

South Hams Citizens Advice Bureau Monitoring

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny**
Date: **27th August 2015**
Title: **South Hams CAB Monitoring**
Portfolio Area: **Customer Services**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **Overview and Scrutiny**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **Executive**
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision)

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Recommendations:

- (1) To note the content of this report and the performance of SHCAB in relation to the agreed SLA's;
- (2) To recommend to Executive that the existing SLA be renewed for a further 12 months on existing terms in accordance with clause 15.2 of the SLA
- (3) To identify panel members to assist with a structured long term review of the CAB partnership to report back to Scrutiny

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1. Executive summary

On 9th July 2015 members received a report on the work of the South Hams Citizens Advice Bureau. This report set out the background to activity in the District and established the scope, quantity and outcomes of the work (minute O&S 17/15).

When considering the report the Panel felt that it required additional information to be able to reach a view in respect of future options for the renewal of the SLA. In particular, Members wished to see further financial information.

This item establishes further detail and allows members opportunity to consider and advise on future options including retention of the grant (potentially with amendments), seeking an alternative provider or bringing the work in house. The report notes that the SLA establishes a time limited need to consider the current position and in light of this it is recommended that the SLA be renewed for a year to allow detailed review to take place.

2. Background

Details of the operation of South Hams CAB were set out in the 9th July item. Members are referred to this item as the extensive background details are not repeated in this current item unless relevant to specific analysis of options. Members are also referred to the CAB partnership background and two Service Level Agreements which are appended

- Appendix A. 2013 CAB Partnership Principles
- Appendix B. 2013- 2016. Service Level Agreement
- Appendix C. Outreach Service Level Agreement (Annual renewal)

Member's attention is drawn to clause 15.2 of the main SLA which establishes the following.

15.2 At least 6 months before the expiry of the three year term the Council may propose by notice in writing that the agreement be extended for a period of up to 2 years on the same terms (subject to any alterations that either party may agree). If SHCAB accept such proposals this agreement shall be extended for the agreed period.

Given the need to have made a decision on this matter by the end of September 2015 this issue is addressed in this item

3. What outcomes does the partnership deliver for South Hams Residents and SHDC?

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As reported previously CAB provides a support service for all residents of the South Hams. This can be as a walk in service, phone or e-mail or via the outreach work and is undertaken without constraint on who can be supported and in what circumstances. The July report and presentation highlighted the range and depth of the issues covered by the advisory service and this is supplemented by Appendix D which gives further detailed analysis of CAB service delivery. This appendix sets out extensive background and identifies, in particular, the value of the service, the significant value of volunteering and makes suggestions for looking forward.

What is difficult to separate out is the precise benefit to SHDC in terms of service delivery from the general assistance to residents. Members might wish to consider the following in considering how effective CAB is in delivering directly for SHDC

- Covering SHDC service provision. SHDC has an obligation to provide advice in relation to a wide range of legal issues. A significant number are dealt with by CAB through the agreement and these are summarised within Appendix D.
- General Intervention. Over and above direct service delivery on behalf of SHDC the issue of general support needs to be considered. Distressed or vulnerable families and individuals will often see SHDC as their helper of final resort – and approach the council for advice. Sometimes this is with problems directly within Council responsibility (i.e. housing advice linked to debt management) – at other times with issues not directly related to the Council (i.e. relationship issues). Commonly the issues are complex and inter-related with debt, housing and family issues overlapping. Whilst SHDC could attempt to extract issues specific to the Council to date it has been recognised that CAB is better placed to provide an intervention service which firstly identifies the range of the problems and then seeks a rounded series of interventions to address all the issues. It would be difficult for the Council to undertake this rounded work given that council staff would need to
 - a. Interview the individual and identify the range of issues
 - b. Intervene directly on Council specific matters
 - c. Signpost other matters to a wide range of other advisors (in the potential absence of CAB if it was no longer being funded).

It should also be noted that the emerging work on *Our Plan* has identified the aim of supporting vibrant towns and villages as the key vision. It could be considered that supporting third parties who directly support the vulnerable or needy contributes to the Our Plan aim to make a positive contribution to equality, fairness and spiritual wellbeing of communities.

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Continued working with CAB will also underpin the following action from the Annual Delivery Plan

Work with Devon County Council, Districts, statutory agencies and voluntary sector partners to understand and mitigate the impact of welfare reform changes on local people and build financial resilience.

Scrutiny Panel will also need to be mindful of the following factors which are likely to impinge on the service in the future.

Universal Credit. Universal Credit, the new system aimed to simplify the benefit process and roll up all existing individual benefits in one claim, is due to be rolled out for single people in South Hams, in November 2015. It is anticipated that there will be customers who struggle to make their claims online and will therefore need the assistance of the Local Authority to support vulnerable customers. It is fully recognised that SHDC will have to work with our partners in the voluntary sector to share the burden and ensure people are not allowed to slip through the net. This not only will require resourcing in the local authority, for which there may be funding available from the Department of Work & Pensions, but also with advice agencies such as the CAB.

