

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills,
Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	Councillor Mrs S Woolley, Executive Councillor for NHS Liaison and Community Engagement
Date:	Between 16 March and 23 March 2018
Subject:	Citizens Advice Lincolnshire
Decision Reference:	I
Key decision?	No

Summary:

Historically, Citizens Advice Services in Lincolnshire have been supported through a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) which enables Citizens Advice Lincolnshire to deliver free, confidential and impartial advice and assistance through the network of local Citizens Advice Offices in the county. This includes a 'core service' across a broad range of advice areas including debt and money, benefits, housing and employment, consumer, relationships and family, discrimination, law and rights, tax and education and an 'Income Maximisation Service' providing intensive support to enable people to claim all of the benefits they are entitled to.

The current one year Grant Funding Agreement provided £616,135 to enable the delivery of this support in 2017/18 with no commitment to further funding beyond 31 March 2018.

A service review involving consideration of the benefits of the two elements of the existing funding agreement has been undertaken. This review identified that as a result of already existing specialist support available within communities from a wide range of both statutory, community and voluntary organisations; there should be a shift in focus to concentrate on the broader and more inclusive range of advice being available to assist citizens through the core service including appropriate advice about their finances. Rather than renewing funding for the Income Maximisation project, greater value within available resources would be obtained by funding the generic 'core service' with an additional amount being made available to those requiring additional support specifically with issues relating to Universal Credit.

Therefore, a single year amount of £278,000 has been allocated from contingency to continue to fund Citizens Advice Lincolnshire for 'core service' for 2018/2019 with a further one off £53,000 identified from within the service area to enable the provision of advice and support in areas around welfare reform and specifically Universal Credit. Both amounts will be incorporated within a new Grant Funding Agreement that will be drawn up.

Executive Councillor approval is therefore sought for the award of grant funding to Citizens Advice Lincolnshire and to delegate the conclusion of legal documentation and the decision to enter into the Grant Funding Agreement to the Executive Director for Environment and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Councillor.

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive Councillor:

- 1) approves the award of grant funding to Citizens Advice Lincolnshire for 2018/2019 of £278,000 for core services plus £53,000 for additional support relating to welfare reform including Universal Credit
- 2) delegates the conclusion of legal documentation and the decision to enter into the Grant Funding Agreement to the Executive Director for Environment and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for NHS Liaison and Community Engagement.

Alternatives Considered:

- 1) To offer the grant funding to alternative providers. Research indicates that other providers do not have the ability, resources or facilities to provide the same range of holistic support across the county at this time.
- 2) Providing no funding for Citizens Advice including for core services. Whilst there are other organisations supporting particular demographics e.g. age, re-offenders etc. with advice, there is no other single organisation in Lincolnshire that supports the number of individuals or that address the range of advice that Citizens Advice services deliver. The core services provided by Citizens Advice in Lincolnshire contribute to outcomes sought by the County Council which would be lost as would additional analysis of the wider social and economic trends through policy research and added value from local, regional and national partnerships and the infrastructure provided through the national Citizens Advice organisation.
- 3) To fund the Income Maximisation Project for 2018/19

This would continue intensive support to categories of individuals to maximise their income from benefits. However, the Council has a number of competing demands on its budgets such that it must consider whether it is appropriate to fund core services and the more intense support provided by the income maximisation project. The core service already provides support to individuals to manage their finances of which benefits advice is a part. Other organisations working with particular groups of individuals such as older people or people with a disability provide advice on welfare benefits. The Council's proposal would see

£53,000 funding being given to ensure that Citizens Advice can supplement their core service with a specific offering county-wide supporting people to navigate the transition to Universal Credit.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To ensure continuation of the free, confidential, impartial and quality assured advice delivered through Citizens Advice Lincolnshire core service.

The services provided by Citizens Advice in Lincolnshire contribute to outcomes sought by Lincolnshire County Council. For example, enabling communities to have easier access to services and information, supporting individuals to care for themselves and develop a stronger sense of self, built on improved self-efficacy, confidence and self-esteem.

In addition, through their networks, Citizens Advice provides valuable connections and insight into the problems faced by people and communities in Lincolnshire with analysis of the wider social and economic trends through policy research.

Furthermore, the local, regional and national partnerships they participate in and the infrastructure provided through the national Citizens Advice organisation add value to the services that are delivered.

Additional funding will allow the Core Service which already includes welfare benefits advice to be supplemented by specific advice to support people through the transition to Universal Credit

1. Background

At its meeting on 4 January 2017 the Executive received a Report proposing a two year grant agreement for Citizens Advice Lincolnshire for the amount of £684,594 in each of the two financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

At its meeting the Executive expressed concern at the level of funding and the two year commitment given the budgetary pressures facing the Council. They approved a one year grant agreement at the proposed level less 10% and called for a review of future funding.

