

## COUNCIL

25 MARCH 2025

### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & ELECTIONS

#### A.1 PETITION: “SAVE CITIZENS ADVICE TENDRING”

#### PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

##### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To formally report the receipt of a petition submitted requesting the Council to continue to fund Citizens Advice Tendring and the Mental Health Hub and to enable Council to consider that petition alongside Cabinet’s formal response to that petition, arising from Cabinet’s meeting held on 17 March 2025.

##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A paper petition submitted by Danny Mayzes as lead petitioner, was received on Friday 21 February 2025. Following a check carried out by Officers in Electoral Services, the petition was found to contain at least 514 names and addresses that were legible and those persons were included on the electoral register.

The text of the paper petition stated:-

*“We the undersigned petition Tendring District Council to continue to fund Citizens Advice Tendring and the Mental Health Hub to ensure this vital advice service can continue to support the residents, families and small businesses of the Tendring District. The core grants of £144,000 and £28,000 per annum should be reinstated for 2025/2026 and beyond. Citizens Advice is a national treasure and a staple of UK life, and we want this protected locally for the people of Tendring at all costs.*

*The Council has stated publicly that it would not be able to deliver the same level of advice for less cost, and that Council staff would not have the knowledge to deliver the advice required in-house. The Council praises Citizens Advice Tendring as value for money, and despite core funding not having increased in 10 years, the advice service by Citizens Advice Tendring is better than ever and must be retained.”*

In addition, the Lead Petitioner, Danny Mayzes, had submitted an E-Petition with the same text. That E-Petition had been e-signed by 349 individuals who had given an address within the District.

As this matter was an executive function (Partnerships Portfolio) the Cabinet was the appropriate body to consider this matter in the first instance and this duly took place at the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 March 2025.

Section 2 of the Council’s adopted Scheme for Dealing with Petitions states, inter alia,:-

*“(b) A valid petition containing 501, or more signatures from Tendring residents or non-residents who can be clearly identified as either working or studying in Tendring, will be reported to*

*Council to advise that the petition has been received. Once it has been investigated, a report will be prepared and presented with the petition at the next meeting of the Council for consideration. If it relates to a matter that is an Executive function under the law the petition will also be presented to the first practicable meeting of the Cabinet and any views, comments or recommendations made by Cabinet will be incorporated into the aforementioned report to Council.”*

In accordance with the Petitions Scheme, Danny Mayzes was invited to attend the meeting on 17 March 2025 to address the Cabinet, outlining the reasons for the submission of the petition and what action the petitioners would like the Council to take.

Having discussed the petition it was for Cabinet to decide what views, comments or recommendations it wished to be incorporated into this report to Full Council.

Cabinet, having duly considered the Petition together with the information provided in the Officer report, decided:-

*“That Cabinet –*

- (a) notes the allocation of £0.072m to Citizen’s Advice Tendring 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; and*
- (b) recommends to Council that having considered the petition and having reviewed the assessment and advice set out within the Head of Democratic Services & Elections’ report (A.8), Cabinet believes the right approach is to test which is the best organisation to provide advice in Tendring through the procurement process, as was set out in the January 2025 report to Cabinet.”*

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That, having duly considered the Petition together with the Cabinet’s views, comments or recommendations, Full Council decides, what action, if any it wishes to take in this matter.**

#### **REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)**

To comply with the adopted scheme for dealing with petitions, as set out in the Council’s Constitution.

#### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

There are several courses of action available to the Council once the petition has been considered, (whilst acknowledging that this is a Executive function matter and therefore ultimately down to the Cabinet to decide) including:

- *No action (with reasons as to why no action is proposed)*
- *Taking the action requested in the petition*

- *Taking an alternative or amended course of action to that requested in the petition (with reasons as to why such action is being taken)*
- *Undertaking research into the matters raised (this could include referring the matter to the relevant Portfolio Holder, or officer of the Council) and holding a meeting with the petitioners.*
- *Referring the petition to a Committee or Cabinet or an external person/body (such as the County Council or Government body or Public Services or the Ombudsman or Member(s) of Parliament)*
- *Holding a public meeting*
- *Holding an inquiry*
- *Providing a written response to the lead petitioner setting out the Council's views on the request in the petition*
- *Deferring consideration of the petition to a future committee, Cabinet or Council meeting*
- *Calling for a referendum (if permitted under the legislation and subject to costs)*

## **PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **DELIVERING PRIORITIES**

In respect of the Corporate Plan 2024/28 Priority Themes the Council's decision will contribute to:

- 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.*

### **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)**

External grant funding is an executive function that is delegated by the Leader of the Council to the Cabinet collectively and, individually, to the Partnerships Portfolio Holder in Schedule 3 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution. The overall function of the Council's Executive is the discharge, in accordance with the Council's policy framework all functions of the Council (including "local choice functions") except those functions which cannot by virtue of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) and other legislation, be the responsibility of the Executive.

### **FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct implications immediately resulting from consideration of this report. However, should Council be minded to request Cabinet to explore the possible sustained long-

term funding of the Citizens Advice Tendring and the Mental Health Hub then various matters would need to be considered and decided upon such as the application of the Council's adopted External Grants Policy and the allocation of a Budget.

**USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY**

*External Audit expect the following matters to be demonstrated in the Council's decision making:*

- A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;*
- B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and*
- 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.*

*As such, set out in this section the relevant facts for the proposal set out in this report.*

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;	Not applicable in this instance but would need to be seriously considered if there was a desire to provide sustained long-term funding of CAT and the Mental Health Hub going forward.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	Nothing in addition to those matters already set out in the report.
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.	Not applicable in this instance.

**MILESTONES AND DELIVERY**

Not Applicable in this instance.

**ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION**

Not Applicable in this instance.

**OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

The Council's adopted Scheme for Dealing with Petitions states, inter alia:-

- Receipt of a petition will be formally acknowledged to the lead petitioner in writing or by email as appropriate, within five working days of its receipt.*
- The appropriate Ward Member(s) will be informed of receipt of a petition and when and how the petition will be considered.*

- *When a petition is being considered by Cabinet or Council/Committee, the lead petitioner will be invited to address the Cabinet or Council/Committee, outlining the reasons for the submission of the petition and what action they would like the Council to take. The lead petitioner (or his or her representative) will have a time limit of three minutes for their speech and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors. A Ward Councillor can, at the request of the lead petitioner, present the petition to Cabinet or Council/Committee on behalf of the relevant petitioners.*
- *The lead petitioner will be informed, in writing, of the Cabinet or Council's decision and this information will also be published on the Council's website via the Minutes of the relevant meeting at which the petition was dealt with. If a further meeting is to be held to consider the issues raised in the petition, the lead petitioner will be supplied with the relevant details and will also be given the opportunity to attend and address that meeting and if appropriate, answer any questions posed at the meeting.*

## **EQUALITIES**

*In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies such as the Council must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*

*The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.*

Not Applicable in this instance.

## **SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no social value considerations relevant to this report having regard to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050**

There is no impact on the Council's aim for its activities to be carbon neutral by 2050 including the actions, policies and milestones in its Climate Change Action Plan.

## **OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS**

*Set out what consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are then set out below.*

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

<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	None
<b>Health Inequalities</b>	None
<b>Area or Ward affected</b>	All (potentially)

## PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### **CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PLACE & ECONOMY)'S ASSESSMENT AND ADVICE (AS SUBMITTED TO CABINET ON 17 MARCH 2025)**

The petitioner highlights the importance of providing a vital advice service.

Cabinet decided on this matter on 31 January 2025 with the report of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder: Procurement of information and support service. The advice to Cabinet is drawn from that report, which sought 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. [...] 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.

Citizens Advice Tendring 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.

In summary, Cabinet has approved the provision of an information and advice service to local residents, which it will procure via a modular approach to determine who is best placed to deliver the services required and provide best value for the taxpayer. There is a process in place to determine the best provider of advice services for residents. As such, Cabinet should enact the recommendations made in the January 2025 report.

In relation to the Mental Health Hub, the funding for the Mental Health Hub run by Citizen's Advice Tendring remains in the Council's budget and continues.

### **Partnerships Portfolio Holder's Comments and Recommendations as submitted to Cabinet on 17 March 2025:**

*"I believe passionately in the importance of advice and information to enable residents to make the best decisions and navigate the systems that provide financial and other support. That is why the Council extended the funding to Citizens Advice Tendring for six months to ensure there is no gap in provision and why we want to go through a process to test the best value provision of advice in the District.*

*Having considered the petition and reviewed the assessment and advice set out in this report, I believe the right approach is to test which is the best organisation to provide advice in Tendring through the procurement process, as was set out in the January 2025 report to Cabinet."*

### **BACKGROUND**

In accordance with the Petitions Scheme, Danny Mayzes has been invited to attend this meeting to address Council, outlining the reasons for the submission of the petition and what action the petitioners would like the Council to take. The lead petitioner (or his or her representative) will have a time limit of three minutes for their speech and the petition will then be discussed by Council.

### **PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS TAKEN BY COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE ETC.**

Cabinet, at its meeting held on 31 January 2025 (Minute 118 refers), considered a report of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder in relation to the procurement of an information and advice service that:-

- (1) sought 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.
- (2) sought approval from the Cabinet for 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.

At that meeting Cabinet had:-

**“RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- a) *approves the provision of an information and advice service to local residents;*
- b) *agrees to the procurement of such services for a contract period of three 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) *authorises the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive, to approve the specification for the provision of an information and advice service based on the broad principles set out within the report of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder (A.5);*
- 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) *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) *authorises the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and the Monitoring Officer, to finalise the 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) *agrees to extend the current Service Level Agreement with Citizens Advice Tending (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 to the report (A.5).”*

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Paper Petition and E-Petition submitted by Danny Mayzes (as the Lead Petitioner) on 21 February 2025.

Report of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder (A.5) entitled “Procurement of Information and Advice Service” that was submitted to the formal meeting of the Cabinet held on 31 January 2025.

Published Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31 January 2025.

Published Report of the Head of Democratic Services entitled Petition: “Save Citizens Advice Tending” that was submitted to the formal meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 March 2025.

Published Decisions of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 March 2025.

**APPENDICES**

None

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