**LEISURE, WELLBEING & HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**29 NOVEMBER 2017**

**PART I - DELEGATED**

**6. CITIZENS’ ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

(CED)

1. **Summary**

1.1 The Committee will receive a presentation from the Director of the Citizens’ Advice Service in Three Rivers (CASTR) highlighting their performance and achievements for the financial year 2016/17.

2. **Details**

2.1 Three Rivers District Council has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with CASTR and pays over an annual grant of £257,340 which is VAT exclusive.

2.2 The next formal review of the SLA is in March 2019.

2.3 In addition the Council meets the lease costs of Council premises used by CASTR in Rickmansworth and South Oxhey.

2.4 Council funding and support enables CASTR to deliver the following services for the residents of Three Rivers:

1. Provision of advice to residents principally covering: benefits, consumer, debt, education, employment, finance, health, housing, immigration, law, relationships, signposting, tax, travel and utilities.
2. Access to 3 bureaux in Rickmansworth, South Oxhey and Abbots Langley from Monday to Friday, as well as outreach services in other areas.
3. Home visits for people who are housebound.
4. Access to specialist debt advice and budgeting courses.
5. Representation by CASTR for clients in repossession hearings in court and clients at benefit tribunal hearings.
6. Provision of information to partner organisations and membership of the Three Rivers Local Strategic Partnership.

2.5 The CASTR annual report is within Appendix A.

2.6 Appendix B contains the CASTR Strategic and Management Performance Indicators reported on thus far in 2017/18 along with feedback from CASTR.

2.7 Officers have no performance issues to report.

3. **Options/Reasons for Recommendation**

3.1 To note the performance and achievements of the Citizens’ Advice Service in Three Rivers for 2016/17.

3.2 To raise any questions following the presentation by the Director of the Citizens’ Advice Service in Three Rivers.

4. **Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

* 1. The recommendations in this report are within the Council’s agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policies are entitled the Strategic Plan 2017-20.

5. **Financial Implications**

* 1. The budgeted funding for the SLA for 2017/18 is £257,340.
  2. The Council also meets the lease costs of Council premises used by CASTR in Rickmansworth and South Oxhey. A market rent figure of £46,000 is entered into the Council’s accounts for transparency, which shows an income figure in the Property cost centre and a matching expenditure figure in the CAB cost centre. This is purely a notional accounting entry and has a nil effect on the Council’s revenue account.

6. **Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

6.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at http://www.threerivers.gov.uk. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council’s duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

6.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Community Partnerships service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.

6.3 There are no risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation.

6.4 There are no risks to the Council in rejecting the recommendation.

7. **Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre and Communications & Website Implications**

7.1 None specific.

8. **Recommendation**

8.1 To note the performance and achievements of the Citizens’ Advice Service in Three Rivers for 2016/17.

Report prepared by: Karl Stonebank, Partnerships Officer

**Data Quality**

Data sources: CASTR SLA Performance Report – 2016/17

CASTR Strategic/Management Performance Indicators Returns

Data checked by:

* Andy Stovold, Head of Community Partnerships
* Nigel Pollard, Section Head Financial Planning & Analysis

Data rating:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Poor |  |
| 2 | Sufficient | **✓** |
| 3 | High |  |

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A - CASTR Annual Report 2016/17

Appendix B - CASTR Strategic/Management Performance Indicators 2017/18

Appendix A



**CITIZENS ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

(Abbots Langley, Oxhey & Rickmansworth Bureaux)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue Distribution** | **Number of issues** | **%**  **of work** |  | **Staffing** | **Number of hours per week** |
| **Benefits** | 5,698 | 33 |  | **PAID HOURS** | 272 |
| **Consumer** | 455 | 3 |  | **per week across all 3 CAB,** |  |
| **Debt** | 3,283 | 19 |  | **of which** |  |
| **Discrimination** | 131 | 1 |  | **Core funding:** | 249 |
| **Education** | 115 | 1 |  | **External funding:** | 23 |
| **Employment** | 1,471 | 9 |  | **Full time equivalent for** | 6.7 |
| **Financial** | 420 | 2 |  | **core hours** |  |
| **Health** | 387 | 2 |  |  |  |
| **Housing** | 1,986 | 11 |  | **VOLUNTARY HOURS** | **Nos Hrs** |
| **Immigration** | 250 | 1 |  | **per week** |  |
| **Legal** | 921 | 5 |  | **Advisers** | 70 576 |
| **Relationships** | 1,360 | 8 |  | **Administration** | 2 10 |
| **Tax** | 275 | 2 |  | **Trainees** | 5 27 |
| **Travel** | 335 | 2 |  | **Trustees** | 8 4 |
| **Utilities** | 262 | 1 |  | **I.T.** | 1 8 |
| **Total** | **17,349** | **100%** |  | **Total** | **86 625** |

