

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>REPORT NO:</b>	LR/03/18
<b>DATE:</b>	12 June 2018
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Hugh Jones (People – Communities, Partnerships, Public Protection and Community Safety) Councillor David Griffiths (Place – Housing)
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Lee Robinson (Tel: 292400)
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Response to Notice of Motion – Advice Services Review
<b>WARD:</b>	N/A

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To outline a response relating to Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the notice of motion raised at full Council on 23 May 2018.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The notice of motion raised at full Council on the 23 May 2018 read: '*We call on this Council to support our local Citizens Advice Service by providing a grant of £50,000 in this financial year to avoid its imminent closure and followed by a review, prior to the end of this current financial year, of Wrexham CAB's viability needs for the following year.*'
- 2.2 The original recommendations from the Advice Services Review were presented to Executive Board in June 2015. Following that meeting, Members agreed to consider a further report in October 2015, detailing the results of a consultation exercise and the completed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and to make a final decision on the implementation.
- 2.3 At the Executive Board meeting in October 2015 Members agreed to cease core funding of third sector organisations and due to the findings of the equality impact assessments, carried out with affected organisations, recommended the phasing out of CAB core funding over a 2 year period.

- 2.4 CAB Wrexham was made aware of the decision to phase out core funding at the earliest opportunity and formal notification was provided in March 2016. Since then a series of follow up meetings with CAB Wrexham have been held to work through any issues and explain the route for any future commissioning opportunities.
- 2.5 In March 2018, meetings were held with CAB Wrexham following indications that they would cease operating by June 2018 unless funding from Wrexham County Borough Council was provided.

### **3 RECOMMENDATION**

#### **3.1 That Executive Board consider the report.**

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- (i) To provide a response to the notice of motion raised at full Council on 23 May 2018.

### **4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The advice services review involved an in-depth analysis of the provision of advice services in Wrexham, identifying links to the third and private sector as well as internal Council services. The Council reviewed how these services were best provided to make sure that public funds were used effectively and efficiently and customers could get access to the right advice at the right time.
- 4.2 This work followed previous reviews undertaken in 2011 looking at third sector commissioning and procurement. Part of the legacy of this earlier work, meant that the review of advice services also considered whether or not the Local Authority could continue to core fund third sector organisations and whether any not now fit for purpose third sector contracts could be stopped.
- 4.3 In terms of ceasing core funding, a set of criteria was agreed by Executive Board in October 2014 and this was applied consistently across those third sector organisations where core funding was provided. It was proposed that an organisation's core costs should only be funded where:
- There is a clear and demonstrable need for the funding i.e. there are no reserves which could support the organisation;
  - The core funding is only for a time limited period and during that time, funding will be tapered to give the organisation an agreed timescale to ensure its ongoing sustainability;
  - Market analysis shows that there is only one provider that can deliver the services but they have not reached sufficient financial maturity to ensure their sustainability in the short-term;
  - The services being provided complement those provided by the Council and if that organisation did not exist the Council would have to provide the service itself;
- 4.4 Following the presentation of review recommendations in June 2015, Members agreed to consider a further report in October 2015, detailing the results of consultation and completed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) in order to make a final decision on implementation.
- 4.5 Regarding the core funding decision, equality impact assessments were carried out with the affected organisations to fully understand the impacts of the proposals.

Officers from the Performance, Improvement & Partnerships Service carried out facilitated equality impact assessment sessions with those organisations affected. A specific template was developed and agreed by both the Council and the affected organisations and initial sessions took place in June 2015. Follow up sessions were carried out in July 2015 before the content was agreed and signed off during August 2015. The sessions were independently facilitated to enable a fair and unbiased assessment of the potential impacts.

- 4.6 The EIA process with CAB Wrexham considered, jointly, the number of clients seen by CAB Wrexham, the types of advice offered, the value of benefits received, their funding and staffing structures and a summary of the impacts suggested by the consultation, along with some mitigating proposals.
- 4.7 A comprehensive review of the current position highlighted immediate implications and impacts for CAB Wrexham. A summary of the impacts highlighted by the Equality Impact Assessment can be found in the Executive Board Report 'Advice Services Review consultation and EIA findings' (LR/16/15).
- 4.8 The overall conclusion from the collated impacts suggested a requirement for CAB to prioritise the work of support and volunteers for community organisations, consider alternative delivery models and ensure minimal detrimental impact on any proposed cuts. The proposal to withdraw the core funding to Wrexham CAB at the time had the potential to severely impact on seven specialist projects supported by different funding streams: Families First; Communities First; MASDAP debt (government established organisation); Better Advice Better Lives; Children's Disability Campaign; Council Tax Take-up Campaign; Energy Best Deal; and 7 various outreach services funded by Community Councils.
- 4.9 The impacts outlined as part of the EIA process, contributed directly to the recommendation to consider phasing out the core funding of CAB Wrexham. As a result, it was agreed by Executive Board to phase out CAB Wrexham core funding over a 2 year period in line with section 46 of our contract payments process. This meant a reduction of 50% of the core per annum (50% in year 1 and a further 50% in year 2), previously funded from Adult Social Care, in order to stagger the impact, allowing CAB time to reposition their funding stream and requirements and mitigate the risk highlighted by the impact assessment.
- 4.10 Following the October 2015 Executive Board meeting, CAB Wrexham were formally informed of the Council's intention to phase out core funding over a 2 year period in March 2016. Prior to this communication however, a series of meetings were held with the Chief Executive CAB Wrexham to outline the phasing process and agree the new funding arrangements.
- 4.11 Following the formal communication to CAB Wrexham a number of follow up meetings were held to discuss issues arising and any future commissioning proposals. In August and October 2016, Wrexham's Procurement Lead and Reshaping Services Programme Manager met with CAB Wrexham to explain that any future commissioning of services would be carried out through the Sell2Wales national portal.
- 4.12 In April and May 2017, Wrexham's Procurement Lead and Reshaping Services Programme Manager met again with CAB Wrexham, to answer questions about a 'preferred supplier' approach and to reaffirm the position that any future commissioning of services would be done through the national portal.

