

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 9TH MARCH, 2011

EAST AYRSHIRE CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU – FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS AND SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Report by Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Support

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of the outcome of discussions with the East Ayrshire Citizen's Bureau in respect of, and to seek Cabinet's approval of, proposed service provision arrangements from the CAB for 2011/12 to be included within a Service Level Agreement between the parties.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The CAB in East Ayrshire has previously been in receipt of different Council/Community Planning Partnership funding streams and in 2009/10 these were as follows:-

<u>Source of Funding</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
1. EAC	£142,796	Core funding
2. EAC (Social Services)	£108,000	Money Advice Service
3. Fairer Scotland Fund	£100,000	To provide a targeted financial inclusion service across East Ayrshire

- 2.2 In addition, the CAB also used to receive £50,000 per annum of Big Lottery Funding to provide an Outreach service in the south of the authority area. This funding ceased in 2009/10 but the CAB continued with this service provision during 2010/11 from their reserves.
- 2.3 At its meeting on 27th January, 2010 Cabinet approved continuation of the core funding of £142,796 for each of the financial years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13. At the same time, Cabinet also agreed to continue the £108,000 funding for Money Advice services for 2010/11 only, whilst noting that the Fairer Scotland Funding of £100,000 had also been approved by the Community Planning Partnership Board for 2010/11. Cabinet also noted that the FSF funding for future years would be part of the overall review of FSF arrangements to be carried out during 2010 and agreed that the review process should include Money Advice Service Funding provided through Social Services.
- 2.4 Thereafter, at their meeting on 3rd November, 2010 Cabinet received and considered a report on the outcome of the FSF review carried out under the auspices of the Strategic Review of the Revenue Budget – Strand 3. As regards the CAB, Cabinet agreed to approve both the Money Advice Service

funding and the FSF funding for 2011/12 at the same levels as for 2010/11, namely £108,000 and £100,000 respectively. Whilst it may obviously have been preferable to have been able to provide the CAB with the certainty of a three year budget in respect of all three elements of EAC funding, as outlined above, the Council, through Cabinet, were unable to do so due to certain external factors which were identified as likely to have a significant impact on the CAB's budget, but the specific effect of which would not be known until some time in 2011/12.

- 2.5 Accordingly, as matters presently stand the Council has determined full funding arrangement for the CAB for 2011/12 which are at the same levels as both 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 2.6 In addition, towards the end of 2010, Housing Services colleagues negotiated and agreed arrangements with the CAB for the provision of a new bespoke independent housing information and advice service for all EAC residents, regardless of status or tenure, at an additional cost of approximately £36,000 per annum to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account.
- 2.7 Further, on 1st December, 2010 Cabinet approved the budget consultation report which both identified savings to be achieved as management actions through the redesign of existing Income Maximisation and Financial Inclusion services currently situated within both Housing and Social Services (budget proposals 20a and 21a refer) and provided £150,000 in additional investment to support the redesign of these services across the Council in order to consolidate and co-ordinate activity and deliver maximum impact. It is anticipated that this will lead to a single service unit within the Council working in close partnership with other agencies, including the CAB, in a mutually complementary and co-ordinated manner.
- 2.8 The CAB and other partner agencies will be fully involved in this review process and any consequent agreed changes to their current service arrangements will be reflected in the Service Level Agreement for 2011/12 and in future years as appropriate.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 In the meantime, the CAB, having been advised of the agreed EAC funding for 2011/12, subsequently put forward proposals for the services to be provided by them during 2011/12. These are set out in Appendix A to this report and were approved by CAB's Board of Directors at their formal meeting on 1st December, 2010. Subject to Cabinet approval, it is intended to incorporate the agreed arrangements into a formal Service Level Agreement between the Council and the East Ayrshire CAB which will be in effect for 2011/12 but which will obviously require to be reviewed in light of future funding decisions as outlined above.
- 3.2 In essence, as can be seen from Appendix A in light of the approved funding for 2011/12, including the additional amount for the new Independent Housing Advice Service, the CAB have been able to put forward a package which

pretty much maintains current levels of service provision for 2011/12, including continuation of the Outreach service in the south of the area previously funded through Big Lottery monies, albeit with reduced levels of home visits. The facility will still remain for CAB staff to make home visits where necessary, but these will now be by exception rather than routine. The CAB will be asked to continue to record performance information, including levels of uptake at the open door sessions specified in Appendix 2 within Appendix A, to enable the Council and the CAB to review on an ongoing basis to ensure this aspect of their service provision continues to represent the best match with the identified needs of all communities in East Ayrshire.

