

SUBJECT:	<i>Service Level Agreement with Chiltern Citizens Advice Bureau</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Community Health and Housing Portfolio – Cllr Graham Harris</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Martin Holt, Head of Healthy Communities</i>
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WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To agree the award of funding to the Chiltern Citizens Advice Service (CAB) for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet agrees to support the Chiltern Citizens Advice Service draft business plan with funding of £122,900 for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2019

2. Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 The work of the CAB contributes directly to the Housing and Homelessness prevention strategies and as a key partner in reducing the risk of homelessness it is estimated that the prevention work undertaken by the CAB. In 2014/15 the CAB prevented 39 cases of homelessness where clients were facing an imminent prospect of repossession due to rent and Mortgage arrears. If these households had been placed in B+B accommodation the cost to the Council is estimated at between £30,000 to £65,000. The Council would also have faced further costs accommodating other clients who became homeless because they did not receive the support of early intervention by the Debt Advice Service.

2.2 The CAB assists the Council's excellent delivery of council tax collection through the support and debt advice it provides to residents on council tax and housing benefits issues. Should the council tax collection performance fall below 98.5% there would be an adverse impact on the proposed council budget for 2015/2016, with a potential for deficit on the collection fund, which would require a negative adjustment in our overall budget. At Chiltern there is usually a surplus in the collection fund; for example in 2014/15 we had a positive adjustment of £252k

3. Content of Report

3.1 The Chiltern CAB is a charity that operates out of offices in Chesham, Amersham and provides outreach services at Prestwood and Chalfont St Peter Community Centre. It provides; a free, independent, confidential and impartial service to everyone, on their rights and responsibilities, and has developed a range of generalist and specialist services meeting the changing needs of the local community.

3.2 All offices and outreach centres provide face to face advice and support which continues to be the principle method of engaging with clients. The service supports the Buckinghamshire wide telephone based – Adviceline and has sought to deliver outreach through Children’s Centres and community locations

3.3 Advice services are provided by 56 volunteers supported by 5 administrative volunteers and 8 part time advisors. Most advice is given at the general level with specialist services in benefits, debt and employment.

3.4 The service has supported 4,875 clients with 16,668 issues and provided £2.310,169 financial benefits to customers. Through partnership working the with the other Buckinghamshire CAB’s the Chiltern CAB supports the delivery of the Money Advice Service and Pensionwise services as well as working closely with Food Banks, Credit Union and other charitable organisations.

3.5 Partnership working enabled the organisation to access Lottery Funding to deliver the Community Advice Network (CAN) project across Chiltern and South Bucks increasing its opportunity to provide support and assistance.

3.6 The benefits of the Community Advice Network (CAN) service to the Chiltern District community are detailed in the presentation to Full Council detailed in [Appendix 1](#)

3.7 Future challenges include;

- Increased demand for advice services – whilst more clients are accessing self-service support via the website, similar to the experience of housing more complex enquiries are being undertaken on a face to face basis. The predicted changes to benefits and the economy will increase the risk of consumer debt leading to more demand for services.
- Challenging funding environment – The Council has traditionally encouraged the CAB to diversify its funding stream. Whilst the award of funding from CDC has not increased in line with inflation the CAB has successfully accessed alternative funding. With the potential for cuts in public funding over the next three years, this is identified as a significant risk to the continuation of service delivery.

3.8 The CAB aims to mitigate these and other challenges through the actions identified in its draft Business Plan as detailed in [Appendix 2](#).

4. Consultation

Not Applicable

5. Options

To continue to fund CAB with and award of £122,900 or consider increasing or decreasing the annual award

To award funding for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2019 in line with the Buckinghamshire Compact or award funding on an annual basis.

7. Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Finance: the provisional budget anticipates an award of £122,900, however this could be increased by up to £12,500 following the ending of three community SLA's in 2014/15. It is recommended that the agreement with the CAB should be subject to annual review and 6 month notification of any change in funding. Thus should this area of work be the subject of further savings or the demand for the service is not as great as current predictions indicate the council could renegotiate the funding agreement. Any change would take effect after 6 months and for the following year.
- 7.2 Legal: The support to the CAB assists the Council in ensuring that those with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act are supported with advice and assistance to access services.

8. Links to Council Policy Objectives

This links to the 'Working towards safe and healthier local communities' aim of the Joint Business Plan 2014-19.

9. Next Step

Officers will agree the Service Level Agreement with the Chiltern CAB in consultation with the Head of Healthy Communities and the Portfolio Holder.

Background	None except as referred to in this report
Papers:	