Money Advice Contract. The Local Discretionary Welfare Support Fund was funded for an additional year and there are no indications that further funding will be available from central government and Devon County from April 2016. This was funding that replaced the crisis loan and community care grant service formerly provided by the Department of Work and Pensions. Some of this money (£42k across South Hams & West Devon) has been spent on increasing people's financial resilience through a Money Advice service. Although the CAB had formerly done this work (under an additional contract) it was necessary to tender for this work for the final 12 months and the service, provided by Homemaker will cease in June 2016. There will need to be some consideration, when we are informed of the funding decision by central government, as to whether Members wish to continue funding this type of service

4. What does it cost?

Financial support to South Hams CAB from SHDC in 2014/15 totalled £76,514, broken down as follows:

£41,867 in respect of Core Services
£10,000 for the Outreach Project
£24,647 for the Money Advice Project (funded via external grant)

Financial support to the CAB for 2015/16 (and subject to this report) totals £51,867, broken down as follows:

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£41,867 in respect of Core Services SLA
£10,000 for the Outreach Project SLA

South Hams CAB is a registered charity. The most recent annual accounts are still awaiting adoption but are presented at Appendix E.

5. What are the options?

Over a number of years the Council has identified the need, and benefit, of being able to support universal advice for South Hams residents – and has utilised the comprehensive approach of CAB to achieve this. If Scrutiny Panel recognises a continued need and justification for continuing work of this nature then it next needs to consider what options for delivery are available. The table below gives a basic summary of key options for consideration.

Option	Details	Financial Implication
Continue SLA as existing	Retain current under measures within SLA. Would allow continuity at time of likely increasing pressure and allow for structured review of SLA	£51,867 pa
Reduce SLA	Would provide direct financial saving. May have disproportionate impact on CAB core funding and structure with risk of increased workload falling back to SHDC. Impacts would be difficult to identify and quantify.	Reduced external expenditure in grant but likely increased internal costs to bolster in house service
Extend SLA	Would create capacity for increased resilience and breadth for CAB with greater ability to pick up anticipated external pressures on behalf of SHDC	Increased external expenditure in grant
Alternative Provision (potential delivery partners identified in region – others could be identified)	<u>South Hams:</u> Dartmouth, Tones, Ivybridge and Kingsbridge Caring <u>Teignbridge:</u> Young Devon Teignbridge Access Group Teign Housing Supported Living Scheme Homeless in Teignbridge Support Assist Teignbridge Age UK <u>Exeter:</u> Age UK Exeter Shelter Young Devon	Unknown Would need soft market test or formal tender exercise to establish base costs. Likely inefficiency if work is dispersed in terms of delivery and monitoring.

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Deliver In House	<p>CAB have a number of posts (staffed by volunteers and paid staff) with the following most obviously applicable to the T18 model</p> <p>CAB Assessor – Likely T18 level 7 -8 CAB advisors – Likely T18 level 6.</p>	<p>Level 7 -8 salary range £17,372 - £22,937</p> <p>Level 6 salary range £23,698 - £27, 123</p> <p>Both would have usual on costs to be added.</p>
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6. Summary and conclusions

South Hams CAB delivers a wide ranging service for both SHDC and South Hams residents. The work is complex, bespoke and customer focused requiring careful handling and a broad knowledge. Although based on a core funded staffing it relies on extensive volunteer input (at many levels including face to face complex advice) and thus provides significant added value to the SHDC input.

The current SLA arrangement are due for review – with a decision to be made imminently if SHDC wishes to renew the service on current terms. Following the analysis in this report the officer view is that the arrangement provides clear and tangible benefits for SHDC on a good value basis. Nevertheless there is scope to review this (against a shifting national backdrop of decreased funding and increased pressures) and the recommendation is therefore to renew current arrangements for a further 12 months to retain continuity of service and allow members an opportunity to input to a detailed review.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Localism Act 2011 (Section 1 – Powers of General Competence)
Financial	Y	Support to renewing the current SLA for a further 12 months would need to be built into the forthcoming budget setting.
Risk	Y	<p>A failure to implement the SLA in an effective manner would carry the following key risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective use of SHDC funds • Poor quality service to those in need of support • Inequality of delivery across the District

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knock on resource pressures direct to SHDC with vulnerable individuals and families coming direct to SHDC <p>These risks are mitigated by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLA setting out clear requirements • Regular officer liaison • Scrutiny and annual reporting to Members
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	The services provided by SHCAB promote equal opportunities and help prevent discrimination in our communities.
Safeguarding	Y	CAB operate to adopted Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policies
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	The work of CAB provides advice and volunteering opportunities which reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	CAB has close links to, and understanding of, health sector and consideration of health implications is integral to advice where appropriate
Other implications		None identified

Supporting Information - Appendices:

Appendix A – Partnership Principles
 Appendix B – CAB SLA 2013/2016
 Appendix C – Outreach SLA
 Appendix D – CAB Supporting Details
 Appendix E – CAB Draft Accounts 2014/15

Background Papers: None

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed	Yes
SLT Rep briefed	Yes
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	Yes
Data protection issues considered	Yes
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Committee/Scrutiny)	No