- 3.3 Against this background, Cabinet is asked to consider and agree the terms of Appendix A to this report to form the basis of a formal Service Level Agreement between the Council and the East Ayrshire CAB for 2011/12.

4 COMMUNITY PLAN/POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The work of the CAB in East Ayrshire reflects the ongoing commitment of both national and local government in Scotland to addressing the social economic disparities that continue to exist between our most deprived communities and the rest of the country.
- 4.2 Through the provision of an independent and free advice and, where appropriate, representation service to all East Ayrshire residents the CAB contributes, directly and indirectly, (as an employer) to the Community Planning themes of Improving Health and Well-Being, Delivering Community Regeneration and Promoting Community Learning.

5 FINANCIAL/HUMAN RESOURCES/RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:-
- (i) agrees the terms of Appendix A to this report as the basis for a formal Service Level Agreement with the CAB for 2011/12;
 - (ii) note that a report on the review of income maximisation and financial inclusion services within the Council will be brought to a future meeting of Cabinet in due course;
 - (iii) note that further decisions will require to be made in respect of future year's funding of the CAB as part of the budget setting process for 2012/13;

- (iv) note that the proposed SLA for 2011/12 will require to be adapted for future years to take account of the future funding decisions referred to at above; and
- (v) otherwise to note the contents of this report.

Alex McPhee
Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Support
AMcP/DM/SM

1st March, 2011

Background Papers

1. Report to Cabinet of 27th January, 2010 – East Ayrshire Citizen’s Advice Bureau - Funding Appraisal Report (Agenda Item 4)
2. Report to Cabinet of 3rd November, 2010 – SRRB2 – Strand 3 FSF Review (Agenda Item 2E)

For further information on this report, please contact David Mitchell, Head of Legal Procurement & Regulatory Services (Tel. No. 01563 576061).

Implementation Officer: David Mitchell

East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau provides information, advice practical assistance and representation on a range of topics. The four main areas of work are around benefits, debt, employment and housing.

Advice is likely to comprise some or all of the following components

- Listening to clients
- Diagnosing the problem
- Giving information
- Advising on the options available
- Taking action on behalf of clients
- Negotiating on behalf of clients
- Representing clients' cases at tribunals and courts
- Referrals where appropriate
- Enabling individuals to take informed action on their own behalf

These activities can be broken down into three types of intervention

Type I – Active Information, Signposting and Explanation

This work refers to activities such as providing accurate information wither orally or in writing, sign-posting or referring the user to other available resources or services, and the explanation of technical terms or clarification of documents and letters e.g. council tax benefit notice, default notice etc.

Type II – Casework

Initially this work will include:

- A diagnostic interview where the problem and all relevant issues are identified
- Establishing if the client has a case that can be pursued

Once it has been established that the client has a case that can be pursued activities may include

- Setting out the client's options or courses of action
- Providing practical aid with letters or forms
- Negotiating with third parties on behalf of the client
- Researching information and accessing second tier support to build the client's case

Type III – Representation and Mediation

This work includes a range of further actions arising form Type II casework.

The principal activities may include:

- Advocacy and representation – where the adviser may prepare a case for the client and represent or speak on their behalf at tribunal or court
- Mediation- where the adviser may act on behalf of the client by seeking to mediate between the client and a third party

Over 60% of the work of East Ayrshire CAB is casework (Type II) and representation (Type III) which is in - depth and time consuming.

The front line advisers are trained volunteers supported by paid staff. The casework and representation is provided by paid specialist workers.

The CAB also has access to second tier support services e.g. CPAG – for complex benefits issues. Shelter and Scottish Homes Advisory Service (SHAS) on housing issues MATRICS on money advice and Law at Work for employment cases. The CAB also has access to free representation, for clients, from devil advocates for employment tribunals and appeals to social security commissioners.

