

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet 12 April 2007  
**AUTHOR:** Chief Executive / Community Development Manager

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### CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAUX

#### Purpose

1. To make a decision on the level of grant aid to be awarded to Cambridge and District CAB for the financial year 2007/08 and to note proposed awards to North Hertfordshire and District, Uttlesford and Haverhill CABx and also to Cambridge Independent Advice Centre, now known as Advice for Life. The total recommended budget available for 2007/08 is £87,770 (This allows for a 2.5% cost of living increase on last years grant allocations to CABx).

#### 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	Community Services continues to work closely with Cambridge City CAB both in terms of the service it provides for South Cambs residents and through consultations with, and involvement by, the CAB on service requirements for growth areas.

#### 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.
4. 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

5. 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 its residents.

6. The ongoing benefits take up work that CAB has been providing for South Cambs residents has proven to be particularly successful in targeting benefit take-up in older people.
7. The core funding CABx receive from local authorities enables them to secure additional external funding. For example, specialist funding has been secured to provide services to their most disadvantaged clients and additional funding was also secured last year to increase access to CAB services in Cambridge City and in North Herts. This has resulted in a new single portal phone system being installed in both organisations and, in the case of Cambridge City, a new website at the beginning of this year.

### Options

8. As part of the Government drive for Compacts between the voluntary and statutory sectors South Cambridgeshire is working with the County Council and Cambridgeshire Funders Group to look at joint funding arrangements for the voluntary sector.
9. Part of this is the need to agree three year funding terms with the organisations that we have Service Level Agreements with to deliver specific services on our behalf.
10. Three year agreements would give voluntary organisations providing direct services more stability in terms of how they plan their services and employ their staff.
11. The Service Level agreements are a statement of intent and not legally binding. SCDC would not be legally bound to provide agreed funding for three years, simply give an undertaking that this is what we plan to do if present circumstances do not change.
12. Additionally the SLA's have a six month notice period written into them which means the agreement can be terminated by either side if circumstances bring about a reduction in available funding.

### Financial Implications

	Grant Approved 2006/07	Proposed Grant 2007/08	Approved by Portfolio Holder 07/08
<b>Cambridge CAB</b>	<b>52,060</b>	<b>53,360</b>	
North Hertfordshire and District	16,275	16,682	
Uttlesford CAB	5,380	5,515	
Haverhill CAB	5,380	5,515	
Cambridge Independent Advice Centre (now Advice for Life)	6,535	6,698	
	<b>85,630</b>	<b>87,770</b>	

### **Legal Implications**

13. 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.  
There are no legal implications attached to extending this SLA to three years as SLA's are not legally binding documents, merely statements of intent.

### **Staffing Implications**

14. None.

### **Risk Management Implications**

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

### **Consultations**

16. Consultation meetings to review the annual Service Level Agreement have taken place with each of the five organisations concerned and have resulted in agreement about the service priorities the organisations will work to.
17. The capping situation in 2006/07, which resulted in a 25% reduction in the grants made to the CABx last year, has resulted in the need to streamline service delivery.
18. This has been addressed through examining how clients access the services (single telephone portal is an example of service change) and the development of a triage system which grades the type of inquiry the client is making.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

19. South Cambridgeshire funds Cambridge and District CAB on an annual basis.
20. Regular monitoring takes place of the individual benefits delivered by the CABx to South Cambridgeshire clients.
21. Monitoring this year has included assessment of the impact of the 25% grant reduction in grants to the CAB.

### **Recommendations**

20. It is recommended that Cabinet
  - (a) approves a grant of £53,360 to Cambridge CAB for 2007/08,
  - (b) notes the grants awarded by the Portfolio Holder for Community Development to the other CAB's and Advice for Life for their work in South Cambridgeshire, and

- (c) as part of its commitment to the Cambridgeshire Compact, that SCDC increase its funding agreements with CABx from one year to three years. These agreements will be statements of intent rather than legally binding commitments and that this three year agreements be extended to other voluntary organisations that SCDC funds for over £3000 and with whom we have Service Level Agreements.

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

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