

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (COMMUNITY SERVICES)

REPORT NO: DCS32

DATE: 9th January 2006

TITLE:	FUNDING OF SOUTH KESTEVEN CITIZEN ADVICE BUREAUX
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	NO
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	N/A

COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	COUNCILLOR LINDA NEAL, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	<u>Priority A</u> : Affordable Housing. <u>Priority A</u>: Crime and Disorder
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	YES
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	YES
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Report DCS31 to Cabinet on 7th November 2005.

1.0 INTRODUCTION OR SUMMARY

1.1 Following extensive discussions earlier this year with South Kesteven Citizen Advice Bureaux an agreement was reached regarding financial support for the current financial year (2005-2006). The Agreement included the following conditions.

- A) A grant of £50,000.
- B) Rent free accommodation of the CAB offices in Stamford (£4,560).
- C) Free use of the Corn Exchange in Bourne (£2,000).

1.2 In return the South Kesteven Citizen Advice Bureaux guaranteed to provide the following services. These services are set out in the agreement attached as Appendix 1.

1.3 The CAB requested that the Council engage in constructive and positive discussions on the establishment of an ongoing programme of funding for the bureaux to provide for value for money advice for the people of South Kesteven and this report set out proposals for the longer term.

- 1.4 The CAB also expressed a concern about long-term stability in funding and the possibility that the Council could consider a further bid for 2005/06 in October of this year. This report includes a request from the CAB for a supplementary grant for the current financial year of £3,500 to reflect the cost of providing an additional three (3) hour session per week at the Grantham office from 1st October this year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are recommended to:

- 2.1 **To decide whether or not they wish to support the request for a supplementary grant of £3,500 as a contribution towards the additional costs of providing an additional session at the Grantham office from the 1st October 2005.**
- 2.2 **Approve core funding of £50,000 for the financial year 2006/2007. The grant will be conditional upon the Citizen Advice Bureaux entering into a Service Level Agreement with the Council.**
- 2.3 **To note that additional financial resources will be available to fund additional capacity for advice and support for homelessness through the Government's Homeless Innovation Fund commencing 2006.**
- 2.4 **To note that any future grant allocations may be made payable through the Area South Partnership as part of an integrated approach to voluntary sector funding.**

3.0 DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The South Kesteven Citizen Advice Bureaux have submitted a budget proposal for a three year cycle from April 2006 to March 2009. This has resulted in a request for funding of £69,500 for provision of sessions in the four centres currently served.
- 3.2 The request has been based on the grant made by the District Council to the CAB in 2002-2003 which was £57,000. An allowance has been added year on year for inflation at 2.2% per year and an additional amount of £7,000 to reflect the full year effect of introducing the additional three (3) hour session per week at the Grantham office.
- 3.3 The budget proposal also requests a supplementary grant of £3,500 to meet the cost of providing the additional three (3) hour session per week at the Grantham office for the period 1st October 2005 to 31st March 2006.
- 3.4 In assessing these proposals consideration has been given to whether or not it is appropriate to use the 2002-2003 funding (£57,000) as the starting point. Since a new agreement was signed in 2005 it seems more appropriate to use the agreed funding of £50,000 as the basis for approving future grant levels.
- 3.5 Earlier this year, the Audit Commission's report on the inspection of Strategic Housing identified that the Council provides funding for the local CAB but does not have a service level agreement in place to ensure that benefits advice, debt counselling and housing rights advice are easily available in the area and

contribute to the prevention of homelessness. Therefore, in response to this criticism it is proposed that the grant would be made subject to the CAB entering into a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

- 3.6 The S.L.A. may also include some advisory aspects of community safety. The SLA would provide a framework for the provision of advice for an agreed level of funding and would include the items referred to above.

4.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 4.1 At the time the agreement was signed performance monitoring arrangements were put in place. This required the CAB to provide information to the District Council. The quarterly returns confirm accreditation under the Community Legal Services (CLS) quality mark and identify the Chairman, Treasurer and Company Secretary. In addition opening hours and the number of sessions undertaken are identified and these are consistent with the Agreement.

- 4.2 The following table based on client contacts and advice references show the number of clients receiving advice for the period April to September 2005.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Client Contacts</u>	<u>Advice References</u>
April	456	1038
May	324	696
June	452	840
July	382	784
August	421	811
September	452	848
<u>Total</u>	2,487	5,017

- 4.3 The following table shows the four main areas of advice provided to clients.

	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Debt</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Other</u>
April – June	28%	25%	10%	9%	28%
July- September	25%	26%	10%	8%	32%

- 4.4 The quarterly report for July to September confirms that the Grantham office hours have been extended. The additional session is on a Tuesday for 3 hours public opening.

5.0 COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND STRATEGIC RESOURCES

- 5.1 I have been consulted throughout on this report. There is a large difference in the request for funding and the existing level of grant which may require the CAB to consider alternative funding streams if available.

6.0 COMMENTS OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (REGULATORY SERVICES)

- 6.1 Since the inspection of Strategic Housing earlier this year, a closer working relationship has been developing between senior officers of the Council and the CAB Manager with a view to developing a SLA. Arrangements are also in place to create the opportunity for officers to attend advisors meetings on a quarterly basis to brief advisors on Housing development and also to obtain feedback on operational issues. The first of these sessions has taken place

and this has been a positive step forward in developing a closer working relationship.

- 6.2 The Council (as part of a Countywide bid) has also successfully bid for ODPM Homeless Innovation Funding to work in partnership with the South Kesteven CAB to prevent homelessness, particularly in relation to work with the private rented sector. This is a two year programme of funding commencing in April 2006. One of the outcomes identified for this project is to provide additional capacity for advice and support within the private sector through an enhanced service in partnership with the Citizen Advice Bureaux who are integral to the successful delivery of the outcomes of the bid.

7.0 COMMENTS OF CORPORATE MANAGER (DEMOCRATIC AND LEGAL SERVICES)

- 7.1 No comments.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is clear that South Kesteven Citizen Advice Bureaux have met their obligation under the terms of the agreement signed earlier this year. The proposed recommended grant falls short of the £69,500 requested by CAB but the proposal for future partnership working will provide an opportunity for enhancing services in partnership with the Citizen Advice Bureaux. There is no doubt that this approach will be beneficial for the future sustainability of the CAB.
- 8.2 The additional sessions provided at Grantham Citizen Advice Bureaux have been provided since the beginning of October 2005 and appears to be providing a worthwhile service and for this reason the request for a supplementary grant may be justified.
- 8.3 Following the re-organisation of the voluntary sector across Lincolnshire an integrated approach to funding the voluntary sector has been created. Details were set out in report DCS31 considered by Cabinet on 7th November 2005. It involves the creation of three area partnerships. The Partnership relating to South Kesteven is called the Area South Partnership. It may be appropriate for any future funding of the Citizen Advice Bureaux to be channelled through this partnership organisation.

9.0 CONTACT OFFICER

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22nd November 2005