal will be presented to this committee.**

##### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Leicestershire CAB service started on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and over the last 6 months they have been challenged to deliver an improved service. In particular that they should work towards greater integration, more timely up to date data and a partnership approach using Parkside as a base with a view to proactively helping people with debt, preventing homelessness and ensuring people receive the benefits to which they are entitled. The work of the CAB should draw money into the community, creating jobs and further enhancing the work it does by helping and assisting vulnerable adults and families experiencing difficulties.

- 3.2 The Citizens Advice Bureau has been working closely with the Financial Inclusion Officer to identify how the two organisations can improve integration of services and to continue our work on collaboration. Monthly meetings with the Chief Executive of the CAB take place to ensure a greater understanding of our vision and in delivering an excellent advice service. In planning the development of the service the Council have asked the CAB to:

- Deliver more consistent and better targeted services to those in greatest need.
- Engage those in 'greatest need' more effectively in the service.
- Raise the profile of the service so that it is credible, competent, confident and authoritative.

- 3.3 During the last 6 months the CAB have seen over 650 people and helped resolve over 1300 queries. This number is now comparable to the amount of people using the service at the old CAB office on Burton Street and the numbers continue to grow. Almost 70% of all enquires made relate to just 4 areas of advice; Benefits, Debt,

Employment and Housing. Links with Council Officers who provide these services have been made to try and alleviate any difficulties that customers may have.

3.4 In order for the CAB to deliver their services in Melton they have 1 Supervisor, 9 volunteer advisors & 5 further advisors in training. They provide a total of 28 hours a week advice at the following locations:

- Parkside all day Mondays & Thursdays
- Melton Library all day Tuesday
- Children's Centre AM Mondays & Thursdays
- Long Clawson Surgery PM Wednesdays

3.5 The service is expanding to offer free Legal Advice, with a Solicitor on site over the next couple of months and the Macmillan Cancer advice service has now restarted. The Tuesday session at the Library has proved so successful that an additional day is being planned and Age Concern has shown interest in having an advice session at their offices in the Town Centre. The new CAB Customer Contact Centre opens in Leicester in October 2012 with a dedicated Melton telephone number that will direct customers straight to the service, offering bookable appointments and additional out of hours advice.

3.6 As we work with the CAB we continue look at ensuring they understand the challenges, issues, and geography of all members of the communities in which they live. They must do more to engage those who are the most vulnerable or deprived. Where this is the case, the challenge is to provide advice on the full range of issues that these clients need help with (especially where it is not available elsewhere) and that often they do not raise with the Council.

3.7 From October 2012 the office administration for the CAB will take place on the first and second floors only, freeing up space on the ground floor for confidential/semi confidential space that will be created using new 'fit for purpose' partitions. At present ICT continue to overcome some of these technical issues allowing the CAB to install a Virtual Private Network (VPN) line to give secure access to the CAB database.

3.8 A key issue for CAB has been the availability of bookable confidential space that can be used for their clients. A comprehensive survey on the use of meeting rooms at Parkside will be undertaken in the first two weeks in September. The findings from this survey should be able to inform the way forward with CAB and customer meeting space and one option which will be investigated (subject to consultation with staff and partners) is the use of meeting space on the first floor to accommodate customer meetings.

3.9 Once the ICT issues have been overcome and the CAB have integrated onto the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> floor a Service Level Agreement will be put into place to include the level of monitoring that is required and most importantly how this ongoing relationship will accommodate change (Universal Credit) and financial challenges to funders and partners.

#### 4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 By continuing to support the presence of the Citizens Advice Bureau in Melton, the Council is facilitating access to an important source of independent advice to potentially vulnerable members of the public.

4.2 There are clear links with the CAB and some of the Council's priorities within the Corporate Plan:

- Improving the Well-being of vulnerable people
- Improve access to money, debt, redundancy, housing and mortgage advice.
- Encourage people to claim the benefits they are entitled to

## 5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Within the Council's budget for 2012/13 there is an amount of £50,000 for this service.

5.2 Costs for the CAB service during 2012/13 and the commissioning of complimentary services that can provide additional debt and advice services in the build up to the implementation of universal credit. I.e. Clockwise Credit Union & The Money Advice Service, will be met from the existing budgets, ensuring that added value and value for money are achieved.

5.3 In regards to co-locating in Parkside, LeicesterShire CAB is charged £2,000 for 6 months. This does not reflect the amount of space taken, and a proposed licence fee of £5,100 for the next 6 months is probably a reasonable charge for the space and discussions are taking place with the organisation on this issue.

## 6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 No direct legal implications have been identified with the recommendations contained in this report.

6.2 A Service Level Agreement will be developed.

## 7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no direct links to community safety arising from this report.

## 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					<b>Risk No.</b>	<b>Description</b>
High B					1	Members do not approve proposals
Significant C					2	Leicestershire CAB unable to deliver the [longer term] services
Low D			2		3	
Very Low E			1,			
Almost Impossible F						
	IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic		

↓

→ **Impact**

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 Leicestershire CAB have led to the recommendations identified in this report

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All

Contact Officers: M Shields/H Rai, Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods

Date: 29 August 2012

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Reference: X:C'tees, Council & Sub-C'tees/CSA/2012-13/19-9-12/CAB