

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

17 MARCH 2017

REPORT OF THE LEISURE AND PARTNERSHIPS PORTFOLIO HOLDER

A.3 CITIZENS ADVICE TENDRING – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2017/18
 (Report prepared by Karen Neath)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
To agree an updated Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Citizens Advice Tendring for 2017/18

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendring District Council has, for many years, supported Citizens Advice Tendring by way of grant funding. Since 2013/14 the core grant has been £144,000. This has been backed by an annually agreed Service Level Agreement setting out what Citizens Advice is expected to deliver. • A review of the operation of Citizens Advice has recently been undertaken driven by a number of factors:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Chairman of Citizens Advice and 3 other trustees have recently resigned. The change in leadership and the appointment of new people to the Board will allow a fresh approach from the Trustees on the future direction of Citizens Advice. ○ The CEO of Citizens Advice left the organisation June 2016. The post of CEO as it was has been deleted and new part time posts of Operations Director and Strategic Director have been created. ○ Citizens Advice is moving towards more electronic communication and National Citizens Advice is requiring all local bureaux to provide an advice line and webchat capability. ○ There have been ongoing discussions between officers from TDC and Citizens Advice to look at where Citizens Advice could be more efficient. As overall TDC funding continues to reduce it is essential to ensure that funding to Citizens Advice is providing value for money to the Council. • The two key areas of the SLA are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivery of core services ○ Provision of advice at localities outside of Clacton. • These areas have been reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect the current position and are relevant both to the service Citizens Advice provides and what the Council expects for its money. In addition the SLA 2017/18 includes a requirement for Citizens Advice to provide

information that will measure how well they are delivering on these two areas.

- In order to further ensure that value for money from grant paid to Citizens Advice is being achieved, Citizens Advice will be attending a future meeting of the Community, Leadership and Partnership Committee to provide an update on their activities.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Service Level Agreement between Tendring District Council and Citizens Advice Tendring for 2017/18, as attached at Appendix A, be agreed.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

RESOURCES AND RISK

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

Alongside this there is a separate agreement between TDC and Citizens Advice for the delivery of Universal Credit. This is paid on a case by case basis and is funded entirely by DWP funding.

The budget for 2017/18 also includes a sum of £23,000 to support a further year of the pilot of the Mental Health Hub, a project initiated by Citizens Advice Tendring. A letter has been sent to the CCG requesting that a decision is now made as to whether the pilot demonstrates that this service should now be delivered as a mainstream health provision. A grant funding agreement between the Hub and the North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group for 2017 is being prepared along with a MoU with the other funding partners – TDC, Essex County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner. This assists in moving this project forward from a pilot to a more formal provision.

There is a risk that Citizens Advice does not provide value for money for the grant provided. However, the measures put in place through ongoing office liaison, the SLA and now the attendance of Citizens Advice at a future Community Leadership and Partnership Committee should mitigate this.

LEGAL

Citizens Advice Tendring 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 implications for TDC in paying over the grant. The SLA requires that Citizens Advice have all necessary policies in place around equality and diversity and the seven protected characteristics.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION

Tendring District Council has, for many years, supported Citizens Advice Tendring by way of grant funding. Since 2013/14 the core grant has been £144,000. This has been backed by an annually agreed Service Level Agreement setting out what Citizens Advice is expected to deliver.

Although it is the case that the SLA has been subject to review each year, a wider review of the operation has Citizens Advice has recently been undertaken. This has been driven by a number of factors:-

- In October 2016 the former Chairman of Citizens Advice stepped down from this role following completion of the maximum six year term for this post and also stepped down as a trustee after 23 years service. Three other trustees, on health grounds and due to competing demands on their time, have also resigned. Citizens Advice is currently appointing new trustees and is looking for people who can bring particular skills to the organisation. An interim Chairman is in place prior to a new Chairman being confirmed at the next AGM. However, the change in leadership and the appointment of new people to the Board will allow a fresh approach from the Trustees on the future direction of Citizens Advice.
- The CEO of Citizens Advice left the organisation in June 2016. This has provided an opportunity for Citizens Advice to review its staffing structure going forward. The post of CEO as it was has been deleted. A new part time post of Operations Director has been created. This post will have responsibility for managing the day to day operations. Alongside this a new part time post of Strategic Director will have responsibility for external engagements and liaison with partners including opportunities for new projects. Arrangements are being put in place for the latter role to be a joint post with Citizens Advice Colchester.
- Citizens Advice are cognisant of the fact that their staffing structure and ways of working need to reflect today's society. This means that people increasingly look to social media, email and internet as a way of communicating and gaining information. National Citizens Advice is requiring all local bureaux to provide an advice line and webchat capability.
- There have been ongoing discussions between officers from TDC and Citizens Advice to look at where Citizens Advice could be more efficient. It is well documented that the Council has further savings to find and if there were the need to reduce the grant to Citizens Advice then it is hoped that through these discussions, that would be achieved through genuine efficiency savings rather than just a funding cut. As overall TDC funding continues to reduce it is essential to ensure that funding to Citizens Advice is providing value for money to the Council.

The two key areas of the SLA are:-

- Delivery of core services which complement or support the work of the Council. This includes debt advice, financial planning, assisting with benefits claims, homelessness advice, supporting days of action etc.
- Provision of advice at localities outside of Clacton.

These areas have been reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect the current position and

are relevant both to the service Citizens Advice provides and what the Council expects for its money. In addition the SLA 2017/18 includes a requirement for Citizens Advice to provide information that will measure how well they are delivering on these two areas. Although no precise targets have been set, year on year comparisons will be undertaken and performance will be challenged through the contact officers if there is any concern.

In order to further ensure that value for money from grant paid to Citizens Advice is being achieved, Citizens Advice will be attending a future meeting of the Community, Leadership and Partnership Committee to provide an update on their activities.

The steps taken to formally report the current position, formally agree a new SLA for 2017/18, include the need for performance data to be provided and to make arrangements for Citizens Advice Tending to attend a meeting of the Community, Leadership and Partnership Committee will strength the monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that the Council is receiving value for money from the payment of this grant. These monitoring arrangements will continue and a further review of the SLA undertaken leading up to 2018/19.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Service Level Agreement 2017/18

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.