
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE**

HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY

- Present:** Councillors D Miles (Chairman), M Patten (Vice-Chairman), C Amos, C Callender, J Hawkins, T Howard and A Pugh
- Also Present:** Councillors L McWilliams (Well-being and Partnerships Portfolio Holder), I Johnson and M Talbot
- In Attendance:** Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney) and Democratic Services Officer (Janey Nice)
- Also in Attendance:** Linda Isaac (Chief Executive Officer) and Alex Stanmore (Chairman) (Citizens Advice Bureau -Tendring)

20. WELCOME

The Chairman (Councillor Miles) extended a warm welcome to Linda Isaac and Alex Stanmore from the Citizens Advice Bureau – Tendring (CAB) and also to all Councillors and Officers present at the meeting of the Committee.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor I Tracey.

22. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Committee, held on 23 June 2014, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Whilst not a Member of the Committee, Councillor McWilliams considered it appropriate to declare a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item No.4 (Citizens' Advice Bureau, Tendring – A Review of the Outcomes from CAB Grant Funding), by virtue of the fact she was a Board Member of the CAB – Tendring and remained in the meeting during its consideration.

24. CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU, TENDRING – A REVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES FROM CAB GRANT FUNDING

Mr Stanmore said that this year was a special year for the CAB as it celebrated its 75th anniversary since it was formed at the start of World War II with 200 bureaux opening on 4 September 1939. He stated that there were now 340 independent bureaux in the country, which were all individual bodies with their own Boards. He said he was delighted to announce that CAB Tendring got an outright pass for its last audit, which was very rare, and this was a credit to Linda Isaac and her team.

Ms Isaac reported that the CAB helped people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice and by influencing policymakers. She said that the Core Service received funding of £144,000 from Tendring District Council (TDC) and without this funding, the CAB offices in Tendring would not exist. She added that there were bureaux in Clacton and Harwich with outreach offices in Manningtree, Walton-on-the-Naze and Brightlingsea.

Each bureau, she said, was open between 9.30 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. on weekdays and anyone who visited would be seen during that time for general advice and problem-solving. She said there was a client telephone box, which was an extremely popular and vital service with a capped phone bill being given by the CAB's telephone service provider. She added there was supported digital access in place to assist clients to be able to access digital services, particularly the most popular 25 used services and that the CAB was fortunate to have had its funding extended to deal with specialist debt and welfare benefit advice.

Ms Isaac then talked about the "Reach-out" Project, which was jointly funded by the then North East Essex Primary Care Trust (NEEPT) and Essex County Council (ECC), and which had been running for five years. The Project delivered early intervention and prevention by sending CAB Advisers door-knocking in the community and was able to tackle hard to reach clients on a variety of issues. She said that the Reach Out Project had achieved recognition as an example of best practice in the 2010 Marmot Review, which addressed health inequalities, European Union-wide best practice in the field of 'Making Local Services more Accessible to All.' She said that CAB Tendring had also received other commendations, including finalist at the Civil Society Magazine Charity of the Year Awards 2013 and that CAB Tendring had received a royal visit from HRH Princess Anne.

Ms Isaac added that the mental health casework, funded by ECC, had been running for five years and helped in a number of areas by addressing the underlying problems, which could affect mental health. She added that this area of work had been recognised by Commissioners as a 'Gold Star' service and would be rolled-out across the whole of Essex.

She said that the "Face-to-Face Money Service" provided specialist debt and money advice, acted as a Debt Relief Order Intermediary and that CAB Tendring was registered and authorised to provide debt advice by the Financial Conduct Authority, which was a legal requirement. She then added that the Financial Inclusion Project was funded by the TDC Big Society Fund and that it worked in partnership with the TDC's Benefits Team to support applications for Discretionary Housing Payment. The project delivered training to improve financial literacy and helped people maximise income, reduce expenditure and live within budget, which allowed, on average, for people to be £10 per week better off.

