
To: Leadership Board

On: 25 April 2018

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Provision of Temporary Grant – Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau.

1 Summary

- 1.1 As part of Renfrewshire Council's commitment to supporting local people impacted by poverty, grant funding has been allocated to organisations which provide free advice and information to support local people. Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB) and Renfrewshire Law Centre (RLC) have historically received funding for this purpose.
- 1.2 As reported to the Leadership Board in February 2018, a review of funded advice provision was undertaken during 2017 with a view to a re-commissioning exercise being undertaken during 2017/18. The purpose of the review and re-commissioning exercise is to ensure that the advice and support being funded by the Council is appropriate to the requirements of local people, particularly in light of welfare reform.
- 1.3 On 21 February 2018 the Leadership Board agreed to extend funding to RCAB and RLC for the three months to 30 June 2018, to allow for the completion of a procurement process for advice provision, including the required approval by the Finance, Resources and Customer Service Policy Board.
- 1.4 On 27th February 2018, Renfrewshire Law Centre formally advised Council officers of its intention to close, confirming that the extension of grant funding to 30 June 2018 would not be drawn down. In addition,

the organisation formally withdrew from the procurement process for the provision of external advice services outlined at 1.2.

- 1.5 To maximise provision to those in need of legal advice and support, this paper seeks approval to provide two months of grant funding to RCAB to provide a legal advice service commencing from 1 May 2018 until the new advice contract commences on 1 July 2018. The cost of this is £18,350 which is in line with the current grant arrangement and will be met within existing resources.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- Agree to allocate temporary grant funding to Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau to provide a legal advice service from 1 May 2018 to 30 June 2018 at a cost of £18,350.

3 Re-commissioning of External Advice Services

- 3.1 As reported to the Leadership Board in September 2017 and February 2018, a review of funded advice provision was undertaken during 2017 and an advice re-commissioning exercise commenced in late 2017. The purpose of the review and re-commissioning exercise is to ensure that the advice and support being funded by the Council is appropriate to the requirements of local people, particularly in light of welfare reform. Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau (RCAB) and Renfrewshire Law Centre (RLC) have received grant funding in previous years for this purpose.
- 3.2 On 21 February 2018 the Leadership Board agreed to extend funding to RCAB and RLC for three months to 30 June 2018, to allow for the completion of a procurement process for advice provision including the required approval by the Finance, Resources and Customer Service Policy Board.
- 3.3 On 27 February 2018, Renfrewshire Law Centre formally advised Council officers of its intention to close, confirming that the extension of grant funding to 30 June 2018 would not be drawn down. In addition, the organisation formally withdrew from the procurement process for external advice services. Clients and stakeholders were advised and RLC worked through an exit strategy agreed with the Council to minimise the effect on clients prior to closure.
- 3.4 The Finance, Resources and Customer Service Policy Board on 28 March, subsequently approved the recommendation to award the

contract for legal advice provision to Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau from 1 July 2018.

- 3.5 To maximise provision to those in need of legal advice and support, this paper seeks approval to provide two months of grant funding to RCAB to provide a legal service commencing from 1 May 2018 until the new legal advice contract commences on 1 July 2018. The cost of this is £18,350 which is in line with the current grant arrangement and will be met within existing resource.
- 3.6 For this two month period, RCAB would provide legal advice and representation for clients on issues such as housing, homelessness, employment, debt, public law, community care and disability rights and welfare rights. In addition to this type of legal assistance, the service will also involve providing legal representation at court and tribunals.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The cost of the temporary grant is £18,350 which will be met from existing resources.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – No implications.
3. **Council Plan and Community Planning** – The service being commissioned supports two Council Plan priorities: 'Building strong, safe and resilient communities' by delivering strong community based services and 'Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunity for all' by tackling key causes of poverty and deprivation.
4. **Legal** – The grant funding will be governed by the Council's Conditions of Grant and monitored in accordance with existing policies and procedures.
5. **Property/Assets** – No implications.
6. **Information Technology** – No implications.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - It is anticipated that the proposal will have a positive impact on Equality and Human Rights considering the overrepresentation on equality groups within low-income households. Without this funding, there would be a lack of access to free legal advice until the new contract commencement date of 1 July 2018.

8. **Health & Safety** – The Health and Safety implications of each project within the programme and where risks are identified, appropriate steps will be included within the implementation plan to mitigate these.
 9. **Procurement** – No implications
 10. **Risk** - These will be managed through the Strategy's management and governance arrangements.
 11. **Privacy Impact** – No implications.
 12. **COSLA Policy position** – n/a
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