

CABINET

31 JANUARY 2024

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A.5 PROCUREMENT OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek approval from Cabinet to provide an information and advice service to local residents with revised requirements via an associated specification and procurement process, with the new arrangements commencing on 1 October 2025.

To approve the allocation of **£0.072m** to Citizen's Advice Tending to continue to contribute to the existing information and advice guidance service through direct funding for the interim period up to 30 September 2025 in accordance with a subsidy scheme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To date the Council has contributed to the funding of an information and advice service available to local residents across the district. This is currently provided through Citizens Advice Tending (CAT) via a Service Level Agreement.

The current payment made to CAT for the above service is **£0.144m** per annum. This arrangement has been in place for 13 years, which has recently been facilitated via the adoption of a local Subsidy Control Scheme.

In line with the high-level external funding framework agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 September 2024 and in demonstrating value for money that reflects the Council's wider best value responsibilities, a procurement process is proposed to be undertaken for the future provision of information and advice services to local residents.

In terms of the procurement process, it is important that the Council sets out a clear specification of what it wishes to procure, which includes understanding the 'market' and what similar services are already available to local residents. This approach ensures a joined-up approach across the various sectors within the area with the underlying aim of maximising the use of the Council's resources.

In terms of the principles underlying the provision of an information and advice service to local residents, it is important to highlight the following:

- the challenges some parts of the community face in relation to housing, welfare and debt,
- almost 30% of our local neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived nationally
- there has been a 20% increase in those claiming out of work benefits between 2020 and 2022.
- In addressing deprivation, residents need to improve their income which can be achieved by employment, accessing higher levels of benefits and adequately managing and reducing debt.

- The provision of information and advice is a cost-effective way of helping to support people in relation to employment, benefits and debt.
- Providers are highlighting the increasing demand, for example CVST reporting a 103% increase in demand around social prescribing and DWP have highlighted the need around 4000 new cases formerly on Employment Support Allowance migrating to Universal Credit
- Partners have also identified the greater complexity of those in need both in terms of the multiple issues they now present with, but also that they now more frequently appear in crisis.

The demand for information and advice services to local residents is therefore demonstrable based on the above and as set out further on in this report a 'gap' analysis has been undertaken in terms of the services offered to local people by other local organisations and providers.

Some funding is provided by Government to support services to assist individuals for example funding for DWP who lead on Universal Credit. Other providers who deliver advice and guidance may receive funding from Essex County Council, Tendring District Council the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance or other partners.

There is a wide range of provision of online services and phone services provided for example by Shelter, money and debt helplines and Christians Against Poverty. Some of the main providers highlighted above such as DWP and Citizens Advice also provide some on line or phone services.

A number of providers including DWP, CAT the Council and also CVST highlight the importance of face-to-face advice and in particular DWP highlighted that a significant number of those needing support will not use digital channels but will also not use the phone to make contact.

Providers also highlight the importance of outreach for those residents who may find it difficult to travel to access services.

Face to face provision is a more expensive way of delivering services than online advice and consequently will have a lower rate of access. However, those people who access via a face-to-face method are those most likely to be furthest away from support and the least likely to engage in existing on-line provision. Any service would need to provide wider than just face to face services as some clients will need different forms of access.

When considering the type and scale of provision of an information and advice service, key considerations include ensuring any provision is easily accessible and in particular has a strong face to face component, has the potential for outreach rather than in one location, has some form of quality assurance and can deal with multiple issues residents face and is complimentary to the existing provision of such services across the District.

With the above in mind, and in maximising the use of the Council's resources, a recommendation is set out below that provides a delegation to the Partnerships Portfolio Holder to approve the specification for the provision of an information and advice service and to then undertake the necessary procurement activities.

In further supporting the maximisation of the Council's resources highlighted above, it is

recommended to take a modular approach to procurement, with providers being asked to indicate the complimentary services they could deliver at different price points to enable the Council to determine the best value proposition from the market.

As highlighted above the Council has historically contributed funding to an information and advice service for local residents via a Service Level Agreement with CAT, with the most recent cost being £0.144m, that has been paid to them annually.

CAT have been made aware of the proposed approach set out above and they may consider submitting their own 'bid' for the work the Council is seeking to procure and respond to the outcome of that process.

To ensure a service to residents continues for advice and information while the procurement takes place and the service mobilises on 1 October 2025, we have extended the grant to Citizens Advice Tending for six months.

Based on the estimated procurement timeline set out in this report, it is proposed that a new contract with the provider will have been procured and can commence on 1st October 2025.

Based on the existing arrangements in place with CAT, it is therefore recommended to allocate £0.072m to enable them to maintain the existing provision of information and advice services until 30 September 2025. This will require the withdrawal of the current termination notice issued on 9 December 2024 and the reissuing of a further termination notice reflecting the proposed approach set out in this report and the approval of the Service Level Agreement set out as an Appendix to this report.

To deliver this a subsidy scheme will be required to provide the direct allocation of funding which will need to be published on the Government website, with associated recommendations set out below.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) approves the provision of an information and advice service to local residents;**
- b) subject to a) above, agrees to the procurement of such services for a contract period of 3 years commencing 1 October 2025, and agrees to a modular procurement approach to determine what a provider could offer for various levels of potential funding e.g. £50,000, £100,000, or £150,000 per year;**
- c) delegates to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive to approve the specification for provision of an information and advice services based on the broad principles set out within this report;**
- d) approves for an interim period of six months from 1 April 2025, the continuation of the existing agreement with CAT at a cost of £0.072m, supported by the existing budget for information and advice services to local residents;**
- e) subject to (d) above, in respect of the contribution of £0.072m to CAT, agrees to extend the current Addressing Health Inequality – Advice, Support and Mental**

Health Support Subsidy Scheme for 2025/26;

- f) delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Monitoring Officer, to finalise administrative requirements for the production of the Subsidy Scheme in accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2023 and Statutory Guidance and to publish it on the Government website prior to any awards; and**
- g) subject to d) to f) above agrees to extend the current Service Level Agreement with Citizens Advice Tendring (CAT) from 1st April 2025 until 30th September 2025 on the terms and conditions as set out in the updated agreement shown in Appendix B.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

Following an assessment of need it has been identified that there is continuing demand for an information and advice service which is repurposed and commissioned, to support improving income and opportunity as residents face increased challenges associated with deprivation. Partners report the importance of a holistic approach and dealing with the multiple issues residents face which can be achieved via an information and advice service.

The allocation of £0.072m to the existing provider Citizen’s Advice Tendring will ensure there is continuous provision of a service and allow sufficient time for any new provider to gear up for maintaining provision of an appropriate service.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council could not allocate funding for this type of service although an assessment of need has identified there is a demand. The Council has previously allocated funding to advice and guidance services and if no further provision is offered this may leave significant need among our communities not being addressed.

Funding for the next six months could not be provided to CAT however this would potentially leave a gap in service of two months and maintaining the service whilst the procurement is completed will support residents who are most in need.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Provision of funding is in line with the Corporate Plan priority of working with partners to improve quality of life to promote safer, healthier well connected and inclusive communities as an information and advice service provides support around for example accessing benefits, housing support and connecting residents to wider support and their community.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

Officers have been in liaison with a number of partners in this field including the Council’s

benefits team, CAT, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Peabody and CVST who have identified that residents are often in need of support and are increasingly presenting with multiple issues and the importance outreach and face to face provision as some people will not access services digitally or even by phone.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget
	And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	21 November 2024

In line with the External Funding Review approved by Cabinet in September 2024 (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 20/09/2024 10:30 Item A7 pages 637-688), if the Council is seeking to obtain services that this would be via a procurement approach.

As the Council is now considering seeking services in terms of advice and support via a procurement approach, this will identify who is best placed to deliver the services required and provide best value for the taxpayer. The Council’s Procurement Procedure Rules and relevant procurement legislation (depending upon timescales) will need to be adhered to, with clear record keeping and decision making.

As it is proposed to provide a further £0.072m to CAT to continue to deliver a service for 6 months this will be delivered via a subsidy scheme to ensure the Council meets the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

This scheme once approved will be published on the Government website.

The provision of the service by CAT will be in accordance with a service level agreement.

The power to allocate funding is provided under the general power of competence within the Localism Act 2011 which give local authorities powers to do anything that individuals can generally do.

YES The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

Having been consulted throughout the drafting of this report, the only additional comments to make are to ensure that CAT are clear that whether they are successful or not through any procurement process, they prepare for the outcome to take effect on 1st October 2025.

