

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **Tuesday 20th March 2007**
Report of: **Executive Member for Social Inclusion 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 Council's level of funding for the Easington and District Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for the 2007/2008 financial year.

2. Consultation

2.1 In preparing this report the Senior Regeneration Officer (Finance & 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 the following funding profile was agreed subject to an annual review:

The core grant was increased by 5% for 2004/2005 and by 4% per year thereafter. This equates to:-

Core grant - £95,849 plus	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

3.3 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 2007/2008 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 £108,854. The cost for providing the entire CAB service for 2007/2008 is estimated at £245,000.

4.2 Specifically the service provides:-

- Generalist advice and information on a wide range of subjects
- Representation at welfare benefits appeals
- Negotiation with creditors in multiple debt situations
- Assistance with disability benefits claims

- Free legal advice
 - Home visits to those unable to access the service for whatever reason.
- 4.3 Easington and District Citizens Advice Bureau sees itself as having a wider role in the community and engages in a range of partnership working, particularly:-
- District of Easington Homelessness Steering Group
 - Community Legal Services Partnership
 - Consumer Support Network
- 4.4 During 2006 CAB have been working closely with Durham Primary Care Trust and McMillan Cancer Relief to provide an advice worker to work with the palliative care team to aid persons suffering from cancer and other life limiting illnesses and their carers. A bid for funding has been submitted to the Big Lottery Fund's "Advice Plus" programme but at the time of writing this report the outcome is unknown.
- 4.5 The service relies heavily on volunteers who are supervised by permanent staff and there is an ongoing recruitment drive to ensure that the volunteer training programme can be achieved.
- 4.6 The Bureau continues to operate an outreach service in 12 community buildings throughout the District the funding for which has been secured from the Big Lottery Fund and the Northern Rock. Funding from Town and Parish Councils also supports this element of the service.
- 4.7 During 2006 the bureau handled 10,756 client contacts and managed 22,003 issues on their behalf. This represents an increase of 15.1% on the number of issues handled in 2005. As a result of generalist and tribunal work the bureau has generated £1,058,291.49 in additional benefit income for their clients (£306,015.17 in disability benefit, £380,984.70 in benefit through tribunal support and £371,291.62 in other awards) and have managed a further £2,463,899.61 in client debt related issues.
- 4.8 It is clear that the financial gains made by the bureau goes some way to alleviate the poverty experienced by some clients and also benefits the local economy. It is also clear that the amount of debt managed by the bureau relieves some of the stress and anxiety experienced by people in debt.
- 4.9 The amount of debt in the area is increasing and the CAB is thus managing an increased amount of money advice and debt management work. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) have recognised this as a major problem with Easington being one of the worst affected areas in the country. The bureau has thus secured funding from the DTI to employ two additional debt workers (from October 2006 & April 2007) to address this increase. This funding has been secured for two years.
- 4.10 The service, both core and outreach, currently provided by the bureau is considered to be the minimum for the District. The CAB report that failure to secure funding for the outreach service from September 2008 onwards will markedly reduce the service. Steps are being taken to secure funding but in the event of this not achieved CAB are requesting that the Council give consideration to increasing funding to the Bureau from September 2008 onwards.

- 4.11 Following the election of the new Council in May 2007 it is proposed to bring a further report to the Executive to determine a further four year funding arrangement for the CAB. Consideration of the above request will be made at this time. The funding arrangement will also include the establishment of a Service Level Agreement for the whole service.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial

There are no financial implications as the recommended funding is in line with the previously agreed profile as outlined in Section 3, and is accommodated within the 2007/2008 budget estimates. Future funding for the bureau will be the subject of a further report to the Executive once the new Council has been established.

5.2 Legal

There are no legal implications.

5.3 Policy

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 to March 2008.

5.4 Risk

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

5.5 Communications

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

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 issues such as homelessness, relationship or employment problems, which are often causes of stress and anxiety and subsequent ill health.

6.2 Equality and Diversity

There are no Equality and Diversity Issues.

6.3 E-Government

There are no direct E-Government issues for the Council however CAB have introduced a new IT system which provides up to date legal information and

has allowed the bureau to develop a case recording system. This will allow the analysis of data thus enhancing the organisation and planning of the service.

6.4 Procurement

There are no procurement issues.

6.5 Social Inclusion

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. Recommendations

The Executive approve a funding contribution of £113,208 to the Easington and District Citizens Advice Bureau for 2007/2008.

Background Papers/Documents Referred to in Preparing this Report

District of Easington Risk Assessment
Letter from the Manager of the CAB (CAB/01)

Executive Member for Social Inclusion and Culture