

This Report will be made public on 15 November 2022



Report Number **C/22/58**

To: Cabinet
Date: 23 November 2022
Status: Non-Key Decision
Responsible Officer: Ewan Green, Director of Place
Jyotsna Leney, Health, Wellbeing & Partnerships
Senior Specialist
Cabinet Member: Cllr Jennifer Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for
Communities, Lifeline, Area Officers & Street
Homeless

SUBJECT: **NEW THREE-YEAR GRANT AGREEMENT (2023 -2026)
FOR SHEPWAY CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

SUMMARY: The Council has historically provided grant funding to the Shepway Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) subject to formal three-year Grant Agreement (GAs). In recent years the funding was renewed on a yearly basis due to the global pandemic in 21 /22 and ongoing recovery in 22/23. It was agreed that a more detailed review of the work of the CAB would be carried out during 22/23 for future funding and to inform corporate budget development for future years. This report reviews the work of CAB and recommends that funding is continued for a further three years.

REASON FOR RECOMENDATION:

Cabinet agreement is required due to the value of the three-year agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/22/58.
2. To agree to keep funding levels for the CAB at present levels as set out in section 3.2 and that a new three-year grant agreement be entered into with the CAB to 2026 commencing 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council awards grants to key organisations (outside of ward grants and other community grants) which deliver services to support corporate objectives, particularly those focussed on supporting disadvantaged residents.

1.2 One of these organisations is the Shepway Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), registered name but currently operating as Citizens Advice Shepway. Their three-year grant agreement (GA) expired on 31st March 2021 (ref: Cabinet Reports: C/17/98 and C/17/84 respectively). They have received funding on a yearly basis since and have now requested that their grant be continued into future years.

1.3 In terms of the organisation CAB are:

- A member of Citizens Advice national
- Accredited via the Advice Quality Standard, Specialist Quality Mark and Financial Conduct Authority.
- Operates as a small Citizens Advice with a total of 10 staff/7FTE & 6 Volunteers
- CAB advise and assist on a range of issues delivering services via phone, email and face to face, work to help people secure their rights and work with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community.

1.4 The key services provided are:

Core/generalist

- Paid Supervisor & Volunteers
- Wide range of enquiry areas – Benefits, Debt, Employment, Housing, Legal and Family issues.

Specialist Housing Project

- Court representation at Canterbury and Thanet Courts on possession days
- Specialist Housing advice relating to homelessness, possession and eviction

Money Matters

- Debt Advice
- Money Management

CAB have also supported FHDC in delivering support during the pandemic through the receipt of Covid funds and supporting vulnerable clients as appropriate. This has included the Covid Winter grant funds.

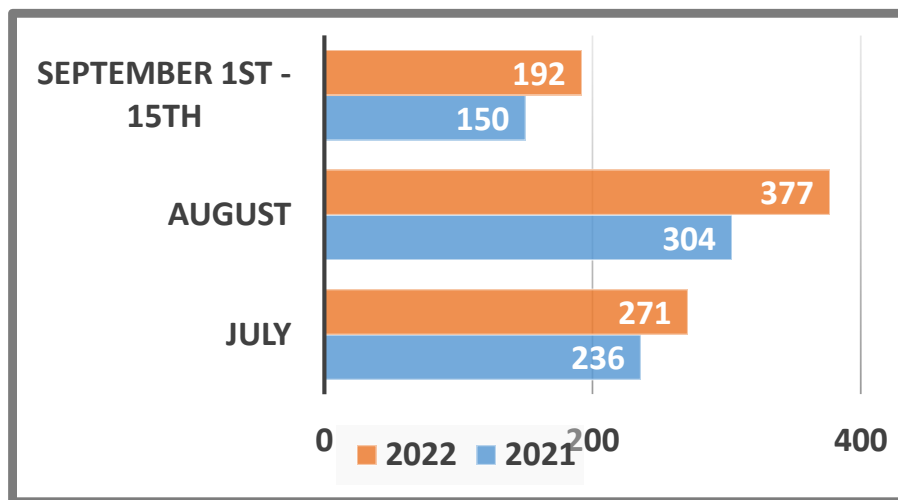
1.5 This report sets out further background to the work of our local CAB and the value they bring to the District and recommends that funding is renewed for a further three years.