Council resources will have to work together to ensure a robust specification is prepared, and aligns with the new requirements of the Procurement Act 2023 and that sufficient time is allocated to ensure that the documentation is ready and able to be published for tender,

evaluated and contract awarded in time for the 1st October 2025 commencement date.

The report highlights that a number of advice and information services are accessible through other means and providers and the procurement process must be fully open and transparent.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The current proposal is to seek a service which provides advice and guidance to residents and is obtained via a procurement approach.

An advice and guidance service has previously been funded by the Council and there has been a budget of £144,000 per year for that service.

The amount of funding for this service needs to be determined and the time period over which a contract will run as it is not necessarily efficient to procure the service on an annual basis and will not provide any certainty for the winner of any procurement.

A modular approach is proposed for the procurement setting out figures of for example £50,000 £100,000 £150,000 and what could the provider offer in quality welfare, debt and housing advice with a focus on a face-to-face offer across the district, at those different amounts.

It is proposed to procure a service for three years to which will provide consistent support for residents and certainty for the provider.

Half of the current budget £0.072m for the forthcoming year is proposed to be allocated to CAT to continue to run the existing advice and guidance service for 6 months up to 30 September 2025 to ensure there is no gap in service provision whilst the procurement is undertaken.

YES The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

Although there are no major comments over and above those set out elsewhere in this report, the proposed procurement approach better aligns with the Councils' wider best value / value for money responsibilities and aims to reflect other providers of information and advice services within the district.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	This report seeks to determine the amount of funding that the Council wishes to allocate to an advice and support service following an assessment of need to ensure the effective use of resources
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	If approved to procure a service it will be in line with the External Funding Review approved by Cabinet in September 2024 and with the Council's procurement and governance procedures. The continuation of a service by CAT for 6 months is in accordance with previous Cabinet decisions about allocating funding to CAT for this service.

C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

Future allocation of funding to this service is in accordance with an assessment of need to ensure there is effective use of resources.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

If approval is given to procure a service it is currently proposed to start the procurement in February and Essex County Council's procurement team have this potential procurement in their planner.

If there is no framework available (which would potentially shorten the procurement timeline) the procurement would be via an open procedure. Once the documents are ready to be sent out it is likely to take 8-10 weeks if below the procurement threshold of £214,904 and up to 12 weeks if in excess of the threshold. A new service could therefore potentially be procured and completed by June 2025.

If approved an indicative timescale for the procurement is as follows

- January 2025 Cabinet approval to develop specification and go out to procurement
- February 2025 Specification approved and ready to send to ECC Procurement Team
- Market engagement undertaken
- Documents prepared by procurement team
- March 2025 Documents sent out for procurement for a 30-day period
- April 2025 Documents returned and evaluation undertaken
- May 2025 Standstill period
- June 2025 Obtain delegation to award contract
- July 2025 Documents drawn up and signed, sealed and exchanged
- August and September 2025 Mobilisation period

Incorporated in this period is consultation with internal services and in particular the Governance Team who have accepted the timeline.

The contracts to be used will be standard contracts and the specification will form one of the schedules.

This procurement is on the Essex County Council Procurement Team's forward planner.

As a modular approach is being offered and it may be over a number of years this procurement could exceed the threshold in the Procurement Act 2023 of £214,904. The ECC Procurement Team have identified that a contract exceeding this threshold would take in the region of 3 months to procure which is in line with the timeline above.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

The needs assessment has identified that there is a significant need in the area for advice and support services and this can effectively support addressing deprivation by supporting improvements around income. The Council has previously funded advice and support services and therefore if no services are now sought this may leave significant need in the community.

The allocation of funding to CAT for 6 months ensures there is no gap in service provision whilst the procurement is being undertaken.

The procurement of any service will ensure need is still addressed but will also effectively test the market to ensure the best placed and most effective provision is delivered.

There is a risk that providers may be unsuccessful and no organisation wins the procurement.

Market engagement should help focus the procurement to ensure there are providers in the market who can deliver the service to ensure the procurement is realistic.

If there are no successful bidders a review will be undertaken with providers to understand why and consideration given to any amendments that can be made to support a successful procurement.

There is a risk that mobilisation for the new provider may take time which could be beyond when the extended service provided by CAT finishes. Pre-market engagement will ensure providers have a long period of awareness of any potential new service and a significant mobilisation period is included with in the timeline of at least 2 months.

A communications message will need to be provided as part of this process to ensure it is clear why the Council has undertaken an assessment of need and then undertaking a procurement to determine the best provider.

Further communications will be required at the start of the contract to promote the service to residents.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Any providers bidding for the service will need to demonstrate they have effective equality procedures in place and by having a strong face to face offer will provide access to services for those who do not engage digitally or by phone.

SOCIAL VALUE

As part of the procurement scoping will be undertaken to include within the specification and evaluation criteria a determination of the social value that can be delivered as part of the procurement, as required by the Social Value Policy recently adopted by the Council.

This is proposed to be based on the Local Government Association's National Social Value Taskforce National Themes, Outcomes and Measures method of classifying and scoring social value.

As part of the procurement this will include the value score (the commercial value of the social value) and the supporting statement which determines the robustness of the approach.

In particular this will focus on opportunities for local residents and particularly those not in employment, education or training and also the promotion of greater environmental sustainability by how the service will operate.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030

None

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR 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	By supporting those with facing significant challenges and helping build resilience an information and support service can help prevent clients either being the victims or perpetrators of crime
Health Inequalities	The service will support those in an area of significant deprivation and builds resilience in residents most in need for example by providing benefits advice which helps address health inequalities.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	The new service will be procured which ensures that provision will not be a subsidy and so will be in accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. The extension of the service for CAT for 6 months will be in accordance with the process used last year which was approved by Cabinet and will use a subsidy control scheme published on the Government website.
Area or Ward affected	All, as anyone can be referred to the service

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Tendring District Council have contributed funding for advice and guidance services since 2013/14 which has assisted residents around issues such as claiming benefits, dealing with debt, accessing food and services and housing issues.

In line with the External Funding Review approved by Cabinet on 20 September 2024 ([Public Pack](#)) [Agenda Document for Cabinet, 20/09/2024 10:30](#) Item A7 pages 673-678, and in demonstrating value for money that reflects the Council's wider best value responsibilities, a procurement process is proposed to be undertaken for the future provision of information and advice services to local residents.

In terms of the procurement process, it is important that the Council sets out a clear specification of what it wishes to procure, which includes understanding the 'market' and what similar services are already available to local residents. This approach ensures a joined up approach across the various sectors within the area with the underlying aim of maximising the use of the Council's resources.

In terms of considering the type of service that could be provided Tendring faces significant challenges around deprivation with the most deprived ward in the country (Jaywick) and almost 30% of our local neighbourhoods being in the 20% most deprived nationally. There has also been a 20% increase in those claiming out of work benefits between 2020 and 2022.

To help address deprivation residents need to improve their income which can be achieved by employment, accessing higher levels of benefits and adequately managing and reducing debt.

The provision of information and advice can help residents address these issues and is a

cost-effective way of helping residents manage their income more effectively. For example, one provider has reported that for every £1 invested they estimate the value of benefits advice as £22.

Some funding is provided by Government to support services to assist individuals for example funding for Department of Work and Pensions offices which lead on Universal Credit.

Other providers who deliver advice and guidance may receive funding from Essex County Council, Tendring District Council the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance or other partners.

Significant providers in the area are identified below.

Provider	Advice areas	Number of people	On phone	On line	In Person + where
DWP	Universal Credit Employment support	No specific figure as advice is provided as part of the wider service as all interviews may include some advice	✓	✓	DWP offices Clacton and Harwich 65-70% of provision is face to face
Tendring District Council	Housing benefits Council Tax Family Solutions, Fuel Poverty and Housing benefits Early Intervention officers	4,700 per year 11,700 per year	✓	✓	Council Offices (Pier Avenue) Predominantly in person responses with outreach and home visiting although some phone and on line activity
CVST	Social prescribing Resilience support	2,700 received seasonal resilience support	✓	✓	Throughout district with social prescribing in GP surgeries
CAT	Benefits, debt, housing, employment, relationships, consumer, health, poverty,	7,800 per year	✓	✓	Outreach across Tendring including Pier Avenue Council

	energy, hate crime, domestic abuse, food and fuel vouchers, cancer				Offices. Clacton, Harwich, Walton, Jaywick, Brightlingsea, Colchester hospital for McMillan cancer support
Peabody	Housing and benefits support, landlord issues support, homelessness applications	10 workers each with caseload of 16-18 and current waiting list in excess of 50 cases	✓	✓	Outreach across Tendring including Pier Avenue Council offices
Age Well East	Welfare benefits and entitlements, housing and care options	3000 cases per year across Essex	✓	✓	Home visiting and office locations (Colchester)
Specific providers e.g. Open Road for drugs and alcohol	Counselling and practical help for people affected by drug and alcohol addiction and other health and social problems	3600 cases per year over a wider area than Essex			
On line services – Stepchange, National Debt Line, Money Helper, Christians Against Poverty	Debt advice services	No figures available for Tendring		✓ These are on line services only	

There is significant demand for benefits, debt and housing advice which is not funded by Government provision. Although the Council's Benefits Team deal with a significant number of debt enquiries they also refer on a lot of cases to other providers such as Peabody, Citizen's Advice Tendring, CVST and online support.