**Noteworthy Trends**

* Total number of advice issues in 2016/17: 17,349 (+7% on 2015/16).
* Total number of new clients in 2016/17: 7,321 (+3% on 2015/16).
* 41 % of our clients are disabled or have a long term health condition.
* We offer email advice to Three Rivers residents via our website: threeriverscab.org.uk.
* We also provide advice via webchat to increase our channels of access.
* We joined Adviceline, the Citizens Advice county phone service, four years ago and are the only Herts CAB to have a local phone service linked to Adviceline.
* We provide an outreach at Watford County Court, to represent and defend clients facing possession hearings: success rate 100%!
* We provide advice outreaches at Mill End and South Oxhey foodbanks, plus new outreaches at Croxley and Chorleywood Libraries, and Mill End Club.
* Our caseworkers represent clients at benefit tribunals: success rate 93%.
* We offer a full home visiting service for the housebound in Three Rivers.
* Money gained for local community in past year: £1,399,466 (+40% on 2015/16)
* 32,500 hours donated by 86 volunteers last year, equating to £552,500 if paid man hours.
* Courses on financial awareness given to local community groups, pensioners and schools (226 attendees) plus individual budgeting sessions.
* Research and Campaigns work – working with local MPs and council officers.
* District manager LSP board member, vice chair of LSP subgroup and until 3/16 was chair of Herts CAB managers’ group.

**External Funding initiatives 2016/17 – Total raised £88,733**

* Herts County Council – welfare, foodbank and DRO applications funding (£26,109 pa to end March 2018).
* Herts Healthy Homes Fund from Herts County Council (£15,000 for Herts CABx).
* Thrive Homes - extra CAB debt advice hours (£12,000 p.a.).
* South Bucks Management fee for general advice service (£8,000 p.a.).
* OFGEM – courses for local community on utility bill savings (£6,300).
* Abbots Langley Parochial Church Council – rent subsidy (£6,004 p.a.).
* Santander – one year funding for a budgeting adviser (£5,000).
* Watford Rural Parish Council – Oxhey caseworker (£4,000 p.a.).
* Abbots Langley Parish Council – Abbots caseworker (£2,000 p.a.).
* DWP Back to Work Programme managed by our CAB across 6 counties (approx. £1,000 pa).
* Martin Lewis Fund – Outreach work (£1,000)
* Croxley Parish Council – Library outreach (£785)
* Chorleywood Parish Council – Library Outreach (£785)
* Waitrose – Local Community Fund £750

**Home Visits & Casework**: Service available at all 3 sites.

**Legal Advice Sessions**: Available at Oxhey.

**CAB Premises:** Also used by hearing assistance charity, Signpost youth charity

and Mill End Foodbank.

**Opening Hours:** Total of 77 hours per week, including Tuesday late night.

**The Future:** Concern that in 2018/19 current frontline services may need to be reviewed; South Oxhey CAB relocation; consequences to clients of Universal Credit and possibly Brexit.

Appendix B

**CASTR Quarterly Strategic/Management Performance Indicators 2017/18**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategic Indicator** | ***Target* Q1** | **Result Q1** | ***Target* Q2** | **Result Q2** | **Exception Report / Other Feedback from CASTR** |
| Nos. of clients that now receive benefits they are entitled to following CAS in Three Rivers Intervention | *733* | 1338 | *367* | *1023* | Surge in demand due to concerns re Universal Credit, shrinking disposable incomes from benefit cap and inflation / Surge in benefit queries as clients’ incomes have been cut due to the benefit cap, welfare reforms in general. We have an increase in rent arrears as clients struggle to meet rent and everyday costs. |
| Number of clients onto a Debt Relief Order | *11* | 8 | *6* | *11* | We can only process DROs when clients happen to present to us and meet the very strict criteria. If they don't meet the criteria, we organise some other solution, e.g. debt repayment plan, grant from a trust to cover arrears etc. |
| Number of clients no longer at threat of eviction that were at threat of eviction | *100* | 131 | *55* | *127* |  |
| Number of clients still at threat of eviction that were at threat of eviction | *11* | 10 | *6* | *9* | Low is good for this measure |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Management Indicator** (no target set) | **Result Q1** | **Result Q2** |
| Total of income gain for clients, £ | 207,822 | 266,174 |
| Total of client debts written off, £ | 63,802 | 34,226 |
| Number of clients who are paying their debts off | 198 | 171 |
| Success rate (%) in representing clients at benefit appeals | 96% | 97% |
| Success rate (%) in representing clients at repossession hearings | 100% | 100% |