**LEISURE, WELLBEING & HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**30 NOVEMBER 2016**

**PART I - DELEGATED**

**6. CITIZENS’ ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

(CED)

1. **Summary**

1.1 The Committee will receive a presentation from the Director of the Citizens’ Advice Service (CAS) in Three Rivers highlighting their performance and achievements for the financial year 2015/16.

2. **Details**

2.1 Three Rivers District Council has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with the Citizens’ Advice Service in Three Rivers (CASTR).

2.2 Each year the CASTR receives £257,340 funding. In addition the Council meets the £46,000 lease costs of premises in Rickmansworth and South Oxhey*.*

2.3 Council funding and support enables the 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 in Mill End and South Oxhey.
3. Home visits for people who are housebound.
4. Access to specialist debt advice and budgeting courses.
5. Representation by the 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.

2.4 The CASTR annual report is in Appendix A.

2.5 Officers publish an annual SLA return for the CASTR within the Members’ Information Bulletin.

3. **Options/Reasons for Recommendation**

3.1 To note the performance and achievements of the CASTR for 2015/16.

3.2 To raise any questions following the presentation by the Director of the CASTR.

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 2016-19.

5. **Financial Implications**

* 1. The budgeted funding for the SLA for 2016/17 is £257,340. This does not include the lease costs of CAS offices in Rickmansworth and South Oxhey which have a value of £46,000. There are no proposed changes to the budget.

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 CASTR for 2015/16.

8.2 To identify any areas for further policy consideration regarding the data and information presented.

Report prepared by: Karl Stonebank, Partnerships Officer

**Data Quality**

Data sources: CASTR SLA Performance Report – 2015/16

Data checked by: Andy Stovold, Head of Community Partnerships

Data rating:

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

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A – CASTR Annual Report 2015/16

Appendix A



**CITIZENS ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016**

**(Abbots Langley, Oxhey & Rickmansworth Bureaux)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue Distribution** | **Number of issues** | **%**  **of work** |  | **Staffing** | **Number of hours per week** |
| **Benefits** | 5,034 | 31 |  | **PAID HOURS** | 293 |
| **Consumer** | 449 | 3 |  | **per week across all 3 CAB Offices,** |  |
| **Debt** | 3,197 | 20 |  | **of which** |  |
| **Discrimination** | 99 | 1 |  | **Core funding:** | 249 |
| **Education** | 120 | 1 |  | **External funding:** | 44 |
| **Employment** | 1,210 | 8 |  |  |  |
| **Financial** | 385 | 2 |  | **Full time equivalent for** | 6.7 |
| **Health** | 337 | 2 |  | **core hours** |  |
| **Housing** | 1,805 | 12 |  |  |  |
| **Immigration** | 148 | 1 |  | **VOLUNTARY HOURS** | **Nos Hrs** |
| **Legal** | 918 | 6 |  | **per week** |  |
| **Other** | 357 | 0 |  | **Advisers** | 72 576 |
| **Relationships** | 1,357 | 8 |  | **Administration** | 8 32 |
| **Tax** | 221 | 1 |  | **Trainees** | 9 72 |
| **Travel** | 275 | 2 |  | **Trustees** | 8 8 |
| **Utilities** | 293 | 2 |  | **I.T.** | 1 8 |
| **Total** | **16,205** | **100%** |  | **Total** | **98 696** |

**Noteworthy Trends**

* Total number of advice issues in 2015/16: 16,205 (+6% on 2014/15).
* Total number of new clients in 2015/16: 7,141 (+9% on 2014/15).
* 33% of our clients are disabled or have a long term health condition.
* We now offer email advice to Three Rivers residents via our website: threeriverscab.org.uk
* We have recently begun to offer advice via webchat to increase the channels of access to our service.
* We joined Adviceline, the Citizens Advice county phone service, three years ago and are the only Herts CAB to have their local phone service linked to Adviceline.
* We provide an outreach at Watford County Court twice per month, to represent and defend clients facing possession hearings. Their average success rate is 100%.
* Our caseworkers represent clients at benefit tribunals, to appeal against benefit rejection decisions. Their average success rate is 94%.
* We provide advice outreaches at Mill End and South Oxhey foodbanks.
* We offer a full home visiting service for the homebound in Three Rivers.
* Money gained for local community in past year: £1,000,591.
* 32,032 hours donated by 88 volunteers last year, equating to £544,544 if paid person hours.
* Courses on financial awareness given to local community groups, pensioners and schools (241 attendees) plus individual budgeting sessions.
* Research and Campaigns work – working with local MP and council officers.
* District manager LSP board member, vice chair of LSP subgroup and until March 2016 was chair of Herts CAB managers’ group.

**Other External Funding initiatives 2015/16 – Total raised £137,483**

* Advice Services Transition fund – building local partnerships and client referrals (£186,000 over 2 years).
* Herts County Council – welfare, foodbank and DRO applications funding (£35,779 to end of March 2017).
* DWP Back to Work Programme managed by our CAB across 6 counties (approx. £2,000 pa).
* Herts Healthy Homes Fund from Herts County Council (£15,000 for Herts CAB Offices).
* Thrive Homes - extra CAB debt advice hours (£12,000 p.a.).
* South Bucks Management fee for general advice service (£8,000 p.a.).
* Abbots Langley Parochial Church Council – rent subsidy (£6,004 p.a.).
* Watford Rural Parish Council – Oxhey caseworker (£4,000 p.a.).
* Abbots Langley Parish Council – Abbots caseworker (£2,000 p.a.).
* OFGEM – courses for local community on utility bill savings (£1,200).
* Santander – one year funding for a budgeting adviser (£5,000).

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

**Legal Advice Sessions**: Available at South 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 2016/17 current frontline services may need to be reviewed.

Funding gained to provide an improved client referral service between organisations in

Three Rivers, plus outreaches at foodbanks, some Debt Relief Order application fees

paid and budgeting adviser.