There is also digital provision via the myTending portal allows for some self-service provision for Council services.

Existing providers are reporting an increase in demand with CVST experiencing a 103% increase around social prescribing, Age Well East stating they had experienced a 26% increase for attendance claims, DWP highlighting the increase demand caused by migration to Universal Credit for example from Employment Support Allowance which is forecast to be 4000 cases. They also highlight the very significant increase in demand caused by poor mental health with up to 65% of cases for those not in work being caused by mental health. Peabody operate a waiting list to manage provision of support.

There is also a legacy from covid when debt increased as action could not be taken against residents to address issues at that time which now result in very high debt costs.

A number of providers including DWP, CAT the Council and also CVST highlight the importance of face to face advice and in particular DWP highlighted that a significant number of those needing support will not use digital channels and will also not use the phone to make contact. These and other providers also do outreach work as well to ensure they can contact those who will not access support other than by face to face means.

DWP report that they are predominantly funded by Government for face-to-face work as this provides the best results and although they do provide other channels this is often adjustments that customers specifically ask for if for example, they cannot access services physically because of poor health.

Face to face provision is a more expensive way of providing services and consequently will have a lower rate of access. However, those people who access via a face-to-face method are those most likely to be furthest away from support and the least likely to engage. It is important that the service provides a wider offer than simply face to face as more people can then access the services but a face-to-face offer should form a considerable part of the provision.

Providers also report an increasing complexity of cases so that individuals now present with more than one issue and are more often in crisis. This is also evidenced by the needs identified by Family Solutions, fuel poverty and housing and benefits early intervention officers who all seek to provide a multiple offer response.

The assessment of need therefore identifies that this type of service is needed to support residents. The Council does not have the capacity itself to deliver further advice and support services beyond that which it already provides as part of its core activities such as housing or benefits advice. Therefore, any further provision would need to go out to the market.

If a procurement is undertaken, it will need to be in line with the outcome of the needs assessment for example around the importance of face-to-face services. In addition, as part of the procurement process information would be sought in terms of how providers will seek to engage those who are otherwise not receiving support.

There is also a need to ensure that the provision of any service has a quality standard or assessment undertaken to ensure that those providing advice are competent to do so and are delivering this effectively.

The provision of this type of service aligns with the developing place-based prevention approach which sees partners aligning around a wider determinants approach including for example around housing, skills and employment.

There is provision of a variety of services across the district which an information and advice service could refer into and this type of service could assist individuals to access those services by helping to transfer them over. This would not be via a basic signposting service but by supporting people to access a wider service.

There is therefore a demand for benefits, debt and housing advice and although there is some existing provision the very significant demand reported by providers and the Council indicates that further support is needed. In addition, this demand is likely to be helping to fuel the deterioration in mental health which a number of providers are reporting.

The Council has previously allocated £0.144m funding to this type of service so there is a budget available and a modular approach to allocating funding is now being considered to determine what a provider could offer for various levels of potential funding e.g. £50,000, £100,000, or £150,000 per year.

The procurement of the service also provides the opportunity to obtain the provision over a longer time period for up to three years to avoid repeated procurement but also to give the provider some certainty about future funding. So even if there is a reduction in funding provided per year, overall the level of funding provided over a three year period could be higher than was previously given on an annual basis.

As part of the procurement process consideration will be given to any wider services the Council commissions for example from Peabody around housing support to ensure there is consistency.

The Council has historically contributed funding to an information and advice service for local residents via a Service Level Agreement with CAT, with the most recent cost being £0.144m, that has been paid to them annually.

CAT have been made aware of the proposed approach set out above and they may consider submitting their own 'bid' for the work the Council is seeking to procure and respond to the outcome of that process.

As the procurement of any new service is likely to take in excess of three months, it is proposed to continue the existing arrangements with CAT in the interim period. Based on the estimated procurement timeline set out in this report, it is proposed that this interim period be for six months with a new contract with the provider identified via the proposed procurement route commencing on 1st October 2025.

Based on the existing arrangements in place with CAT, it is therefore recommended to allocate £0.072m to enable them to maintain the existing provision of information and advice services until 30 September 2025.

A termination notice was issued to CAT on 9 December 2024 highlighting that any future provision would be via a procurement approach and that this was being sought from 1 April 2025. This notice will now be withdrawn and a further termination notice reissued reflecting

the proposed approach set out in this report.

To deliver this a subsidy scheme (Appendix A) will be required to provide the direct allocation of funding which will need to be published on the Government website which is in line with how the funding was allocated in 2024.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 21/07/2023 10:30](#) Page 37
[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 26/07/2024 10:30](#) Page 877

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A Health Inequalities Subsidy Control Principles Assessment
Appendix B Service Level Agreement

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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A.5 APPENDIX A

Addressing Health Inequality - Advice, Support and Mental Health Support Subsidy Scheme – Tendring District Council

Assessment Framework Component	Recommended Evidence
<p data-bbox="236 98 580 197">Policy objective (Subsidy Control Principle A)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="236 230 520 329">▪ <i>Provide details of specific policy objective</i> <li data-bbox="236 362 564 595">▪ <i>Establish the existence and significance of the market failure and/or the inequality the subsidy seeks to address</i> <li data-bbox="236 629 576 902">▪ <i>Identify how the subsidy will remedy the market failure (i.e. provide a more efficient outcome) and/or address the equity objective (reduce an inequality)</i> <li data-bbox="236 936 515 1003">▪ <i>State the desired outcome(s)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="619 98 1453 230">▪ The policy objective is within the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 which seeks to work with partners to improve quality of life to promote safer, healthier, well connected and inclusive communities <li data-bbox="619 230 1485 600">▪ Funding provision to Citizen's Advice Tendring via a subsidy scheme will specifically seek to address poor mental health via the Mental Health Hub which seeks to support, mentor and encourage people who are economically inactive through their poor mental health to gain confidence, skills and build resilience so they are work ready. In addition the provision of a General Advice Service to deal with residents in extreme circumstances for example around eviction, access to benefits, suicide, gambling addiction, domestic violence or relationship breakdown which often leads to people not being able to cope or having poor mental health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="715 633 1469 880">○ Unemployment: 76.6% of residents (62,700 people) aged 16-64 in Tendring are economically active, 4.2% lower than the average for Essex (80.8%) and 2.1% lower than England (78.7%). This is the third lowest rate of economic activity in the county. Source: (Page 32, <i>Essex County Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2019, Tendring Local Authority Profile</i>) <li data-bbox="715 891 1469 1317">○ Mental Health: The prevalence of anxiety and depression in over 18 year olds across North East Essex at 14.3% is higher than the rest of Essex and England and the prevalence for severe mental health as recorded on general practice disease registers is also significantly higher at 1.00 than the Essex (0.80) or England average (0.94) the prevalence of long term health conditions across North East Essex is also slightly higher than across Essex and similar to England. (<i>Page 81 Essex County Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2019 Tendring Local Authority Health Profile</i>) <li data-bbox="715 1328 1469 1720">○ Health Inequality: Tendring is one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England. Approximately 24% (5,500) of children in Tendring live in low income families. Life expectancy in the most deprived areas of Tendring is 10.6 years lower for men and 7.8 years lower for women in than in the least deprived areas. In the most deprived areas people not only live shorter lives than average for England, but also experience worse health. Source: (Page 23, <i>Embedding the Marmot Principles in Tendring, Essex, Ruth Bell, 30th July 2021</i>) <li data-bbox="619 1753 1485 2224">▪ The scheme will effectively seek to address and reduce inequalities by providing mental health support in a key area of mental health inequality and deprivation so as to improve confidence skills and resilience. Outcomes from funding provision for the mental health hub will be provided and are proposed to include addressing ongoing mental health concerns so as to help people become more resilient and reduce numbers of people requiring clinical interventions. In addition the General Advice Service will provide a wide level of support including in relation to benefits, housing, suicide, gambling addiction, domestic violence and relationship breakdown which will also address inequalities. Outcomes of work undertaken by the General Advice Service will also be

