

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 22 FEBRUARY 2001**

#### **EAST AYRSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

##### **Report by Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** To provide an update on the activities of the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau and to request approval of funding for the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau for 2001/02 in accordance with the current partnership agreement.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** At its meeting on 23 February 1998 the Policy and Resources Committee adopted a partnership agreement between the council and the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau and agreed a four year funding package covering the financial years 1998/99 – 2001/02. In this the final year of the funding package the agreed sum of £120,000 has been identified as the council's contribution for financial year 2001/02.

### **3.0 PROGRESS**

- 3.1** The citizens Advice Bureau/East Ayrshire Council Concordat Group, which consists of nominated link officers from each department within the council have continued to perform a co-ordinating and strategic role in liaising with the Citizens Advice Bureau and in monitoring and evaluating the bureau's role in providing an independent information and advice service within East Ayrshire.
- 3.2** The concordat group at their meeting held on 5 September 2000 considered the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau's annual report and financial report for the year ended 31 March 2000 and agreed, in terms of the annual review process, as outlined in the partnership agreement between the council and the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau, that satisfactory progress had been made by the Bureau in respect of both past performance and proposals for improvement in the forthcoming year.
- 3.3** Recent service improvements by the Citizens Advice Bureau include:- an extension of the opening hours of their Cumnock Office from 10.30 am - 3.30 pm three days per week; the provision of an Outreach Co-ordinator to promote the services of the Citizen's Advice Bureau in the coalfield area of the authority and the provision of a new information technology package to facilitate such outreach work (separately funded by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and European Local Social Capital); proposals to pilot further outreach work in Stewarton and Crosshouse in May 2001 (following filling of existing vacancy) on the basis of a half day per week in each town, to be reviewed dependant upon uptake; and the ongoing recruitment and training of new volunteers in both the Kilmarnock and Cumnock areas to supplement the 40 existing trained volunteers.

#### **4 FUTURE LIAISON/MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

**4.1** It is suggested that the concordat group continue to fulfil a liaison/monitoring role with the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau. However, following the transfer of responsibility for local offices and the Information and Advice Services from Corporate Services to Community Services at the last restructuring, it is proposed that lead responsibility for the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau transfer to the Director of Community Services.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The development of an independent, accessible, and high quality information, advice, advocacy and campaigning service to all residents of East Ayrshire accords with the council's Social Inclusion and Decentralisation policies.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** The proposals contained within this report are consistent with the partnership agreement, the content of which has previously been considered by Legal services.

#### **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** In the financial year 2001/02 the cost to East Ayrshire Council will be £120,000 which can be met from within existing budgets.

#### **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**8.1** The committee are requested:-

- (a) To agree that a contribution of £120,000 (to be paid in two instalments) should be made to the East Ayrshire's Citizens Advice Bureau as the council's contribution for financial year 2001/02 in accordance with the four year funding path;
- (b) Agree that lead officer responsibility for the East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau be transferred to the Director of Community Services;
- (c) To note that this is the final year of the partnership agreement and that for financial year 2002/03 and beyond the council will require to consider appropriate funding for East Ayrshire Citizen's Advice bureau; and
- (d) Otherwise to note the contents of the report.

Fiona Lees

**Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources**

8 February 2001

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1.** Minutes of meeting of the Citizens Advice Bureau/East Ayrshire Council Concordat Group held on 5 September 2000.
- 2.** East Ayrshire Citizens Advice bureau Annual Report 1999/2000.
- 3.** East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau Directors report and financial statements for the period ended 31 March 2000.

Any person wishing to inspect the above background papers or wishing further information on this report should contact Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive. Tel. No. 01563 576019.

**AGENDA**