- 4.13 More recently, in March 2018, meetings were held with CAB Wrexham following indications that they would cease operating by June 2018 unless funding from Wrexham County Borough Council was provided. At the request of Wrexham County Borough Council, further information was provided by CAB Wrexham including a 16/17 financial summary, the current operating model and recent staffing structure.
- 4.14 It was apparent from the financial detail provided by CAB Wrexham that the transition grant would be used to cover such things as training costs, rent, light and heat, premises running costs, travel expenses, stationery, telephony, audit fees, insurance, repairs and renewals, sundries, room hire, subscription costs etc. and therefore had no direct link to service provision. It also went against the decision made in October 2014 to cease core funding for third sector organisations.
- 4.15 From the financial information provided by CAB Wrexham, it is estimated that the average cost per interview is £5.00.
- 4.16 The financial detail provided by CAB Wrexham also appeared to indicate that no action had been taken to address cost reductions in the last two years to address the phasing out of funding. The charity also operates with a substantial reserve value and it is not clear why the reduction of £23,600 funding from 2017/18 is resulting in closure in this financial year. Wrexham County Borough Council have also discussed the possibilities for further efficiencies and possible mergers but these have been discounted by CAB Wrexham.

#### **Options:**

- 4.17 In response to the notice of motion and the requests for funding, explained above, a series of funding options and the rationale behind them are listed here:
1. Uphold the decision to cease core funding of third sector organisations and therefore continue with the proposal to end CAB Wrexham's core funding. (This has ended March 2018).
  2. Fund at the level of the motion of £50k for a further 12 months and carry out a review of Wrexham CAB's viability needs for the following year 2019/20.
  3. Fund at the level of £25k for 18/19 which would enable Wrexham CAB to deliver approximately 5000 interviews based on the average cost per interview.
  4. Continue to fund at the 2017/18 level of £23,600 to extend the phasing out of core funding for another 12 months, with a view to supporting CAB Wrexham to ensure sustainability moving forward and carry out a further review of Wrexham advice services for implementation in the following year – 2019/20.
- 4.18 **Policy Framework** – The Advice Services Review paid close regard to the Council Plan 2013-2017 and the overall aim of the review serves to remove duplication, ensuring efficiency, robustness and customer focus, whilst at the same time achieving savings.
- 4.19 **Budget** – If Councillors did reverse the Executive Board's previous decision, then the reasons for this course of action must be clearly set out and the expected outcomes stipulated. Clearly the budget savings have already been made. Funding for 2018/19, if required, would be charged to Supporting People.

- 4.20 **Legal** – The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Section 17 requires Wrexham County Borough Council to provide information, advice and assistance (IAA) to people who need care and support. This includes how to raise concerns about the well-being of a person who appears to have care and support needs. The Act also requires us to provide IA (Information & Advice) about care & support to people who, following assessment under Part 3 of the Act, are found not to be eligible for care and support services from Wrexham County Borough Council.
- 4.21 CAB Wrexham is a general information and advice service rather than the specialist service providing information and advice regarding care and support required under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 4.22 **Staffing** – There are no staffing implications associated with this report.
- 4.23 **Equality/Human Rights** – Officers and Members of the Council considered the Council’s Equality Duties at the time of the original decision and have paid due regard to them. In summary these legal obligations require the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard “to the need to:
1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
  2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don’t; and
  3. Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don’t (which involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding).
- 4.24 Under the Duty the relevant protected characteristics are: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion, Sex, Sexual orientation. In this case an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for the Advice Services Review as a whole and for each of the impacted organisations. The general EIA is available on the online system (CCS/EIA00049/2015).
- 4.25 **Risks** – An overview of potential risks were identified as part of the review. A project risk assessment has been created and updated to reflect the work of our overall Advice Services Review.

## 5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with Commissioning Officers and Senior Managers in Adult Social Care, Prevention and Social Care and Lifelong Learning. Proposals have been presented to SLT/Lead Members on a number of occasions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.
LR/05/15 - Advice Services Review		
LR/16/15 – Advice Services Review consultation and EIA findings		