Assessment Framework Component	Recommended Evidence
<p data-bbox="113 1126 145 1218">Step 4</p> <p data-bbox="236 304 580 398">Balancing Exercise (Subsidy Control Principle G)</p> <ul data-bbox="236 439 580 1104" style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Set out details of the expected benefits of the subsidy (as they relate to the specified public policy objective) and its anticipated negative effects, including in particular any negative effects on competition and investment within the UK, and international trade and investment. This should also include any geographical and distributional impacts. Justify why the negative effects are outweighed.</i> <p data-bbox="236 1111 580 1375"><i>Please note that it will not always be possible to quantify every element of the assessment, and therefore the balancing exercise may need to include both quantitative and qualitative elements.</i></p>	<p data-bbox="616 304 1485 501">The expected benefits of the subsidy will be to ensure people are supported in terms of their mental health which will provide the ability to be seen by a professional, receive signposting and access volunteering as a precursor to employment. In addition it will provide a comprehensive general advice service to those most in need and who may be going into crisis.</p> <p data-bbox="616 539 1477 770">Although there are no significant obvious negative impacts the funding has been offered on a year by year basis, although in terms of the general advice service this is proposed to move to an open procurement process, and there may be a reduction in service if further funding is not allocated. As there is need in the community currently the positive impacts of this subsidy will outweigh any negative impacts.</p> <p data-bbox="616 808 1437 936">Any negative impact on competition are limited as this work requires specific skills in respect of comprehensive training, routinely audited provided by a local trusted organisation which can deliver a comprehensive approach.</p> <p data-bbox="616 974 1430 1070">CAT provide fully trained staff to undertake the work and are audited and have three monthly monitoring to ensure quality is maintained.</p> <p data-bbox="616 1108 1485 1205">Rigorous training is provided over a number of key areas including welfare benefits, housing, debt, employment, consumer support, relationships, domestic abuse and mental health.</p> <p data-bbox="616 1243 1477 1507">The stringent quality control standard required by local Citizen's Advice offices is a key feature of this work. This includes daily case checking by supervisors, monthly Quality of Advice Assessments provided to National Citizen's Advice with quarterly audits on random cases, monthly case checking feeding in to staff supervision and annual audits by National Citizen's Advice. This auditing has led to CAT being identified as the highest quality provider across the whole Citizen's Advice network nationally.</p> <p data-bbox="616 1545 1469 1742">They are also providing a broad range of services so that a client can be supported in one place across a wide range of issues that they find easy to access because services are provided locally to them by a trusted organisation that they feel happy to access. Therefore, any negative impacts are outweighed by the positive impact that the subsidy scheme can have.</p> <p data-bbox="616 1780 1477 1944">It is therefore unlikely that another provider will be in a position to provide a comprehensive general advice service and mental health support with competent trained staff across a wide range of areas which is also a local trusted provider by the community and is highly accessible and has provable quality standards.</p>

A.5 APPENDIX B

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

AN AGREEMENT made on

BETWEEN:

- (1) **TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL** (TDC) of Town Hall, Station Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 1SE ("the Council") and
- (2) **CITIZENS ADVICE TENDRING** (CAT) (a company limited by guarantee registered under company number 04345160 and charity number 1091777 registered with the Charity Commission) whose registered office and address registered with the Charity Commission is 8 Carnarvon Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 6QF ("CAT")

WHEREAS

- (A) General Information concerning the Partnership Working and Targets or Objectives relevant to this Agreement is set out in the First Schedule
- (B) The Council wishes to support the Services of CAT for the purpose of providing an information and advice service operated within the aims, principles and policies of Citizens Advice subject to an agreed grant and to a defined level of service as hereinafter provided

1 NOW IT IS HEREBY AGREED as follows:

1. Definitions

1.1 In this Agreement, unless the context requires otherwise:

"Agreement" means this Agreement

"**annexed**" means a copy of which is attached to or placed with this Agreement and which has (for identification) been signed or initialled by or on behalf of each of the parties hereto

"CAT" means Citizens Advice Tendring

"Contact Officer" shall be construed in accordance with clause 7 below

"Citizens Advice" means The National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux (registered charity number 279057) a company limited by guarantee registered with company number 1436965

"Grant" means the monies to be paid to CAT by the Council as provided by schedule 3

"Services" means the Service or Services to be provided by CAT as stated in this Agreement

"Term" shall be construed in accordance with clause 2

1.2 Where in this Agreement reference is made to a Clause Paragraph Schedule Plan Drawing or Recital such reference (unless the context otherwise requires) is a reference to a clause paragraph schedule plan drawing or recital of or (in the case of a plan or a drawing) attached to this Agreement

1.3 Where in any Schedule or Part of a Schedule reference is made to a paragraph such reference shall (unless the context otherwise requires) be to a paragraph of that Schedule or (if relevant) part of a Schedule

1.4 Words importing the singular meaning where the context so admits include the plural meaning and vice versa

1.5 Words of the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter genders and words denoting natural persons include companies, corporations and firms and all such words shall be construed interchangeably in that manner

1.6 Words denoting an obligation on a party to do any act, matter or thing include an obligation to procure that it be done and words placing a party under a restriction include an obligation not to cause permit or allow infringement of the restriction

1.7 The clause headings and table of contents shall not be taken into account for the purposes of the construction or interpretation of this Agreement

2. **Term**

2.1 The term of this Agreement is 6 months beginning on 1 April 2025 and ending on 30 September 2025 subject to the right of either party to terminate in accordance with clause 3 below.

3. **Termination**

3.1 The Agreement can be terminated by either party giving the other party not less than 6 months prior notice in writing expiring at any time.

3.2 Notice can be served if delivered, posted, or emailed to the Contact Officer.

3.3 If the Agreement is terminated so as to end before the expiry of the Term, a proportion of the Grant shall forthwith be refunded to the Council pro rata to the number of days of the Year remaining at the date when the notice terminating the Agreement ends the Agreement

4. **The Parties Obligations**

4.1 CAT agrees to provide the Services specified in Schedule 2 of this Agreement (Service Objectives and Specifications).

4.2 The Council agrees to make the grant payment specified in paragraph 3.1 of Schedule 3.

5. **Status of Agreement**

5.1 Each party shall use all reasonable endeavours to honour its obligations to the other under this Agreement, but it is not the intention of the parties that either of them shall be legally liable to the other in damages for failure on its part to observe the terms of this Agreement.

5.2 Nothing in the Agreement shall be construed as creating a partnership or legal relationship of any kind that would impose liability upon one party for the act or failure to act of the other party, or to authorise either party to act as agent for the other party. Neither party shall have authority to make representations, act in the name of, or on behalf of, or to otherwise bind the other party.

6. **Management**

6.1 Responsibility for the management of CAT is vested in the Trustee Board, the membership and operation of which is laid down by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of CAT (registered company number 04345160 and registered charity number 1091777)

7. **Parties Representatives**

7.1 The Council and CAT will each appoint a Contact Officer.

7.2 The role of the Council's Contact Officer is to:

- Be the initial point of contact within the Council for CAT

- Inform CAT, in writing, of any issues which may have an effect on the implementation of the service provision in this Agreement
- Provide information, advice and support to CAT as reasonably required
- Set up monitoring meetings with CAT Contact Officer to consider the information set out in Schedule 4
- Inform CAT, in writing, of any change in the Council's Contact Officer.

7.3 The role of CAT's Contact Officer is to provide the information required in Schedule 4 of this Agreement and to inform the Council's Contact Officer, in writing, if there is:

- a proposal by CAT to change or reduce the services set out in Schedule 2
- any amount to be taken into account under 3.3
- a major change to CAT's financial budget;
- a change to CAT's constitution; or
- a change in CAT Contact Officer.

7.4 The parties' Contact Officers will be John Fox of the Council and Melanie Hammond of CAT or such other officer as either party shall from time to time appoint to represent it and notify to the other party.

8. Confidentiality

8.1 The Council accepts that CAT offers a confidential service and that all matters raised by individual clients are kept confidential.

9. Staffing

9.1 Paid and volunteer staff will be recruited and selected by CAT with full regard to all human resources policies and procedures approved by Citizens Advice.

9.2 Paid staff will be employed and remunerated by CAT with full regard to Citizens Advice Guidelines.

10. Quality Assurance

10.1 CAT undertakes to operate the quality assurance systems described in Schedule 2.

11. Health and Safety

11.1 CAT shall have regard to the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and any other Acts, Regulations, Directives or Orders etc about health and safety.