Historically, Citizens Advice Services in Lincolnshire have been supported through a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) which enables Citizens Advice Lincolnshire to deliver free, confidential and impartial advice and assistance through the network of local Citizens Advice Offices in the county, from a trusted source. This includes (i) a core service across a broad range of advice areas including debt and money, benefits, housing and employment, consumer, relationships and family, discrimination, law and rights, tax and education and (ii) an 'Income Maximisation Service' providing intensive support to enable people to claim all of the benefits they are entitled to.

In addition, through their networks, Citizens Advice provides valuable connections and insight into the problems faced by people and communities in Lincolnshire with analysis of the wider social and economic trends through policy research. Their delivery of free, holistic advice and countywide coverage places them in the unique position of providing a comprehensive advice service across the whole of Lincolnshire. These factors make Citizens Advice Lincolnshire the only organisation of choice for grant funding a county wide advice service by Lincolnshire County Council. Furthermore, the local, regional and national partnerships they participate in and the infrastructure provided through the national Citizens Advice organisation add value to the services that are delivered.

The Citizens Advice organisations in Lincolnshire are non-profit making registered charities funded by grants secured from numerous sources. They are also financially supported by their local District Councils. Lincolnshire County Council core service funding enables the sustainability of the service and enables Citizens Advice to secure other local and national funding for projects and services to further support residents in the county, bringing additional value.

The services provided by Citizens Advice in Lincolnshire contribute to outcomes sought by Lincolnshire County Council. For example, enabling communities to have easier access to services and information, supporting individuals to care for themselves and develop a stronger sense of self, built on improved self-efficacy, confidence and self-esteem.

The one year Grant Funding Agreement approved by Executive in January 2017 has provided funding of £277,957 for the core service and £338,178 for the Income Maximisation Project making £616,135 in total with the aim of:

- Providing information and advice to the people of Lincolnshire in a timely manner and as efficiently as possible
- Raising awareness of support services which may be accessible to recipients
- Ensuring the service is accessible to all
- Ensuring advice given is quality assured, in accordance with the requirements of the national Citizens Advice organisation
- Ensuring advice is based on need and provided by telephone, email, webchat and, where necessary or appropriate, on a face to face basis
- Relieving the anxiety and financial distress associated with severe debt problems through support by specialised debt caseworkers.

And specifically for the Income Maximisation service:

- Providing intensive support to clients to maximise their income by ensuring they claim all the benefits to which they are entitled through casework, applications, renewal claims, reviews and appeals
- Providing an inclusive and accessible service offering home visits to clients, where appropriate, to ensure that no one is unable to receive the help they require due to their inability to travel or access services

- Increasing the number of people claiming Attendance Allowance (AA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Personal Independence Allowance, Carers Allowance, Pension Credit and Employment Support Allowance (ESA).

In recognition that the current Grant Funding Agreement expires at the end of March 2018, and as required by Executive in January 2017 a review involving consideration of the benefits of the two elements of the existing funding agreement has been undertaken.

As set out earlier in this Report the advantage of Citizen's Advice Lincolnshire as a recipient of local authority funding lies in the wide geographic reach and subject-matter scope of its core services. No other organisation can provide such a county-wide advice service. Added to this is the value of the insight provided into the issues facing Lincolnshire residents and the local regional and national partnerships and infrastructure that the local Citizens Advice can access.

In terms of reaching the greatest number of people in such a way as to support those with the widest range of advice and expertise the Council's priority must be the support of the core service.

In terms of the Income Maximisation Service this is a different kind of service involving more intensive involvement with a more specific group of individuals assisting them to maximise their income from welfare benefits. This service has been looked at again in the light of the following points:-

- The Citizen's Advice core service already includes general advice on managing finances and on welfare benefit entitlement
- A number of other organisations provide more targeted financial, income maximisation and welfare benefits advice to particular groups including:-
 - Age UK (for older people),
 - Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency (for those entitled to benefits such as illness, disability, age),
 - Lincolnshire Community Foundation via the 'MoneyLincs' programme (eligibility criteria apply – for those out of work),
 - Lincolnshire Action Trust (for offenders and those at risk of offending as well as welfare of families and dependents),
 - The Wellbeing Service (short-term support only),
 - P3,
 - The National Money Advice Service (offers help online and over the phone for free).
- If additional welfare benefits support is required to supplement this overall mix of generic and more targeted support then:
 - for the reasons set out above it should be done by supplementing the Citizens Advice core service; and

- should be targeted to a specific issue affecting welfare benefit recipients where the core service of Citizens Advice would benefit from additional capacity.

That specific issue at the present time is the change to Universal Credit where specific support to individuals as part of a generic service would add significant value to the Citizens Advice offer.