Ms Isaac said that, in 2013/2014:

- 11,391 clients were assisted, which was 8% of the Tendring District's population;
- 16,196 advice issues were dealt with;
- 14,598 client contacts were made;
- 65 Bureau volunteers were secured, which equated to £304,878 value of volunteer hours;
- £5,038,800 of benefits were claimed;
- £20,884,500 worth of debts managed with £2,108,000 debt being written off;
- 420 homelessness were prevented;
- 350 were assisted in gaining or sustained employment;
- 510 clients had improved financial capability; and
- the CAB advice website had received 39,607 Tendring visitors

She said that the Tendring Advice Network (TAN) was funded by the Big Lottery Advice Services Transition Fund and was in partnership with the CVST and Signpost. TAN supported a growing network of 200 advisers and frontline support works and highlighted some of the areas that were covered by the Network.

In addition, she said, the "Tendring Community Builder Trial" had been funded through the Whole Essex Community Budgets Pilot, which was a one-year Pilot and had been successful in launching 15 different initiatives and had held a master class for the other trials in Essex.

Ms Isaac went on to talk about the “Winter Warmers’ Project”, which had supported 825 residents in need, with 2,094 items of donated warm winter clothing and bedding. She said that this initiative had run from two pop-up shops in Clacton (two weeks) and Harwich (three weeks) and all project materials and premises had been donated free of charge.

Ms Isaacs said that the CAB had run a Food Drive in partnership with Sainsbury’s and in a single day had attracted enough donations to feed 145 extra families who were in crisis. In addition, “Vegtastic” was an initiative where donated surplus produce from allotments had been overwhelming and this had helped families in need.

“Behind Closed Doors”, she said, was there to assist people in bad relationships and had provided over 200 stickers placed in TDC public toilets, which gave the 24 hour telephone number of the National Domestic Violence helpline. In addition, the Tendring Tenants’ Panel had come up with the idea of a pocket-sized book, which was a useful guide to public and community services.

Ms Isaac said that “Workwise” was funded by the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund and was able to assist in the breaking down of barriers to employment in partnership with the entrenched worklessness pilot, which:

- Offered support with childcare options;
- Helped with travel to work and a new Car Banking Scheme;
- Helped with applying for a bank account or ID;
- Offered in-work support for the newly employed to help them stay in work.

Ms Isaac then showed a pie chart, which gave a breakdown of the income received by the CAB in 2013/14 (£562,170), with the core grant from TDC (£144,000) representing 25% of its total income, which, in the current year equated to around 26%.

In conclusion, Ms Isaac commented that the current premises were at absolute capacity and the service was being constrained as it could not be expanded further. She said that, if more suitable premises became available, she would wish to see:

- Early intervention and prevention in domestic abuse;
- A Mental Health Hub, which would combine holistic assessment with Asset Based Community Development to keep people with mental health problems healthy and resilient and enable them to contribute to the local community; and
- A Youth CAB with young, trained advisers to deal with specific youth issues

Mr Stanmore added that partnership funding was important, that the core grant was absolutely essential and that most of the funding was ring-fenced to keep the CAB functioning.

The Chairman, along with Councillors Patten, Hawkins, Howard and Amos asked questions and raised issues in respect of:

- (1) How the funding of £144,000 from TDC was made up and the year-on-year funding from TDC;
- (2) How savings could be made at the CAB;
- (3) The current position on the CAB buildings;
- (4) How could TDC do more to help?;
- (5) How many of the Clients’ problems were self-inflicted and would it be possible to have figures on how many of the reported problems were TDC related;
- (6) How were the outlying rural areas reached, e.g. Wrabness, Wix, Manningtree;
- (7) As transport was poor in the rural villages, would it be possible to piggy-back services with the mobile library?;
- (8) How much of the CAB was funded elsewhere, e.g. NHS, TDC and Social Services?

- (9) Disclosure of confidential matters;
- (10) Whether Teen Talk was coming back to Clacton;
- (11) What help can be given to domestic abuse victims?;
- (12) Concern over the forthcoming introduction of Universal Credit; and
- (13) Staffing costs at the bureaux.