12. Insurances

12.1 CAT will arrange adequate insurances to cover such liabilities as may arise in the course of CAT's work.

13. Dispute Resolution

13.1 If either party considers the other to be in breach of their duties under this Agreement or has a grievance about some aspect of the Agreement's operation, the parties shall make every reasonable effort to resolve the issue through joint discussions. Where this fails:

13.2 the party wishing to make the complaint should provide the other with written details, including proposals for resolving the matters in dispute;

13.3 a written response should be sent to the initiating party within 14 days;

- 13.4 if the response is not considered to resolve the issue, the initiating party may request in writing to the Contact Officer a meeting of the authorised signatories (or their successor);
- 13.5 where possible the meeting should be held within 14 days of the Contact Officer receiving the request;
- 13.6 where the meeting does not resolve the complaint, the issue should be considered by the Bureau's Trustee Board or the relevant Council committee as a confidential item. Any submissions should be sent in advance to the other party and representation permitted;
- 13.7 If either party is dissatisfied with the outcome as notified to it in writing within seven days of the meeting, arbitration can be requested and this will take place with a mutually acceptable external party.

14. **Review**

- 14.1 This Agreement may require amendments in the light of experience of implementing its terms. Any amendments will need to be negotiated and agreed in writing by both parties.

15. **Renewal**

- 15.1 This Agreement applies to a one-off payment and no guarantee, representation or warranty by or on the part of the Council is given as to its renewal for any year or other period subsequent to the Term or that the Council will pay any money to CAT otherwise than as expressly provided by this agreement.

Schedule 1

(Background Information, Partnership Working and Targets or Objectives)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 The objective of CAT is to provide free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to enable residents of the Tendring District to deal with a wide range of issues, including benefits, housing, debt advice, money advice, employment, consumer, relationships, taxation and many more. The nature of the assistance provided will depend on a client's needs and ranges from the provision of information to full rights based advice.

1.1.2 The standard of service is set out in the Citizens Advice Quality Assurance Standards Membership Agreement and the Advice Services Alliance Generalist Quality Mark.

1.1.3 CAT also receives funds from the Money Advice Service, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, NEE CCG, Essex County Council and other grant making trusts. Loss of any funding streams for specific projects making a substantial contribution to CAT's central costs may affect CAT's ability to deliver the core service. If this were the case the Citizens Advice contact would discuss the position with the Council.

1.2 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

CAT recognises the Council's key priorities identified in its 2024-2028 Corporate Plan.

Pride in our area and services to residents

We want to put residents' first, by promoting clean and tidy communities, providing decent housing that everyone deserves, and tackling the things that make a big difference to you. This means getting the basics right on our services. The Council will look to harness the power of digital delivery of services while ensuring that no resident is left behind. We also want to promote pride in our communities by encouraging everyone to take responsibility for keeping their area a pleasant place in which to live and work.

Raising aspirations and creating opportunities

Tendring is ambitious and our residents will be supported to reach their potential and realise their opportunities. To do this, working with businesses and partners, we want to improve access to skills learning and training so that residents can find employment and enable businesses to thrive; particularly taking the opportunities afforded by Freeport East and the Garden Community. We want to maximise the opportunities for young people and see them enthused with purpose. To inspire those dreams we will celebrate business success, encourage cultural, tourism and economic growth.

Championing our local environment

We believe our environment is special, it is the space where we live and work, and therefore deserves protection. We will be tough on those who do not respect our environment. We want to create and maintain spaces for leisure, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, and deliver access to open spaces and community resources.

Working with partners to improve quality of life

We want to promote safer, healthier, well connected and inclusive communities by working with our partners across government, public, private and third sectors. We will strive to build on the firm foundations, developed over time, with those partners to meet the identified needs of our communities. We recognise the vital role volunteers play in caring for others and our environment, and we will support, encourage and facilitate those opportunities.

Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer

We want to boost our tourism by attracting more visitors to the 36 miles of sunshine coast and to our rural towns and villages. We will support our unique heritage, work with our partners, run events and promote the district for the benefit of our residents and to encourage visitors to come and to stay for longer.

Financial Sustainability and openness

To continue to deliver effective services and get things done we must look after the public purse; that means carefully planning what we do, managing capacity, and prioritising what we focus our time, money and assets on. Tough decisions will not be shied away from, but will be taken transparently, be well-informed, and based upon engagement with our residents. We will give clarity on where the Council spends the money it is provided with.

1.3. TARGETS OR OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 CAT will work in partnership with the Council in order to:

- Prevent homelessness
- Promote take-up of benefits (including Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and the Local Council Tax Support Scheme)
- Manage debt and improve financial resilience in order to ensure that clients are able to pay priority bills such as rent and Council Tax
- Support clients accessing Discretionary Housing Payments to plan and manage their finances.
- Highlight and resolve community issues
- Address health inequalities
- Promote reduce, reuse and recycle
- Reduce social isolation
- Reduce the number of Tendring residents living in fuel poverty
- Support clients to move into employment and training

Schedule 2

(Service Objectives and Specifications)

2.1 AIMS OF THE SERVICE

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

The service aims:

- To work proactively to enhance community resilience.
- To provide the advice people need for the problems they face.
- To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

2.2 PRINCIPLES UNDER WHICH THE SERVICES ARE PROVIDED

CAT will provide an information and advice service which is:

- free
- confidential
- impartial
- open to all regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership (only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination).

2.3 SERVICES FUNDED UNDER THIS AGREEMENT

The service (to which the funding arrangements in [Schedule 3](#) relate) offered by CAT shall be 'assisted information' and 'general help' (as defined by the Advice Services Alliance Quality Mark - see paragraph 2.5 of Schedule 2), and Debt and Welfare Benefits 'casework'.

Assisted information is a service in which staff are available to help clients access information, and to identify where a client needs further information or advice.

General help is:

- Diagnosing the client's problems
- Giving information and explaining options
- Signposting to other organisations if appropriate
- Identifying further action the client can take and
- Giving basic assistance e.g. filling in forms, helping the client draft letters, and contacting third parties to seek information on the client's behalf.

Where necessary for a particular client, the service provided by CAT will also include contacting a third party to negotiate on the client's behalf.

In accordance with the Citizens Advice Membership Agreement the subjects covered will include:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Consumer Welfare | • Money advice |
| • Benefits | • Employment |
| • Housing | • Family and personal matters |
| • Taxes | • Immigration and nationality |
| • Health | • Education |

The service covered by this Agreement includes Debt casework as defined by the Advice Services Alliance Quality Mark i.e. with casework, the service provider takes responsibility for further action, whereas with a general help service, the client retains responsibility for the case. Casework also includes representing a client at appeal proceedings where necessary, which general help does not.

CAT Tending shall contribute to the priorities and core values of Tending District Council through the following actions:

CAT will:

- Assist TDC with its aim to identify those in the district who have failed to claim ANY benefits to which they may be entitled and in particular Housing Benefit & Local Council Tax Support and assist those claimants with accessing benefits they are entitled to:
- Advise clients seeking debt advice that Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates are priority debts and assist them by liaising with TDC at individual case level to set up a repayment plan;
- Support the tackling of crime and disorder by taking part in TDC's/Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing Board's local "Community Days of Action"
- Signpost and advise residents on matters around crime and disorder and in particular antisocial behaviour;

- Provide clients with support and information to assist them to remain within their own homes as far as possible and prevent them getting into financial difficulties which would render them homeless;
- Assist clients in the prevention of homelessness by providing advice and support.
- Ensure that clients are aware of benefits and grants to ameliorate fuel poverty and assist them in securing the benefits they are entitled to;
- Assist vulnerable people to obtain the benefits that they are entitled to especially those living in the most deprived areas;
- Inform clients of the advantages of fuel efficiency, reducing their outgoings and protecting the environment;
- Work with partners, including TDC, to reduce health inequalities across the district.

2.4 MEANS OF ACCESSING THE SERVICE

Post Covid-19 pandemic residents are able to contact CAT via face-to-face, email, and telephone as below:

- a) by phone - 01255 377080, Monday to Thursday 10am to 4pm
- b) by email - supervisor@cabtending.org.uk
- c) on the Citizens Advice website (<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>)
- d) online chat with trained advisor via the 'Contact Us' section of above website
- e) CAT Advice line (0800 1448848) - as part of their membership of NCA, CAT in the provision of a public advice line to increase access to advice and information over the phone.
- f) by letter
- g) to personal callers on a drop-in basis, at some or all of the locations set out below

Clacton CAT, 18 Carnarvon Road, Clacton on Sea

Harwich CAT, Jobcentre Plus, 164 High Street, Harwich
Brightlingsea, The Parish Hall, Victoria Place

Jaywick Sands – Community Forum at the Enterprise Centre

Frinton-on-Sea, Community Centre, Triangle Shopping Centre

CAT will endeavour to provide outreach in as many locations as possible.