Services 2011 - 2012

East Ayrshire CAB board has considered the funding proposals for 2011 – 2012. A stand still budget, rent increase and loss of funding from other sources will result in a reduced service to that currently being provided. However, the additional funding to provide Type II and Type III housing advice will mitigate against significant cuts in service.

With prudent financial management and greater staff flexibility the board have agreed (staff co-operation is anticipated):

- There will be no staff redundancies during the above period
- The offices in Kilmarnock and Cumnock will continue to provide an open door service (see appendix 1)
- Outreach services will be provided from at least 6 locations on a weekly basis (appendix 2)
- An *out of hours* service will continue to operate from Kilmarnock office on alternate Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings
- Casework and representation will continue to be provided
- Additional support will be provided to the most vulnerable when required
- Home visits will only be provided in exceptional circumstances
- Telephone advice service 2 days each week

(see appendix 3 for an overview of the services)

EAST AYRSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU PROPOSED OPENING HOURS FROM APRIL 2011



Kilmarnock Office 3 John Dickie Street

Open Door Service

Monday	10am – 2pm	
Tuesday	10am – 3pm	
Wednesday	Appointments only	
Thursday	10am – 3pm	5.30pm – 8pm 1 st and 3 rd Thursday
*Friday	10am – 3pm	
Saturday	10am – 1pm	2 nd and 4 th Saturday

Closed last Friday of every month (to allow staff to progress casework)

Appointment Service

Monday	9.15am -10am & 2.30pm – 5pm
Tuesday & Thursday	9.15am – 10 am & 3.30pm – 5pm
**Wednesdays	9.30am – 3.30pm
Friday	9.15am – 10.am

**reduced appointments on last Wednesday of month (team meetings and training)

Telephone Advice 01563 544744

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10am – 3.pm

Cumnock Office 77A Townhead Street

Open Door Service

Tuesday	10am – 2pm
Thursday	10am -2pm
*Friday	10am -2pm

* 1st and 3rd Friday only

Appointments

Monday	9.30 am – 3.30pm
Wednesday	9.30am – 3.30pm
Thursday	2.30pm – 5pm

**EAST AYRSHRIE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU
PROPOSED OUTREACH SERVICE**



Open Door Service

Auchinleck Health Centre	Thursday 9.30am -11.30am
Dalmellington Area Centre	Tuesday 10.30am – 3.30pm
*Dalrymple Community Centre	1 st and 3 rd Friday 10.30am – 12.30pm
Drongan Community Centre	Friday 10am – 1pm
Muirkirk Community Library	Thursday 10am – 12.30pm
New Cumnock Community Centre	Wednesday 10am – 12.30pm
Patna Community Centre	Tuesday 10am – 12.30pm

* to be reviewed

No surgeries on last week of month

Appointments also available for money advice and complex cases during the above hours



Benefits Advice - All benefits and tax credits (Type I,II and III)

Checks on benefit entitlement
Explanation of forms
Better off calculations
Form filling
Negotiating on behalf of client
Reviews and appeals

Money Advice (Type I, II and III)

Budgeting
Income maximisation
Preparing financial statements
Negotiating and rescheduling repayments
All debt options offered including bankruptcy, trust deeds, voluntary repayments and token offers
Challenging liability for debt

Employment (Type I and Type II)

Unfair dismissal
Grievance and disciplinary procedures
Wages
Contracts of Employment
Holidays and holiday pay
Health & Safety issues

Housing Advice (Type I,II and III) Project with Housing Services

Rent arrears
Mortgage re-possession
Private tenancies
Repairs
Housing benefit
Private landlords
Illegal Eviction
Mortgage to Rent and Mortgage to Shared Equity
Homeowners Rescue Schemes
Homelessness
Housing Benefit
Court representation

Other Areas of Advice (Type I & II)

Child Support
Consumer Issues
Insurance problems
Council tax
Education and student loans and bursaries
Immigration and nationality issues
Legal issues including legal aid
Relationship /Family issues including divorce, separation, contact with children, death and bereavement