

Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)

The baseline position is that CAB receive a grant of £44k from Melton Borough Council and £14,8k from Leicestershire County Council. For this a Face to Face CAB service is delivered from Parkside on Tuesdays (9.30am to 3pm), Wednesdays (9.30am to 3pm) and Thursdays (10.00am to 12 noon). Melton residents also have access to a telephone contact centre which is open from Monday to Friday (9am to 4.30pm).

The proposal in the budget is to reduce the grant by £17k to £27k. A number of consultation meetings have been held with the CAB. The following has emerged from those meetings: -

The CAB say that they cannot deliver the existing Face to Face service for £27k – mainly because the core premises costs of £16.8k per annum (paid to us for Parkside – core premises costs in other districts are mostly around £11k - £12k per annum) are the highest in the county and would only leave £10k for the service. They are clear that in this scenario the recommendation to their trustees would be to close the Face to Face and Telephone service.

There is a possibility of developing an outreach only service, similar to what is being provided in Oadby and Wigston. However, the earliest this could be implemented would be 1st July 2019 and it would mean that there would no longer be any reliance on volunteers to deliver the service. In a move to an outreach only model there would also be a strong likelihood of a reduction in income for Parkside because the rent position would change. However, with our focus on priority neighbourhoods and use of community centres there could be a strong basis for supporting a move to an outreach model.

Funding for the CAB across districts is inconsistent. Whilst our current grant of £44k is the second lowest in absolute terms it is the highest on a per head of population basis at £0.86 per head (£0.48 per head is the lowest) and also the highest on a per Band D equivalent property basis at £2.35 per property (£1.39 per property is the lowest).

If the grant is reduced to £27k this would be around £0.53 per head of population or £1.44 per band D equivalent property. On both counts this would place Melton more on a par with other district contributions albeit towards the lower end but still not the lowest.

The preferred option is for officers to work with the CAB to explore the potential for establishing an outreach only service in Melton to take effect from 1st July 2019, with potentially different operating hours and different locations for delivery. This would deliver an annual saving from the Community Grant budget of £17k with £12.75k being achievable in 2019/20 but there is a risk some income may be lost from the property budget because the CAB would have a much reduced use of Parkside. The Council is already undertaking a space planning review of Parkside to identify how

best to configure our own services, alongside partners and to explore the potential for generating additional income through new commercial partners. Despite the risk of some erosion to the overall saving it is felt that this option represents a sensible balance between delivering a budget reduction whilst retaining a CAB service within Melton. Given implementation for this option would not be until the beginning of quarter 2, contributions would need to be maintained at current levels until that time, meaning there would need to be a small transitional cost of approx. 4k. It is believed this could be contained within the existing budget proposals already recommended in the report by re-directing any underspends from elsewhere.

A second option which is not recommended would be to accept that the CAB service for Melton residents will end on 31st March 2019. This will mean that there will be a saving of £44k on the community grants budget alongside a loss of £17k income to the property budget. There has been no Equality Impact Assessment completed for this option, however should we be unsuccessful in negotiating a new arrangement with the CAB this option will have to be further explored and a subsequent report would be provided to members to confirm the position.

The recommended options results in an amendment to Recommendation 2.1 in the revenue report

2.1 The proposals for General Expenses and Special Expenses MM as set out in Appendix A (i) and (ii) and summarised in para 3.5.1 be approved for inclusion in the 2019/20 budget resulting in the estimates set out in Appendix B subject to an adjustment to the saving from the CAB from £17k to £13k (for 2019/20 only) the shortfall being met as a first call from any savings identified in the financial year.