

**REPORT TO: POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 26 MAY 2004**

**SUBJECT: MORAY CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT)**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1. Reason for Report**

1.1 To report the outcome of discussions with Moray CAB with regard to continuing Council support for this service.

**2. Background**

2.1 The Council provides core funding to Moray Citizens Advice Bureau to enable the provision of independent information and advice surgeries. A three-year Service Level Agreement was proposed by the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on the 8 May 2002, with provision for annual update.

2.2 This is the last year of the three year Service Level Agreement, and it will therefore be necessary to negotiate with the CAB during 2004/5, the basis for a further three-year period.

2.3 The CAB continues to deal with a wide range of enquiries, with over 7,000 enquiries per year spread across benefits, consumer enquiries, employment issues, housing issues and miscellaneous enquiries. During the 3-year period, the lottery funding received by the CAB to support a welfare benefits service has come to an end and this area of service activity has therefore had to contract. The core funding from the Council enables the service to be available for three days per week and CAB is therefore dependent on funding from other sources to enable a five-day week service to be provided. The service is currently contracted through The Moray Council to provide a specialist housing and homelessness advice service which is managed through a separate Service Level Agreement. This enables the service to be available over five days, including Saturday mornings.

2.4 The CAB has to operate to national CAB standards, and this includes seeking customer feedback. As part of the monitoring process the Council has sight of the customer feedback responses and these are very positive in respect of the quality of service provided. A practical limitation facing the CAB relates to the number of volunteers they are able to recruit, at present they are experiencing some difficulty in recruiting and sustaining sufficient volunteers and while this is not as yet impacting on services, it is an issue of concern to the CAB manager.

**3. Proposals**

- 3.1 Discussions have taken place with the CAB with regard to the current Service Level Agreement and it has been concluded that the SLA does not require any modification for this third and final year. With regard to funding levels, it is proposed that 2.5% inflationary allowance be made to assist CAB in reaching some of the additional employee costs that they have faced during the last 12 months, including salary uplifts, increased insurance contributions and pension contributions and increased costs for disclosure fees etc.
- 3.2 It is also proposed that discussions take place with the CAB during 2004/5 with the aim of reviewing and revising the current Service Level Agreement to bring forward a new SLA to commence from 1 April 2005.

#### **4. Consultations**

- 4.1 Consultations have taken place between the CAB Manager and the Contracts Officer in the Community Services Department. The proposals of this report are agreed by all parties.
- 4.2 The Chief Financial Officer has been consulted on the financial aspect of this report and agrees with the contents.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The CAB is administered by the Community Services Department and the Budget is held by the Policy and Resources Committee. The existing Budget provision is £53,000 and an additional allocation of £1,325 will be required if Members approve the proposed increase.

#### **6. Staffing & Environmental & Sustainability Implications**

- 6.1 None directly associated with this report.

#### **7. Corporate Plan**

- 7.1 Supporting the Moray CAB is in line with the working principles section of the Corporate Plan (e.g. open and accountable service provision) and supports the principles of partnership working.

#### **8. Recommendations**

##### **8.1 It is recommended that Policy and Resources Committee:-**

- (i) **Approves Moray CAB Service Level Agreement budget for 2004/5 of £54,325;**

- (ii) Agrees that a new 3 year Service Level Agreement be negotiated with CAB and submitted to a future Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.**

Author of Report: Mike Martin, Director of Community Services

Background Papers: MDM/LMO/Cttee/P&R04

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