

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet
AUTHOR: Chief Executive

13 April 2006

CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAUX

Purpose

1. To make a decision on the level of grant aid to be awarded to Cambridge and District CAB and to note the decision of the Portfolio Holder for Community Development on awards to North Hertfordshire and District, Uttlesford and Haverhill CAB's and also the Cambridge Independent Advice Centre. The total recommended budget available for 2006/07 is £85,630 (This allows for a 25% reduction in the total grants to these organisations as per the budget cuts agreed by Cabinet)

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	These grants support the advice organisations, which operate in South Cambridgeshire, providing direct services to some of our most vulnerable residents.
Village Life	These organisations all prioritise the need to provide services through a variety of means eg telephone, e-mail, face-to-face appointments system and outreach in order to reach as wide a population as possible in rural areas.
Sustainability	The benefits and debt advice provided by the CAB's, contributes to village sustainability and the sustainability of this organisation as they prioritise council tax and rent arrears debts.
Partnership	Through membership of the Community Legal Services Partnership to which all the CAB's belong the Council is seeking to develop a closer working relationship and increased understanding of the work of the CAB's and its outcomes.

Background

3. Funding of Citizens Advice Bureaux forms a major part of the Council's commitment to working with the Voluntary Sector in South Cambridgeshire. Regular annual meetings are held with all five of these agencies and their annual Service Level Agreements are reviewed. The SLA includes how their services to South Cambridgeshire residents will be monitored in the coming year; this information helps to inform decisions about funding allocation in future years.

Considerations

4. The SLA meetings with the advice agencies enable this organisation to build a picture of the level of advice and support that is provided to residents of South Cambridgeshire. For example in the last year Cambridge City CAB have been able to set up a benefit team and South Cambridgeshire has been a target area, with this benefit advice being particularly effective with older people. In addition the organisation has just received funding for extra debt work over a 2 year period and is part of a national demonstration project looking at improving access – particularly

phone, e.mail and web which is due to be launched in April. This project is particularly relevant to South Cambridgeshire where access to the service is a major issue.

Options

5. South Cambridgeshire is working with the County Council and Cambridgeshire Funders Group to look at joint funding arrangements for the voluntary sector. This is part of the undertaking under the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Compact. This is an agreement between statutory agencies and voluntary organisations working in the same geographical area. They aim to provide a framework for improving relationships and enable each partner to:
 - (a) Understand and value the roles, nature and contribution of different kinds of organisation
 - (b) Agree standards for communication, funding, partnership working and consultation

Funding and a clear understanding of how that funding contributes to the quality of life of residents in South Cambridgeshire is a key factor in maintaining a successful compact. The consequences of not funding the CAB's will be a cessation of the advice services in South Cambridgeshire with attendant consequences in increased debt and lower take-up of benefits in the area.

Financial Implications

	Grant Approved 2005/06	Proposed Reduced Grant 2006/07	Recommended Grant 2006/07
Cambridge CAB	66,625	52,060	52,060
North Hertfordshire and District	21,700	16,275	16,275
Uttlesford CAB	7,175	5,380	5,380
Haverhill CAB	7,175	5,380	5,380
Cambridge Independent Advice Centre	8,712	6,535	6,535
	111,387	85,630	85,630

Legal Implications

6. All five organisations detailed in this report have gained and work to the Community Legal Services Partnership Quality Mark for advice giving. This enables their workers to access quality advice and information at Level 4 on behalf of clients they are working with. A primary objective of CLSP is to prevent as many cases as possible going to court by the provision of this quality advice as early in proceedings as possible.

Equal Opportunities Implications

7. There are links between work with vulnerable and/or hard-to-reach sections of the community and the Council's approach to equal opportunities. In line with general and specific statutory duties under the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations

(Amendment) Act 2000, the Council operates a Race Equality Scheme (RES) in order to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote race equality and good race relations. Whilst the district's black and minority ethnic (BME) community represents only 2.9% of the population, three wards have much greater BME communities (Girton, 5.8%; Milton, 7.5%; and Teversham, 8.1%). In addition, estimates suggest that Travellers could make up 1.7% of the South Cambs population.

Staffing Implications

8. None.

Risk Management Implications

9. The risk management factors are the responsibility of the organisations concerned.

Consultations

10. Consultation meetings to review the annual Service Level Agreement have taken place with each of the five organisations concerned. The proposal to cut funding to the CABs and CIAC by 25% was agreed at Cabinet in October 2005. Ongoing discussions with Cambridge CAB and the other advice agencies that the Council fund will take place over the coming year to monitor the impact of the 25% reduction on service delivery to South Cambs residents. Discussions about the way South Cambridgeshire can work more effectively with voluntary sector partners is an ongoing item for the South Cambridgeshire Voluntary Forum and the Compact Steering Group.

Conclusions/Summary

11. South Cambridgeshire funds Cambridge and District CAB on an annual basis. Regular monitoring takes place of the individual benefits delivered by the CABs to South Cambridgeshire clients; monitoring this year will include assessment of the impact of the reduction in grants to the CAB. Grants to North Herts, Uttlesford and Haverhill CABs and CIAC have all been approved by the Portfolio holder for Community Development at the recommended 25% reduction on last years funding to meet reduced budget requirement imposed by capping. Figures from monitoring will also include the amount of benefits bought into South Cambridgeshire. Through their membership of Community Legal Services Partnership the CABs are able to access high quality legal advice for their clients with the aim of preventing costly court proceedings.

Recommendations

12. That Cabinet approves a grant of £52,060 to Cambridge CAB for 2006/07 and notes the grants awarded by the Portfolio Holder for Community Development to the other CAB's and CIAC for their work in South Cambridgeshire.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Service Level Agreements with the organisations concerned.

Contact Officer: Tricia Pope – Community Development Manager
Telephone: (01954) 713290