

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

---

COMMITTEE	Finance and Resources
DATE	25 April 2013
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Service Level Agreement between Aberdeen City Council and Citizens Advice Bureau 2013-2016
REPORT NUMBER:	H&E/13/019

---

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the development of Service Level Agreement between Aberdeen City Council and Citizens Advice Bureau Aberdeen.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that

1. The Committee note a draft Service Level Agreement has been submitted for consideration by the Citizens Advice Bureau Aberdeen which will be considered at their board meeting later in April.
2. Agree to set aside standing orders that would otherwise require this service to be competitively tendered.
3. Delegate responsibility to the Director and Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the convener of Finance and Resources to sign off the Service Level Agreement once agreed by the Citizens Advice Bureau Board and on terms satisfactory to the Council.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The funding levels included within the SLA will be paid from the Common Good Fund as per the ACC budget approval process for 2013/2014 agreed at Council in February 2013. The funding levels from the Common Good Fund were subject to a detailed costed bid received from the CAB as part of this process. For 2013/14 the funding will be £271k.

### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

If the proposed assistance is not provided it will unquestionably raise issues for the sustainability of the Citizens Advice service within Aberdeen and indeed may result in a Service not being available to the Citizens of the City. A significant gap in independent advocacy services will therefore arise which may ultimately require to be provided by other bodies who will seek financial assistance from the City Council.

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

For a number of years now Aberdeen City Council has supported financially the Citizens Advice Bureau within Aberdeen. Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau provides free, confidential, impartial and independent information and assistance in order to relieve financial hardship and promote wellbeing. Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) gives advice and help on any subject without any preconceived attitudes on the part of the organization. The service is open to everybody regardless of race, creed or politics. The Aberdeen office is open Monday to Friday and offers impartial, confidential and independent advice to anyone on subjects such as –

- Consumer rights
- Court Proceeding and compensation
- Debt counseling
- Employment
- Family and personal problems
- Housing
- Immigration
- Nationality
- Welfare Benefits
- Kin ship Care

In addition Aberdeen CAB also runs a number of projects which are separately financed, historically either by Aberdeen City Council, Fairer Scotland Funding, or other independent funding sources.

Core funding has been historically provided by Aberdeen City Council from the Common Good Fund to support CAB Aberdeen and, in addition, other funding for individual projects has also been made available when appropriate.

This Service Level Agreement focuses on the provision of core funding to allow the Citizens Advice Bureau to operate its core services and will not include any additional funding for ad hoc projects. The CAB Aberdeen will however be able to tender for additional funding as Aberdeen City Council, or indeed Fairer Scotland, requests them to do so. These additional projects will be subject to separate terms, conditions and performance standards. In order to provide stability to CAB Aberdeen and to facilitate the development of the working relationship between Aberdeen City Council and CAB the SLA will be

in place for 3 years with funding from years 2 & 3 subject to acceptable performance in 2013/14.

Previous attempts to establish a service level agreement between Aberdeen City Council and the CAB in Aberdeen have not been successful however it is accepted that both organizations see value in there being clarity in the funding arrangement to be provided and also a clear mutual understanding of what services are to be provided for the funding available. This will help to ensure that Aberdeen City Council will receive value for money for the common good monies and the citizens of the City will receive the services they require.

A draft of the SLA is currently with the Chairman, Board and manager of CAB Aberdeen and an update will be provided at the Finance and Resources Committee meeting of any views expressed by them as to the content of the document.

Aberdeen City Council Standing Orders relating to contracts and procurement part A – general contracts for supplies, services and works, would ordinarily require open tendering to be carried out for services provided for Aberdeen City Council to its citizens however in this case on the grounds that the nature and breadth of service to be provided are particularly specialist and could in this case only be provided by Citizens Advice Bureau, it is recommended that standing orders should be set aside.

Members will be aware of the changes taking place under the UK Government Welfare Reform proposals and it is anticipated that there will be a substantial increase in the numbers of citizens seeking advice both from Aberdeen City Council and also other agencies. It is appropriate for Aberdeen City Council to acknowledge this and to recognize the value of the impartial nature of the advice and support provided by CAB Aberdeen. Members will wish to be aware that a review will be taking place during the financial year, with regard to the financial inclusion services within Aberdeen City Council to monitor the level of activity and request for information and support from citizens, arising from the changes to welfare and benefits entitlement. This may in due course result in a reshaping of the delivery of welfare, benefits and money advice services etc provided directly by Aberdeen City Council, as well as those commissioned by the City Council.

## 6 IMPACT

The report has strong links to the Community Plan and our vision as a city to be an even better place to live and work, where people can expect high quality services to meet their needs. The report relates to the Single Outcome Agreement and the Council vision of Aberdeen – the Smarter City, in particular the strategic priority ‘Smarter Living (Quality of Life)’ where we challenge inequality and positively promote

wellbeing building on cultural and physical activity. The report also relates to the following National Outcome Measures:

- National Outcome 6 – “We live longer, healthier lives”
- National Outcome 9 – “A Safer and Stronger Scotland
- National Outcome 10 – “We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and service we need.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Members may wish to refer to item 8(h) on the Council agenda 6<sup>th</sup> March for background to the Welfare Reform changes.

9. AUTHOR OF REPORT

Donald Urquhart  
Head of Housing & Community Safety  
[dourquhart@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:dourquhart@aberdeencity.gov.uk)  
01224 522119