This review identified that greater value for the Council's funding would be obtained by funding the generic 'core service' (with an additional amount for generic welfare advice), with a shift towards a more holistic and inclusive advice service, rather than the specific 'Income Maximisation' 'project'. Therefore, it is proposed that a single year amount of £278,000 (allocated from contingency) is used to continue to fund Citizens Advice Lincolnshire for 'core service' only for 2018/2019 with a further one off allocation of £53,000 (identified from within the service area) to enable the provision of advice and support in areas around welfare reform and in particular Universal Credit. Both amounts will be incorporated within a new Grant Funding Agreement that will be drawn up.

A Grant Agreement can legitimately be used in these circumstances as the Council is not procuring a service. The services that Citizens Advice Lincolnshire deliver are delivered under Citizens Advice Lincolnshire's own objects as an organisation. The grant enables the Council to ensure that the organisation is funded to carry on delivering those services and to do so on a scale which supports the Council's own objectives.

Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- * Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- * Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- * Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- * Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- * Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it

* Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process

An Equality Impact Analysis for not funding the Income Maximisation service is attached at Appendix A.

Potential negative impacts are identified principally for the protected characteristic groups of Age, Disability and Marriage and Civil Partnership.

Mitigation is identified in the range of other organisations providing targeted advice to certain groups within Lincolnshire. While none of these supports the number of individuals or address the range of issues that Citizens Advice Service deliver, they do provide support with a specific focus on the needs of specified groups including older people and people with a disability. This includes support with claiming available benefits.

Further mitigation is provided by the Council supplementing its core funding to Citizens Advice to enable them to provide additional support as part of their core service to individuals navigating the effects of welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit.

Overall this is considered to represent a mix of provision that mitigates sufficiently the negative impacts of not funding Citizens Advice to provide the existing Income Maximisation project to enable the Executive Councillor properly to proceed with the recommendations set out in this Report.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision

Consideration has been given to the JSNA and the JHWS and it is noted that the services provided by Citizens Advice contribute to the outcomes sought by the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) through the delivery of information, advice and assistance that reflects the key themes of the JHWS. Regarding the

JSNA, insight into issues and problems in Lincolnshire gained by Citizens Advice together with policy research has the potential to support the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area

This has been taken into account in this instance and the role of Citizens Advice considered. Citizens Advice remit includes advice on neighbourhood disputes, anti-social behaviour in housing and problems with local environment. Citizens Advice works in partnership with some providers of drug and alcohol support services in Lincolnshire and has a role in combating hate crime. Continuation of funding will enable this to carry on.

2. Conclusion

In January 2017 the Executive declined to approve a two year funding agreement with Citizens Advice Lincolnshire in the light of the financial constraints impacting on the Council. Those financial constraints have not gone away.

The Council continues to face future reductions in its government funding with the overall financial funding position affected by uncertainty relating to such fundamental issues as the funding formula, the mechanisms for effecting local retention of business rates and the future funding of adult care including the future of the Better Care Fund.

As has been the case for a number of years now the Council must manage these funding reductions whilst also funding cost increases in relation to its core statutory duties including adult and children's social care and waste disposal. Despite making significant cost savings over the period the Council has used its reserves to balance the budget in each of the last 5 years with the likelihood that that will continue into the foreseeable future. Such reserves are one-off sources of funding which cannot be used indefinitely. The need for the Council to effect savings is as great as ever.

It is in this context that the grant funding to CAB has been reviewed as requested by Executive.

In recognition of the expiration of the existing Grant Funding Agreement in March 2018 and service review undertaken, funding of £278,000 is proposed (identified from contingency) to enable the continuation of grant funding for Citizens Advice 'core service' only for one year . In addition one off funding of £53,000 is proposed from the service area to be used for advice and support for areas around welfare reform.

This is considered to represent an appropriate balance between ensuring continued funding of Citizens Advice as a key county-wide provider within the wider economy of advice and support within Lincolnshire and financial prudence in what is discretionary expenditure by the Council at a time of continued financial constraint as identified by the Executive in January 2017.

Executive Councillor approval is therefore sought for the continued award of grant funding to Citizens Advice Lincolnshire as set out in the Report and to delegate the conclusion of legal documentation and the decision to enter into the Grant Funding Agreement to the Executive Director for Environment and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for NHS Liaison and Community Engagement.

3. Legal Comments:

The Council has the power to provide the funding proposed and may lawfully provide it by way of grant.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive if it is within the budget.

4. Resource Comments:

Accepting the recommendation within this report to award a grant to Citizens Advice Lincolnshire, will incur a one off cost in 2018/19 of £278,000 to support core services and £53,000 to support areas around welfare reform. These costs will be met from the approved contingency budget for 2018/19 and from service earmarked reserves.

5. Consultation

Has The Local Member Been Consulted?

N/A

Has The Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

Scrutiny Comments

The decision will be considered by the [] Scrutiny Committee on [] march 2018 and the comments of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor

Has a Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes

Risks and Impact Analysis

Please see body of report and Appendix A

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Equality Impact Analysis CAL IMAX Service

7. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Executive Report "Citizens Advice Lincolnshire dated 4 January 2017	Democratic Services

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