

**Report of the Head of Resources**

**PRESENTATION BY THE CENTRAL AND EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CITIZENS  
ADVICE BUREAU**

**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To introduce the presentation by the Central and East Northamptonshire Citizens Advice Bureau, of which the Nene Valley Citizens Advice Bureau (NVCAB) is a member office.
- 1.2 The presentation relates to the work NVCAB carries out in the borough in support of the council's priorities.

**2 Executive summary**

None.

**3 Appendices**

Appendix: A: Information relating to grants made to NVCAB and the required outcomes.

Appendix B: Information about NVCAB, supplied by the organisation.

**4 Proposed action:**

**4.1 The committee is invited to RESOLVE to note the presentation, and;**

**4.2 The committee is invited to discuss issues relating to the work of NVCAB and identify any matters it RECOMMENDS be reported to relevant policy committees for their attention.**

**5 Background**

This presentation forms part of the general programme of review agreed by the committee at its meeting on 17 June 2013.

**6 Discussion**

- 6.1 The committee has requested presentations from organisations who are either funded by the council, or who play an important part in the life of the borough.
- 6.2 Each presentation gives members an opportunity to learn more about the organisation and its impact on the borough. After the presentation there is a chance to ask questions of the presenter.
- 6.3 If any items of significance arise, members may wish to request a further report from a relevant officer or make a recommendation for action by a policy committee.
- 6.4 The council provided two grants to NVCAB as part of the three year grant programme (currently in year two). £30k pa was granted under the 'debt' theme and £20k pa under the 'employment' theme. The current outputs are attached.

## **7 Legal powers**

The Local Authorities (Alternative Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2001 empower the council to establish one or more overview and scrutiny committees. An overview and scrutiny committee of a local authority may invite persons other than members or officers of the authority to attend meetings of the committee.

## **8 Financial and value for money implications**

There are no such implications arising directly from this report. However, effective overview and scrutiny is one of the means by which the council secures effective use of its resources.

## **9 Risk analysis**

A risk table is usually completed for any report setting out a proposed course of action that entails risks at the outset of the project or if the risks change along the way. This is not relevant in respect of this report.

## **10 Implications for resources**

There are no implications arising directly from this report, other than officer time required to prepare any reports needed to make recommendations to policy committees as a result of the committee's findings.

## **11 Implications for stronger and safer communities**

There are no such implications arising directly from this report. However, effective overview and scrutiny is one of the means by which the council secures improvement in the discharge of its functions that contribute to making its community stronger and safer.

## **12 Implications for equalities**

Local scrutiny of public services improves the ability of the council to ensure equalities issues affecting the local community are taken into account by other public service providers.

## **13 Author and contact officer**

Bridget Lawrence, Head of Resources.

## **14 Consultees**

None.

## **15 Background papers**

There are no background papers to this report.

## BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH – COMMUNITY SUPPORT

**AGREED SPECIFIED AREAS OF WORK/MONITORING AGREEMENT FORM  
FOR SERVICE AGREEMENT CLIENTS**

**1. MONITORING AND APPRAISAL TIMETABLE**

Organisation:	Nene Valley CAB – employment advice and support		
Grant amount:	£20,000	Grant Year:	2013-14
Date of 1 <sup>st</sup> review/monitoring meeting	Sept-Oct 2013		
Date of 2 <sup>nd</sup> review/monitoring meeting	Feb-March 2014		

**2. AGREED OUTPUTS / OUTCOMES (Specific, measurable targets)**

<b>OUTPUT</b> <i>(Type of resource, facility or service to be provided)</i>	<b>OUTCOME</b> <i>(e.g. give people the confidence to return to work)</i>
<p><b>1.</b> Give advice or information on tackling worklessness to at least 100 clients</p> <p>Evidenced by client numbers</p>	<p>To reduce worklessness across the Borough.</p> <p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Use a range of methods for client contact to maximise access to service eg individual callers, via telephone appt, leaflets, community outreach, BCW one stop shop etc to reach those in greatest need of advice and guidance.</p> <p>Evidenced by client profile report and report on access channels of clients</p>	<p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Working relationships with partners or training and skills providers that can be/ are used to refer or signpost clients</p> <p>Evidenced by feedback report and survey feedback Evidence of volunteer placements</p>	<p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Increase external funding to allow the development of new projects or enhanced current service provision, to contribute towards meeting the needs of current or potential Wellingborough clients.</p> <p>Evidenced by feedback report and annual accounts</p>	<p>To strengthen the funding base of the Bureau through diversification.</p>
<p><b>5.</b> Gather feedback from clients at least once a year on their experiences and noted increases in skills and confidence in approaching the job market. Include next steps to track actual or intended progress.</p> <p>Evidenced by customer feedback forms.</p>	<p>To reduce worklessness across the Borough.</p> <p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>

**BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH – COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**AGREED SPECIFIED AREAS OF WORK/MONITORING AGREEMENT FORM  
FOR SERVICE AGREEMENT CLIENTS**

