

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **Tuesday 24th May 2005**
Report of: **Executive Member for Community and Culture**
Subject: **Funding - Easington and District Citizens Advice Bureau**
Ward: **All**

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to confirm the Councils level of funding for the Easington and District Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for the 2005/2006 financial year.

2. Consultation

2.1 In preparing this report the Senior Regeneration Officer (Finance and Management) has been consulted who has advised that sufficient funding is in place to support the Council's existing commitment towards the work of the CAB.

3. Background

3.1 The District Council has previously given a commitment at the Executive Meeting on 18th May 2004, to fund the activities of the CAB for a period of four years to March 2008 (i.e. for the term of the Council). This commitment has historically been based on the previous years' allocation plus an inflationary increase. However due to budgetary constraints in previous years the following funding profile was agreed subject to an annual review:

Increase the core grant by 5% in 2004/2005 and by 4% per year there after. This equates to:-

£95,849.00	5% - £4,792	2004/2005 - £100,641
	4% - £4,026	2005/2006 - £104,667
	4% - £4,187	2006/2007 - £108,854
	4% - £4,354	2007/2008 - £113,208

3.2 This commitment allows the organisation to plan ahead and gives security and stability to their operation. The Council now needs to confirm its' level of funding for the 2005/2006 financial year.

4. Position Statement

4.1 The Council has previously provided substantial financial support towards the running of the CAB in the District and the current level of funding is £100,641. The cost for providing the entire CAB service for 2005/2006 is estimated in excess of £200,000.

4.2 The service relies heavily on volunteers who are supervised by permanent staff and a recruitment drive is ongoing to ensure that the volunteer training programme can be achieved.

4.3 As members will be aware funding from the Community Fund was secured to March 2005 to provide twelve outreach sessions throughout the District and this is supported with contributions from the Town and Parish Councils. Additional funding is now being sought from the Lottery and the Northern Rock Foundation and the applications are looking positive.

4.4 A further contribution of £73,000 from the PCT is being used to support debt services until March 2006.

4.5 During 2004 the bureau handled 9,248 client contact and managed 15,333 issues on

their behalf. As a result of generalist and tribunal work, the Bureau has generated some £906,000 in additional benefit income for their clients and have managed a further £2.16m in client debt related issues.

4.6 As previously reported the Bureau is represented on the County Durham Community Legal Services (CLS) Partnership after they were successful in achieving their Quality Mark following a detailed external audit of the services the bureau provides.

4.7 The Bureau has gone through many changes in recent years as a result of restricted funding, changing legislation and a change in management, however it is felt vital that the core service is maintained at its present level. This will allow them to continue to explore funding opportunities, maintain the Bureau service as well as addressing day to day operating issues.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 There are no financial implications as the recommend funding is in line with the previously agreed profile, as outlined in section 3.1, and is accommodated in the 2005/2006 budget.

5.2 Legal

5.2.1 There are no legal implications

5.3 Policy

5.3.1 It is Council policy to fund the CAB for the life of each Council and this policy commitment has been given to the CAB for the period up to March 2008.

5.4 Risk

5.4.1 A risk assessment has been completed and the necessary actions required to manage the identified risks have been/will be implemented.

5.5 Communications

5.5.1 The CAB will be advised of the Council decision and publicity will be sought regarding the Council support of the CAB.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

6.1.1 The CAB provide a quality service for the residents of the District and engages in a range of partnership working including Trading Standards, Consumer Support, Community Legal Services and the Durham On Line Initiative which aims to improve access to advice services. Less easily quantifiable is the effect of the bureau's help in such issues as desk management homelessness, relationship or employment problems which are often causes of stress and anxiety and subsequent ill health.

6.2 Equality and Diversity

6.2.1 There are no Equality and Diversity issues.

6.3 E-Government

6.3.1 There are no direct E-Government issues for the Council, however, Citizens Advice is promoting an IT centred case recording and statistical collection system. Easington and District CAB are keen to adopt this system as it has major benefits to the service provided and it is hoped that this system will be introduced by mid 2005.

6.4 Procurement

6.4.1 There are no procurement issues.

6.5 Social Inclusion

6.5.1 The policy rationale for assisting the operational costs is to promote greater social cohesion and inclusion through the impact on individuals and families. The continuation of the twelve outreach sessions also supports this objective as it facilitates easier access to the service.

7. Recommendation

7.1 The Executive approve a funding contribution of £104,667 to the Easington and District Citizens Advice Bureau for 2005/2006.

Background Papers/Documents Referred to in Preparing this Report:-

District of Easington Risk Assessment

Letter from the Manager of the Easington and District Citizens Advice Bureau

J. Goodwin Executive Member for Community and Culture