2.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE

National Citizens Advice (NCA) introduced a new membership in 2017 outlining the responsibilities of the National and Local Citizens Advice offices. Citizens Advice Tendring (CAT) have signed up to the new membership which will include the following responsibilities known as The Performance Quality Framework (PQF) :-

- * Quarterly Surveys of Client experience sampled
- * QAA - Quality of Advice Assessments conducted monthly (CAT) but reviewed and sampled by NCA quarterly
- * FCA - Financial Health Monitoring - Financial reports submitted to NCA quarterly
- * LSA - Leadership Self Assessment - Annually to include 9 areas of People Management, Operations, Research and Campaigns, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Governance, Strategic Management, Finance and Partnerships.

CAB are audited quarterly by National CAB. Currently green audit for last four years for assurance.

2.6 SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

CAT has a business and development plan (appendix 1), the monitoring of which, and the results of audits (see paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 of Schedule 4) lead to innovation and improvements in its service

CAT will participate in the relevant networks in order to enhance the services provided to local residents.

CAT will work to secure additional funding in order to meet unmet needs for advice amongst the diverse local communities.

CAT will make use of clients' experiences to inform and influence the policy and delivery of other local services, and will inform the Council of relevant issues.

2.7 USER FEEDBACK AND INVOLVEMENT

CAT will operate a procedure for representations and complaints about the service in accordance with Citizens Advice guidelines and shall take all reasonable steps to bring this to the attention of the users of CAT.

CAT undertakes an annual client satisfaction survey. From 2017, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux will be implementing an external quarterly survey of clients.

CAT will consult both clients and potential clients about service provision and opening hours.

CAT will encourage users to take up appropriate training opportunities within CAT.

The Trustee Board are to be constituted in such a way as to encourage representation from as wide a range of local people and relevant organisations as possible.

2.8 CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND CAT'S CONTROL

CAT will not be held responsible for any interruption in or disruption to the core services due to circumstances beyond its control.

The services specified are subject to any national or local restrictions that may be in force and are dependent on the availability of suitable advisers and the continued availability of rent free accommodation for delivery of the Harwich, Manningtree, Jaywick Sands and Walton service; or additional external funding to meet such costs.

Schedule 3

(Financial and Resourcing Arrangements)

- 3.1 The Council has agreed that the grant to be paid by the Council to CAT for the **six** months beginning 1 April 2025 shall be **£72,000**.
- 3.2 The grant in 3.1 will be paid in one instalment of **£72,000**
- 3.3 Together with the funds from Essex County Council, this grant shall be construed as being sufficient to fund the services referred to in Schedule 2 of this Agreement. Separate grant funding will be sought for new service development.

3.4 Any reduction in funding from other organisations that prevents CAT from providing the service detailed in Schedule 2, including the level of availability in 2.4, will result in the Council reviewing its Grant to CAT.

3.5 All amounts specified under this Agreement are exclusive of VAT.

CAT agrees to submit, to the Council a copy of its latest approved accounts, within the meaning of the Charities Act, 1992 and 1993 within 7 days of their formal approval.

Any change to the core funding provided by Essex County Council referred to in 3.3 could cause CAT to be unable to provide the services specified in Schedule 2 of this Agreement.

Where CAT gains a surplus of income from grants, fundraising or other sources in any one year, the Council will not seek repayment of any part of the grant provided the service level specified in Section 2 has been fully met.

Schedule 4

(Monitoring Arrangements)

4.1 CAT monitors and evaluates its services in accordance with the procedures and directions set out in the Citizens Advice Quality Assurance Standards Membership Agreement.

4.2 CAT is subject to an annual organisational self assessment and quarterly audit of quality of advice.

4.3 CAT is subject to a yearly audit by National Citizens Advice.

4.4 CAT is required meet the standards set in Section 2.5, following the audits in 4.2 and 4.3, in order to receive the Council's grant detailed in Section 3.

CAT will provide a copy of the Annual Report to the Council and an invitation for the Council's Contact Officer at the Annual General Meeting of CAT.

4.5 CAT will provide to the Council figures on the following targets:-

- Number of clients advised from Clacton, Harwich, Brightlingsea, Frinton and Jaywick Sands
- A breakdown of the topics on which advice is sought
- Amount of benefits claimed by supported clients
- Amount of debt managed
- Amount of debt written off
- Number of people seeking housing advice or homelessness issues through the Mental Health Hub

CAT will provide information reasonably required by the Council, subject to those requirements not being in breach of clients' confidentiality. Information will not be required more frequently than at quarterly intervals. The Council's Contact Officer will discuss any concerns about performance with the CAT Contact Officer.

Subject to Citizens Advice guidelines these monitoring arrangements can be amended by Agreement between the Council and CAT to reflect changes in service practice, for example data collection.

Signed on behalf of
Tendring District Council
by its duly authorised signatory
and Corporate Director, Place & Economy

Signed on behalf of
Citizens Advice Tendring
by its duly authorised signatory and
Chief Officer



Executive Summary

Our mission statement: To provide quality advice that people need for the problems they face. To identify and champion the issues that affect people's lives.

Citizens Advice Tendring has provided free, confidential and independent advice to our local community since 1939. This plan sets out our development strategy for the next three years.

2 Who we are

We are a team of dedicated, professional volunteers and staff, passionate about empowering our community through advice, information, confidence building, education, advocacy and campaigning.

We are uniquely different from all other local Citizens Advice services because we have an additional service where we deliver a Mental Health Recovery Programme in our charity shop in the High Street, Clacton.

3 What we do

Our core service focuses on meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in Tendring, including those with mental health challenges, rather than providing general advice to those people who can access information and services themselves.

- We provide free, confidential and impartial advice to help people overcome their problems
- We are a voice for our clients and consumers on the issues that matter to them
- We value diversity, champion equality and challenge discrimination
- We encourage, empower and educate
- We're here for everyone

4 Citizens Advice Tendring (CAT) Strategic Priorities

The CAT board sets aside time in the early spring each year to review progress on achievements over the past year and refresh our priorities for the future. Throughout the year we work with our partners and stakeholders to ensure we maintain a broad understanding of local needs and developments.

We have identified **three key priorities** to increase service impact:

1. Improve access to the services we offer, geographically and digitally, according to need. Develop a marketing campaign to reach those most in need and continue to develop our research and campaigns work.
2. Increase effectiveness and continue to improve our internal systems and financial controls. Continue to review use of assets and explore new opportunities.
3. Raise the profile of CAT as both the lead advisory organisation across Tendring and as a driver of change by innovation. Increase our community profile, engaging with our local communities, particularly those who are hard to reach or hard to hear due to geographic location, physical or mental health challenges, language barriers, cultural differences or other characteristics. Develop a diverse and sustainable funding base.

5

6 What we achieved in 2023:

Listed below are some of the successes that we achieved for each of our key priorities:

Improve access to the services we offer, geographically and digitally, according to need:

- We continued to increase the number of face-to-face appointments both at the main office and several outreach sites in Jaywick, Walton, Brightlingsea and Harwich.
- We continued to develop our self-help services by improving the content and access to our website. Over the last year, there were 9592 website visits resulting in 19000 page views.
- We secured 5-year funding from the National Lottery to expand our outreach service into the wider community and increase our reach.
- We secured 2-year funding from ECC to expand our Mental Health Hub into Harwich.

Increase effectiveness and reduce duplication:

- We surpassed targets in the four-year project Warm Homes which ended in February 2024. From this project we developed an energy specialist who is now training others, and this has enabled us to secure further energy contracts such as Cadent and Warm Start Plus.
- We secured subsidised high quality training for our Senior Management Team. Three of the team are undertaking Level 5 management training with the CMI (Chartered Management Institute).
- We continue to successfully recruit volunteers, some of whom have gone on to achieve paid roles in the organisation.
- We continue to recruit to hybrid working where possible, which has enabled us to recruit from a wider skills base.

Increase our community profile and develop a diverse and sustainable funding base:

- We celebrated one year's anniversary of the Mental Health Hub & Charity Shop at the new central location, which has improved visibility and proximity to the advice service office.

- We have developed our website and social media presence, sharing research and campaigns data as well as increased our range of self-help information.
- We have increased our presence in the media with multiple radio interviews on BBC Essex Radio
- We were featured in a news film on BBC Look East, our local television station, promoting the successes of our Mental Health Hub.
- We secured £600k lottery funding over 5 years to increase our community presence.
- We secured £100k two-year funding for an expansion of our Mental Health Hub into Harwich.
- We continue to deliver on our Macmillan project the funding for which has been extended to December 2025 and we hope to have this worthwhile project recommissioned thereafter.