2. Analysis of activity

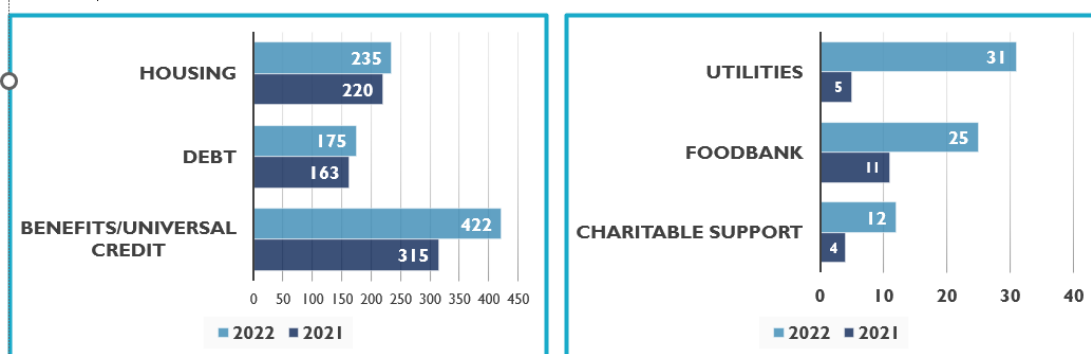
2.1 The last full financial years' worth of performance information is shown in

Appendix 1 where a breakdown is provided of types of enquiries dealt with 2625 clients were provided with information, advice and assistance on 4258 different issues. 264 homelessness preventions were made against a target of 250. This included resolving housing benefit/Universal Credit housing element issues, resolving rent and service charge issues and dealing with mortgage arrears amongst other issues. Additional information is set out in Appendix 1.

- 2.2 In some recent analysis CAB report that traditionally in July and August demand lessens. Comparisons between 2021 and 2022 clearly show a significant increase in demand for services overall and this is a combination of post Covid recovery and the current Cost of Living Crisis.



- 2.3 CAB are seeing greater demand and more complex areas due to the cost of living crisis. Increases in the enquiry areas which act as indicators to the issues currently being faced are shown below. Latest Comparison between April to August 2021 and 2022 show sizeable increases in the categories below:



- 2.4 An impact report at Appendix 2 lists some examples of the value of the service to society with the following case study cited from a Folkestone debt client:

I can honestly say I was at a point where I thought I couldn't deal with it any more. I went around in circles, struggling and I'm a capable individual. I got in contact with CAB Folkestone and spoke to the debt advisor, ranted about everything for an hour and explained the situation.

I can honestly say the guidance made me feel so much relief. I gave them the figures, was at point of losing my flat and losing my job and with a new born baby due in the next few weeks. I honestly thought it wasn't possible and there was no way through this minefield. Citizens advice are absolutely unrecognized for the awesome work they do. I can honestly say it's been a pleasure and a relief to finally be able to move forward with a clean slate and get back everything I thought was lost.

- 2.5 CAB hold a host of data on client profile, age ranges and priority areas to address. They have suffered with loss of volunteers and there is a need for volunteers that specialise in specific areas of work, however these are better as employed roles given the complexity of issues that are involved particularly around legal cases in court.

3. Proposed Funding for 2023-26

- 3.1 The current level of funding is set out below:

£67,800 per year (£57,000 General Fund, £10,800 HRA) and currently the base budget for 23-24 includes both these amounts.

- 3.2 It is therefore proposed that the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) remain funded at current levels for a three-year term to 2026 and that a new three year Grant agreement be entered into with the CAB commencing 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026.

- 3.3 The CAB may also have a role to deliver services and support linked to funding programmes such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Officers will work with the CAB to seek to source additional, external funding to top up the grant provided by the Council.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Communities adversely affected with increases in hardship and less rich cultural offers	Medium	Medium	CAB is funded to adequate levels. Support CAB to source additional resources.

CAB receiving grant support does not achieve outcomes	Medium	Low	Updates on progress are reported to the Council in order that this can be monitored and issues identified.
CAB threatened with closure	High	Low to Medium	To ensure top up funding and other ways to reduce costs are explored

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly out of the supply of the grant funding by the Council on the basis that the CAB enters into a Grant Agreement with the Council.

5.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)

I confirm that the current base budget for Citizens Advice Bureau totals £67,800 (across GF and HRA).

5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

Citizens Advice Bureau account differing needs of people, including those with different protected characteristics. The service by its very nature is protecting the most vulnerable in society.

5.4 Climate Change Implications (JL)

There are some positive benefits in terms of ensuring clients are supported in such a way that their homes are heated as efficiently as possible and that support e.g. for home appliances can look at most energy efficient options. However this report is more about a service provided by a 3rd party and therefore there are no direct impacts on FHDC.

6.0 CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Citizens Advice Bureau Performance Report

Appendix 2 Citizens Advice Bureau Impact Report