

CORPORATE GRANT SCHEMES (Recommissioning of Community Support and Advice Provision)

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet Grants Panel the final agreed contractual arrangements for Community Support and Advice provision by Citizens Advice West Sussex for the period 2022-2028.

Recommendations

2. Members of the Cabinet Grants Panel are requested to:
 - ***Note the outcome of the procurement process for Community Support and Advice Services carried out by West Sussex County Council (WSCC) on behalf of the Districts and Boroughs and agree that Mid Sussex District Council enter into a contract with Citizens Advice West Sussex on the terms set out in this report.***
 - ***Note the contract sum payable for 2022-2028 is within the annual budget allocation of £119,365.***

Summary

3. Following the procurement process carried out by WSCC, Citizens Advice West Sussex were selected as the preferred provider and the notice on intention to award was issued on 27 July 2022, which will be proceeded by the mandatory 10 day standstill period and a period of mobilisation, the contract is anticipated to go live on 1 September 2022.

Background

4. The Provision of Community Support and Advice services to residents and communities in Mid Sussex forms a critical part of the infrastructure needed to support households. The investment in this service enables people facing debt, housing, benefit, pension, health and well-being issues to access the advice and information needed to avoid crisis. The service brings significant amounts of benefit entitlements into the District, enabling people to support themselves and families. The service model employs significant numbers of trained volunteers, benefiting those individuals and reducing staff costs.
5. Between 2020 and 2021, Citizens Advice West Sussex received around 10,000 calls in Mid Sussex. Of these the greatest number of issues being asked about were benefits,

universal credit, consumer rights, debt, financial services, employment, and housing rights. The service also resulted in significant additional funds coming into West Sussex due to optimising residents' benefits and entitlements.

6. Prior to the end of the contract with Citizens Advice West Sussex in April 2021, WSCC commenced a new competitive procurement process for advice services for 2022-2028. This resulted in the re-selection of Citizens Advice West Sussex as the preferred service provider.
7. All signatories to the contract were consulted in the contracts redesign, and a number of changes were made to ensure a greater focus on more tailored responses to the issues impacting on local residents.
8. The new Service specification requires increased performance, quarterly monitoring with Countywide, District and Borough data. There will also be further development of the Digital Service programme with targets for an annual increase in the number of cases being dealt with.
9. The new contract for 2022 to 2028 is a rolling contract with review and renewal dates at three, three and one years. This arrangement allows all signatories to consider performance of the service provider against the contract and to seek amendments at each review point.

Other Options Considered:

10. To not fund the Community Advice and Support service:
The Community Advice and Support service supports people to access all financial entitlements, reduce levels of debt and prevent personal and family financial crisis in Mid Sussex. As well as delivering benefits to the wider economy, the service supports people in maintaining their mental health and well-being with positive outcomes for the wider health and social care system. The service is even more relevant now with the current cost of living crisis and to not fund it would have implications for existing council services who would have to meet the generalist advice needs for residents.

Financial Implications

11. The final cost of the recommissioning of the contract (WSCC and 7 District and Boroughs) is £1,073,201 per annum and the funding contribution from Mid Sussex District Council is £119,365 per annum.
12. During the first financial year of the contract, the annual payment contribution will be 7/12 of the total figure, to reflect the start date of the contract (1 September 2022).

Risk Management Implications

13. As part of their lead role in the recommissioning partnership, WSCC will ensure they have measures in place to mitigate potential risk factors:

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Risk of Supplier failure	As part of the tender process, financial standing checks have been undertaken by WSCC. The Service Provider

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
	passed the relevant checks and the awarded contract is within the value limits recommended by WSCC Commercial Finance.
Risk of disruption due to change in service provider	Not applicable as the incumbent provider will be awarded the contract
Risk of provider failure impacting on services available to customers during the life of the contract.	The Public Health Commissioning and Contracts team will ensure appropriate levels of contract management, performance monitoring and quality assurance. Monitoring of financial due diligence of providers with high risk or high impact of provider failure.
Increasing costs of services	Monitoring of increased costs and mitigation options discussed and agreed with provider

14. It is considered that these measures would mitigate the main risks from materialising and indicate a low risk to the successful outcomes arising from this report.

Equality and customer service implications

15. All Mid Sussex residents have a right to access these services free at the point of use.

Social Value and Sustainability Implications

16. Social Value was included within the procurement process and the proposal therefore includes consideration of the positive impact the Service Provider will have on social value and sustainability in Mid Sussex.

17. The provision of the Community Advice and Support contract supports the council's community leadership role in the delivery of local and [UK sustainable development goals](#). Specifically, this service contributes towards:



SDG 3: (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages)



SDG 10: (Reduce inequality within and among countries)



SDG 11: (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Legal Implications

18. The Council is not obliged to provide grant funding, but by virtue of section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, it is able to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area. This includes the incurring of expenditure, giving financial assistance to any person (or organisation) and entering into arrangements or agreements with any person.

Background Papers

19. Associated documentation for this paper is held in Communications, PR, and Community Engagement.