

Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes
-------------------------------	------------	-----------------------------	------------

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PARTNERSHIPS

28 APRIL 2020

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A1. CITIZENS ADVICE TENDRING – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2020/21

(Report prepared by Alison Rowlands)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To agree an updated Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Citizens Advice Tendring (CAT) for 2020/21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- For a number of years, Tendring District Council has provided grant funding to CAT backed by an annually agreed SLA. This arrangement supports the provision of free, confidential and impartial advice to our residents across a wide range of issues. Since 2013/14, the core grant awarded each year has been £144,000.
- In 2017/18, the SLA was robustly reviewed following substantial changes in the governance, management and service delivery of CAT. The revised SLA for 2017/18 was agreed by Cabinet at the meeting held on 17 March 2017.
- The SLA for 2018/19 required a few minor amendments but remained largely the same as the 2017/18 SLA. It was agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Education on 24 April 2018.
- The SLA for 2019/20 was, again, substantially unchanged from the previous year’s agreement with updates to reflect the addition of Generalist Advice services on Mondays at both Carnarvon Road, Clacton and Holland-on-Sea Library, together with the launch of an email advice service and development of Webchat capability. The SLA was agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships on 26 March 2019.
- On 31 March 2020, CAT reported that they had been operating a reduced service since 16 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This involves temporary cessation of all face-to-face advice, in observation of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland (UK) Government’s social distancing measures. At the time of presenting this report, CAT’s telephone, email and Webchat services are continuing to operate. CAT’s office closures and suspension of services at their outreach sites will remain in force until such time as the UK Government’s advice changes. Schedule 2 (2.8) of the SLA provides for reductions in CAT core services beyond their control.
- The reviewed SLA for 2020/21 is attached for agreement by the Portfolio Holder. Again, there is

essentially little change from the 2019/20 SLA with amendments to reflect Tendring District Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024.

- CAT has provided a summary of the monitoring information for the 2019/20, which is attached at Appendix B. A total of 11,848 clients sought advice over that period, representing a 4% increase on those accessing CAT's services during 2018/19. This equates to an average of £12.15 of the Council's grant being spent on each service user. In terms of advice, Benefits and Debt remain the most prominent issues, with Universal Credit claims now cited as the most common problem. The value of benefits advice achieved in 2019/20 rose dramatically from £3,061,443 the previous year to £10,640,188. This increase follows the introduction of CAT's 'Help to Claim Universal Credit' service in April 2019.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- a) Tendring District Council continues to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Citizens Advice Tendring (CAT) for a further year from 1st April 2020/21 on the terms and conditions as set out in the updated agreement shown in Appendix A; and
- b) delegated authority is given to the Interim Corporate Director for Operations and Delivery to sign the agreement on the Council's behalf.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The partnership working with CAT is consistent with the Council's commitment to put Community Leadership at the heart of everything we do through delivery of high quality, affordable services and working positively with others.

RESOURCES AND RISK

The core grant paid to CAT is £144,000 per annum. The SLA provides that the grant be paid in two instalments during the year.

The budget for 2020/21 also makes provision for a sum of £23,000 to assist with the delivery of the Tendring Mental Health Hub, (a project initiated by CAT), for a further year.

The risk that CAT fails to provide value for money for the grant funding is mitigated by the monitoring measures set out in the SLA. However, the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on CAT's ability to maintain service delivery during 2020/21 is unknown.

LEGAL

CAT is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.

There are no other identified implications for TDC in paying over the grant. CAT's aims and principles set out that they value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination and practice impartiality. The SLA continues to require that CAT have all necessary policies in place in terms of the applicable protected characteristics, as detailed in the Equality Act 2010, and equality, inclusion and diversity.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Service Level Agreement 2020/21

APPENDIX B – Key Statistics 1/4/19 to 31/03/20

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.