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Appendices:

1. ECC Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Summary 2022
2. Tendring and Essex Public Health 2019 Indices of Deprivation
3. National Citizens Advice Business Plan 2024-25
4. CAT EDI Plan 2022 - 25
5. Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26
6. Organogram Feb 2024
7. Financial Projections
8. ECC Everyone's Essex 2021-25
9. ECC Levelling Up White Paper
10. PFCC Rural Crime Strategy 2023 - 26
11. NEE Alliance Delivery Plan 2023 - 26
12. SNEE Joint Forward Plan 2024 -2029
13. CAT Service Delivery Document
14. CAT Mental Health Hub Service Delivery Document
15. CAT R&C Plan 2024
16. CAT Funding Strategy 2024

1. Introduction

Citizens Advice Tendring is an independent charity which works within the policies, quality standards and ethos of Citizens Advice national organisation (CiTA). Its focus is on the challenges and needs of the population of Tendring District in North-East Essex.

CAT currently provides advice services from

- Carnarvon Rd Clacton (Pier Ward)
- High St Harwich (Co-located with Harwich Job Centre)
- High Street Clacton (Mental Health Hub)
- Outreach advice is provided via appointments at Jaywick, Walton on the Naze, Clacton, Brightlingsea and Harwich

Client needs are assessed via an initial triage interview with follow-up by advisers. Our advisers are trained in mental health, suicide prevention and EDI awareness to facilitate an informed and sensitive response. To improve efficiency, we also have different channels of advice accessible via our website.

We provide telephone advice, emails, web advice forms, referrals from other organisations and other Citizens Advice. We also receive voicemails from Tendring residents via the UK-wide Adviceline service.

We gather statistical data from each of our clients (with full client consent) and use the priorities and trends emerging from analysis of both local and national Citizens Advice data, as well as local health and population data, to identify areas of policy and practice which are adversely impacting the population of Tendring. We use this data to advocate for policy change and to highlight local issues.

We are actively seeking to improve accessibility by training existing and recruiting new staff and volunteers to provide outreach services at new venues within our area.

7 1.1 Context and Community Needs Assessment

Through advice, empowerment, and advocacy we wish to address key challenges in our community. We use evidence from the multiple sources contained within the attached appendices and the links below to understand the issues our community is dealing with and to identify how we might develop our services.

[Tendring District District Council \(ukcrimestats.com\)](https://www.ukcrimestats.com/)

[Local indicators for Tendring \(E07000076\) - ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandwellbeing/indicators/localindicators)

[2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2021/areas-in-england-and-wales)

[Appendix 1 Essex-and-Suffolk-Joint-Strategic-Needs-Assessments 2024.pdf](#)

[Appendix 2 Tendring Public Health deprivation index.pdf](#)

Many people and families will experience a complex range of issues which require multiple agency input, and we work with many partner organisations, such as Community Voluntary Services Tendring and the Tendring Community Safety & Health and Wellbeing Board to help prioritise, plan and deliver local services across health, social care, community and police services.

This aligns with the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance delivery plan to help shape service development:

- Start Well - giving children the best start in life
- Feel Well - supporting mental wellbeing
- Be Well - empowering adults to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Age Well - supporting people to live safely and independently as they grow older

- Stay Well - supporting adults with health and/or care concerns to access support to maintain healthy and fulfilling lives
- Die Well – giving people nearing the end of life choice around their care

For further information see appendix 11 or the link below:

[PowerPoint Presentation \(sneeics.org.uk\)](http://sneeics.org.uk)

8 1.2 Advice Services

[CAT Service Delivery Document 060224.docx](#)

(Appendix 13)

9 1.3 Mental Health Hub

[MHH Service Delivery Doc Feb 24.docx](#)

(Appendix 14)

2 Strategic Plan Alignment

Our strategy aligns with National Citizens Advice, our funders, other organisations and partners across the Tendring district whose shared aims are to support and empower residents with the problems that they face. Key plans to which we are aligned are listed below:

- The **National Citizens Advice Business Plan 24-25**, which includes securing sustainability and becoming a champion of EDI in its key aims.

[Citizens Advice National Business Plan 24 25.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

- The **Wellbeing Public Health and Communities Business Plan 2022-25** and the **Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026**, which include the priority of improving mental health and wellbeing in Tendring. This is also the ambition of our Mental Health Hub and can be a direct benefit of support from our advice services.

[Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2026](#)

[Wellbeing, public health & communities business plan 2022 - 2025 \(essex.gov.uk\)](#)

- The **Tendring District Council Corporate Plan**, in particular five of the six key themes:
 - Pride in our area and services to residents
 - Raising aspirations and creating opportunities
 - Championing our local environment
 - Working with partners to improve quality of life
 - Financial sustainability and openness

[Tendring District Council | The Council's Corporate Plan \(tendringdc.gov.uk\)](#)

- **Essex County Council's Everyone's Essex and Levelling Up White Paper** which addresses seeks to deprivation and includes family stability, access to work, levelling up health and living healthy lifestyles.

[Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county, 2021 to 2025](#)

[Essex County Council Levelling-up strategy](#)

- **SNEE Alliance Transformation Agenda** and the **SNEE Joint Forward Plan** which are focused on improving the health and wellbeing of local population in North Essex.

[PowerPoint Presentation \(sneeics.org.uk\);](#)

[Joint Forward Plan - NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB](#)

- **PFCC Rural Crime Plan** In particular we align to the increase of reporting of crime as well as support of victims of crime and crime prevention.

[PFCC-Rural-Crime-Plan-2023-26-web-FINAL.pdf](#)

3 Leadership and Service Delivery

Citizens Advice Tendring is led, given direction and quality assured by a board of trustees, working through a Senior Management Team comprising the Chief Officer, Business Development Manager, Advice Service Manager, Projects Manager and HR Manager. Citizens Advice Tendring is staffed by 30 Volunteers, 25 part-time staff members and 3 full-time staff members. An organisational chart showing the structure is shown as appendix 6.

[Appendix 6 Full Organisation Chart Feb24.pptx](#)

The Trustee Board undertakes a skills audit to identify skill gaps and recruit new trustees accordingly. A number of trustees retired or resigned from the board in 2023, and recruitment began again early in 2024 to find more trustees with the appropriate skills to take us forward. Our aim remains to achieve a balance in terms of diversity of the board.

4 Governance

Policies, systems, processes, controls and records management are continually improving.

A Board Calendar is agreed by Trustees each year to set out the schedule for the Board agenda and key activities throughout the following year. This includes scheduling of updates to the risk register, annual refresh of the Business Development Plan, signing off accounts, and when policies are due for routine review.

Following each **Local Self-Assessment** undertaken with CiTA every year, the Board agrees a timed action plan to deliver on required improvements. This three-year LSA cycle covers the nine leadership areas below:

- Governance
- Strategy and Planning
- Risk Management and Compliance
- Financial Governance
- People Management
- Operational Performance
- Partnership Working
- Research and Campaigning
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Routine checking of recommended policies takes place throughout the year to ensure policies are up to date with the latest legislation.

5 Strategic Planning and Development

The Board holds an annual away day to refresh service strategies and development plans, and for the first time in 2024 this included all staff and volunteers. The board also undertakes an annual board appraisal to test its functionality, effectiveness and working practices. Each trustee has a designated lead role across the organisation which supports the yearly Leadership Self Assessment process.

In the Autumn of 2023, the board began preparations to changes in the way that core funding allocations will take place in future. This will involve a competitive procurement and bidding process, with the prospect that core funding may be limited or reduced. Planning and readiness for this include developing enhanced bidding skills and planning for how a significant reduction in funding may affect service provision.

The Training Manager ensures that up to date records and reminders are issued to all staff, volunteers and Trustees to ensure all have undergone GDPR training and mandatory training to be able to deliver our services effectively, efficiently, safely and legally.

10 5.1 Strategic Priorities

Following a review of community needs and funder and partner aims, we have identified the following strategic priorities and principles for the next 3 years.