Ms Isaacs and Mr Stanmore responded to the questions and comments made by Members as numbered:

- (1) £26,000 of the funding from TDC came from the Big Society funding;
- (2) Savings had been identified and examples of savings were given;
- (3) The Clacton office was owned by the CAB and the Harwich one was sited in Morrisons Supermarket car park where the electricity was free of charge, however all space was currently used up with no more room for future projects, including the Mental Health Hub and Youth CAB;
- (4) The Council was already doing an excellent job to help with very knowledgeable Officers and supportive Councillors and the CAB was very happy with the excellent relationship with TDC;
- (5) Ms Isaac said she would be very happy to provide figures on a Ward-by-Ward basis to Members;
- (6) Manningtree had an outreach service one day a week, however, what could be delivered also depended on funding;
- (7) This suggestion was excellent and Ms Isaac agreed she would look into it;
- (8) Some assistance was readily available, however, for example, TDC only dealt with social housing whereby the CAB could deal with private landlord issues. Also, the CAB could work on a holistic approach where the public services could only deal with their own specific areas;
- (9) All discussions with Clients were confidential and no information could be given to the Police or others as the CAB was a trusted brand and often the last port of call for a worried Client. The only exceptions where confidentiality could be breached would be in matters of terrorist activity or child protection;
- (10) It was generally believed the service would be coming back to Clacton and would be manned by volunteers who, again, would be able to give a holistic approach;
- (11) Matters of domestic abuse were dealt with sensitively by trained advisers who had a safety 'tool kit' as this was a priority. Ms Isaac said she was concerned that little was being done to help male victims of abuse and she would like, in time, a specialist adviser to be in place to deal with such matters;
- (12) There was a great deal of concern over the introduction of Universal Credit, especially as payments would, in future, be paid monthly rather than weekly or fortnightly as at the moment. Ms Isaac added that she had been following the pilot schemes closely and it was clear that support would be needed in finance capability and it would also be helpful to know the start date of Universal Credit so the CAB could be ready for the start of the new scheme. Ms Isaac asked Members of the Committee if they would like an impact document on the start of the Universal Credit and said she would provide this; and

- (13) A paid Supervisor must be on duty at all times otherwise the CAB could not open and it was a requirement of funding that projects were undertaken by mainly, paid staff. Generally, she said, staffing costs were around £300,000 per annum, which included the travelling costs of volunteers. Board members did not claim any expenses whatsoever for their time or travelling and the phone service bill was capped at around £700 per month. Ms Isaac agreed to send to Members of the Committee, figures on staffing costs for circulation.

After further discussion, it was confirmed by Ms Isaac that a full risk assessment was in place to protect the CAB brand and that local CAB branches had national guidelines to follow. In response to a Member's question, Ms Isaac confirmed that while other organisations could give benefit advice, they did not have the indemnity insurance that the CAB had, however the CAB was always willing to provide free training to upskill other organisations to give a good service as it was felt that working in partnership was a good way to move forward.

When asked what would happen if Ms Isaac was taken ill or was unable to work, Mr Stanmore confirmed procedures were in place for a Manager to take over as appropriate.

In closing Mr Stanmore added that he would be very happy to facilitate any TDC Councillor to visit the CAB and to see for themselves how it worked.

The Chairman thanked Ms Isaac and Mr Stanmore for attending the meeting and giving such an informative and detailed presentation, which had been appreciated by the Committee.

It was **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that Cabinet notes that:

- (a) The Community Leadership and Partnerships Committee applauded the work of the CAB and it was fully supportive of what the CAB was achieving;
- (b) The Committee was concerned about the forthcoming Universal Credit and would like to discuss further and make a recommendation to Cabinet on this issue at its next meeting; and
- (c) The Committee would endorse future funding of the CAB.

Ms Isaacs, Mr Stanmore and Councillors Johnson and Talbot left the meeting following consideration of the foregoing item of business.

5. SOUTH EAST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (SELEP)

The Committee received the Reference Report from Cabinet and noted the comments made by Cabinet at its meeting on 1 August 2014.

6. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman informed the Committee that she would like to change the date of the next meeting from 27 October to 17 November and that the same issues already agreed for the postponed meeting would be discussed. The Committee agreed with the Chairman's suggested change of dates.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.36pm

Chairman