1 To improve quality and access to the services we offer, we will:

Year 1, 2024-5:

- Review advice service structure with aim to maximise client access and best outcomes
- Provide service resilience by launch of new community outreach team
- Recruit a trainer to support and develop new and existing volunteers. To include focus on upskilling for next steps or paid work.
- Pilot Mental Health Hub in Harwich
- Develop a wide variety of materials, equipment and support for neurodivergent people and those with sensory, mental and physical disabilities (as per EDI Plan).
- Develop all advisers to help clients manage debt and financial concerns.
- Improve visibility of the service through continued improvement to our website, social media and other promotional methods.
- Launch a newsletter to CAT team and to funders and partners, to promote all projects and services and how to contact us.
- Maintain our local profile, through continued use of different platforms such as TV, radio and social media as well as local event attendance.

Year 2, 2025-6:

- Review new structure for effectiveness in terms of improved access and client outcomes.
- Review successes and areas for development in new Community Outreach team.
- Review general advice service and its alignment with partners and to community need.
- Secure funding to launch Harwich Mental Health Hub.
- Further roll out the accessibility aims of the EDI plan.
- Develop partnerships with financial institutions and seek funding to provide joined up debt support.
- Increase attendance at a range of community events to promote the service and increase accessibility.
- Maintain our local profile, through targeted use of different platforms such as TV, radio and social media, sharing our local and national research and campaign work.

Year 3, 2026-7:

- Conduct analysis on existing accessibility to all services to reflect local demographics.
- Consider all channels of access and implement more to increase reach.
- Review outreach provision to consider further expansion.

2 To Increase effectiveness and reduce duplication, we will:

Year 1, 2024-25:

- Roll out the objectives of the Communication Plan to bring more cohesion across the organisation teams. Include Comms survey to staff and volunteers.
- Recruit training supervisor to develop and deliver remodelled advice training programme to new and existing staff and volunteers.
- Recruit to the trustee board in line with skills audit
- Look to establish outreach locations with partners with shared strategic aims.
- Develop a consistent approach to management of volunteers, more aligned to that of paid staff.
- Improve onboarding and induction by creating a consistent and thorough process.
- IT Support Officer to upskill staff volunteers in all IT applications to embed a consistent competency level.
- Implement Connect Phone platform for advice, to improve reporting and data evaluation on client service.

- Work towards Cyber Essentials accreditation for robust IT security and demonstrating effective risk management for funders.
- Devise standard reporting for all areas of the service, which supports promotion of the service, funding bids, decision making and partnership working.
- Develop clear signposting to and from the service with use of Frontline referral platform.
- Improve data reporting to reflect financial outcomes and use of mental health evaluation Recovery Star for funders.

Year 2, 2025-26:

- Review Comms through a feedback survey
- Review new training programme to consider how long advice training takes, retention and any challenges and successes.
- Launch regular IT Safety and Digital Skills training for staff and volunteers
- Evaluate phone system since launch of new platform
- Review progress on Cyber Essentials
- Review success and uptake of Frontline
- Review Manchester Model for measurement of financial outcomes. Recovery Star for MH outcomes.

To increase our community profile and develop a diverse and sustainable funding base, we will:

In Year 1, 2024-25:

- Explore new funding routes for debt and other services.
- Launch a newsletter to CAT team and to funders and partners, to promote all projects and services and how to contact us.
- Plan attendance to partner and LCA / network meetings to align with Tendring strategic priorities. External as well as internal focus.
- Promote involvement with ECC and Essex Green Pledge and our Climate Plan.
- Promote CAT as an organisation that upskills local people with digital, retail and other skills which gives them workplace opportunities across Tendring. Aligns with Levelling Up and local health agenda.
- Promote the various projects to demonstrate the range of support from health, energy and debt but also holistic advice – to better define us from other community groups.
- Maintain our local profile, through continued use of different platforms such as TV, radio and social media and attendance to local events.
- Promote CAT as an inclusive service and employer; campaign for EDI, and other research and campaigns in our wider community.
- Maintain our partnership relationships, taking a lead role on joint projects where appropriate and develop new relationships in Harwich.

Year 2, 2025-26:

- Evaluate new funding sources for effectiveness.
- Review newsletter for take up and feedback.
- Share best practice and success through our climate plan and Essex Green Pledge involvement
- Promote MHH in Harwich
- Explore the possibility of providing training (benefits, debt etc.) to other organisations.
- Build on promotion of all CAT services and outcomes
- Establish closer links with funders through mutual promotion and celebration of partnership working.

11 5.2 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Priorities

CAT recognises the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and fairness, challenging discrimination and enabling inclusion.

CAT has identified three key priorities for equality:

- challenging discrimination through advice
- championing equality through research and campaigns
- valuing diversity as an employer, volunteer agency and partner

To achieve these, we have an EDI plan in place which covers equality of experience for all clients who access our services, identifying and removing barriers for potential clients who do not.

[Appendix 4 CAT EDI Plan 2024.docx](#)

6 Research and Campaigning

Citizens Advice Tendring is committed to being actively involved in research and campaigns both nationally and locally. The aims of this strategy reflect some of those of the organisation as a whole:

- To champion the issues that local residents face
- To encourage, empower and educate
- To demonstrate our values of diversity, equality and challenging discrimination
- To help meet the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in Tendring

See appendix 15 for more details on our R&C plan:

[R&C Plan 2024.docx](#)

12 6.1 National Campaigns

With the help of a yearly calendar from national CA, CAT monitors upcoming national campaigns and actively supports and promotes them, with focus on several which align with our strategic priorities. Examples include:

- Big Energy Week (Jan)
- Scams Awareness (Feb/Mar but various)
- Debt Awareness Week (Mar)
- Mental Health Awareness (May)
- Volunteers' Week (June)
- Pride Month (June)
- Trustees Week (October)

We promote these campaigns with posters, digital messaging and social media posts. We also include promotion of CA national campaigns in our main office via a digital display in the waiting room.

We also use our website to campaign on key issues such as Hate Crime, Enough (violence against women) and Universal Credit.

[General 2 — Citizens Advice Tendring logo \(cabtendring.org\)](#)

13 6.2 Local Campaigns

In addition to national campaigns we conduct regular local campaigns on issues as they arise. We advertise CAT local campaigns in our main office via a digital display in the waiting room. There are also trends that come through our advice sessions which we highlight in our campaign awareness initiatives such as:

- Promotion of our debt specialist service
- Scams awareness
- Mobile Home Campaign
- Romance Scams
- Winter Warmers
- Promotion of partnership initiatives e.g. Baby Bank Tendring
- Promotion of local authority health initiatives regarding increase in regular exercise
- Promotion of volunteering at the Mental Health Hub
- Mental Health Awareness - this is a permanent campaign for us as we promote our local service.
- Debt – this is a permanent campaign for CAT as we promote and inform our local specialist service through as many means as possible.

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6.3 Social Media Platforms

<https://www.facebook.com/cabtendring>

<https://twitter.com/AdviceCitizens>

Social media has been and continues to be key in raising awareness of research and campaigns as well as increasing our digital presence with other organisations and Tendring residents. CAT post to each of our sites at least on a weekly basis according to general guidelines as set out by Citizens Advice National. Aside from those examples of the types of posts are:

- Staff and Volunteer Vacancies including trustee roles
- Changes to our services – additional opening (Mondays), longer opening hours (Tuesdays), closure over Christmas etc
- Tweets provided by CA Communications Team.
- Promotion of our own services including debt specialist
- Our Mental Health Hub advice service
- We appeal for donations for our charity shop.
- We also ask for financial donations by promoting giving services to which we have signed up e.g. My Donate, EasyGiving etc.
- Links to advice and information from partner organisations e.g. Turn2Us; National Debtline; Mind; Payplan; Refuge, Tendring District Council; CVS Tendring.
- Links to partner organisation or local initiatives that may provide help and support to our clients

We only post for local partner organisations if they are funders, referral partners or recognised business and / or organisations working to the benefit of the local community.

7 Finance

16 7.1 Funding Strategy

Key aims of our funding strategy are around sustainability and broadening our income streams, such as developing fundraising. See appendix 16 for more details.

[Appendix 16 Funding Strategy 2024.docx](#)

17 7.2 Financial Management

Our financial year runs April to March. The Chief Officer and Business Development Manager maintain a day-to-day overview of the organisation's finances and present accounts, trends and issues to each Board meeting. An external qualified book-keeper prepares the management accounts using Quickbooks and presents monthly accounts to the management team.

The annual independent review of our accounts is undertaken by an external accountancy firm. Annual accounts are signed off in time to present to the Annual General Meeting in November each year.

The Board observes trends and issues at Board meetings and makes decisions about spending priorities and financial management requirements.

18 7.3 Financial Projections and Budget Assumptions

Budget Assumptions:

- Inflation is based on latest projections for RPI.
- Grant Income assumes the continuation of existing funds as well as new funding.

Financial Projections:

See Appendix XX

Awaiting treasurer submission

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