**1. MONITORING AND APPRAISAL TIMETABLE**

Organisation:	Nene Valley CAB – Debt prevention and management	
Grant amount:	£30,000	Grant Year: 2012-13
Date of 1 <sup>st</sup> review/monitoring meeting	Sept-Oct 2012	
Date of 2 <sup>nd</sup> review/monitoring meeting	Feb-March 2013	

**2. AGREED OUTPUTS / OUTCOMES (Specific, measurable targets)**

<b>OUTPUT</b> <i>(Type of resource, facility or service to be provided)</i>	<b>OUTCOME</b> <i>(e.g. give people the confidence to return to work)</i>
<p><b>1.</b> Give advice or information on debt, debt management and income maximisation to answer at least 1,000 enquiries.  Evidenced by client numbers and purpose of enquiry</p>	<p>To reduce problem debt within the Borough.  Increased access to preventative and generalist budgeting and personal debt advice through a range of channels</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Assist clients to maximise income and benefit gains.  Evidenced by report on value of debts encountered and report on amount of benefit gain</p>	<p>Maximise the income of the borough's most financially deprived communities  Increased financial benefit take up across the borough</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Recruit and train new volunteers with an emphasis on recruiting from a range of diverse communities – age, ethnicity, gender etc.  Evidenced by report on volunteer profile and recruitment</p>	<p>To reflect the diversity of the Borough within the team of advisors.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Increase external funding to allow the development of new projects or enhanced current service provision, to contribute towards meeting the needs of current or potential Wellingborough clients.  Evidenced by feedback report and annual accounts</p>	<p>To strengthen the funding base of the Bureau through diversification.</p>
<p><b>5.</b> Use a range of methods for client contact to improve access to service eg Gateway 'triage' system and telephone service, outreach services etc to reach those in greatest need of financial advice.  Evidenced by client profile report and report on access channels of clients</p>	<p>Increased access to preventative and generalist budgeting and personal debt advice through a range of channels  To reduce problem debt within the Borough.</p>

Name of organisation: <b>CENTRAL &amp; EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CAB</b>
Date of presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: <b>16 DECEMBER 2013</b>
Number of employees (full time equivalents): <b>Staffing levels were equivalent to 488 weekly staff hours in November – or equivalent to just over 13 members of full time staff.</b>
Number of volunteers: <b>89</b>
<b>Aims and objectives of organisation</b>
<p>We aim to <b>provide the advice</b> people need for the problems they face and <b>improve the policies and practices</b> that affect people's lives.</p> <p>We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.</p> <p>‘Our vision is that this bureau will become the prime provider of free, quality assured advice, offering a service that is as accessible and extensive as that provided by the best in class Citizens Advice Bureaux. We will offer an excellent quality of advice to our clients, who will, in turn, view us with a high degree of trust. The bureau will be progressive and successful, and will have a much wider presence in the area it serves. Staff and volunteers will represent a wider section of the community, form a vibrant and diverse team, and be proud to work for a well respected and sustainable service that champions the rights and responsibilities of individuals, and exerts a positive social influence’.</p>
<b>Service level agreed with council (if applicable)</b>
See below.
<b>Performance against service level agreement (if applicable)</b>
See latest reporting. [Available from committee administrator on request.]
<b>Details of partnership work with other organisations in Northamptonshire</b>
<p>Of relevance to Wellingborough, we work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nene Valley Community Action</b> are significant partners in that they are supporting us to deliver against an SLA with the authority but also in respect of delivery in respect of funding from the Advice Services Transition fund.</li> <li>• <b>The Hope Centre and Croyland Children’s Centre</b> will act as Local Advice Access Points in respect of the above mentioned Advice Services Transition Fund.</li> <li>• <b>Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council:</b> Will be delivering “Public Legal Education“ activities for us in Wellingborough – again through our funding from the Advice Services Transition Fund.</li> <li>• <b>Community Law Service:</b> We are working with this organisation in respect to Advice Service Transition Fund projects in Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire (of which we are lead) and in Northampton (of which they are lead). CLS’s contribution to this project is in respect to specialist advice services but they have asked to deliver these only in East Northamptonshire.</li> </ul>

- **Macmillan Cancer Support:** We have been funded for a number of years by this charity to undertake specialist work for clients affected by cancer countywide. Both an analysis of client need and the merger of the two bureaux (the Macmillan contract sitting with the former Northampton and District CAB) will enable us to deliver more services in Wellingborough such that the percentage of all clients supported through this funding and residing in Wellingborough is increased.
- **Northamptonshire Trading Standards:** We are working with Trading Standards to operate a “consumer empowerment partnership” across the region and this is enabling us to undertake specific work in respect of consumer issues
- **Northamptonshire Libraries service:** We are working with the libraries in respect to offering “Local Advice Access Points” in the county, as well as in respect to improving the skills of library staff and volunteers
- **The Department of Energy and Climate Change:** We are funded to provide support and advice to vulnerable consumers in order to switch energy suppliers and to reduce their energy bills. One worker is allocated to Wellingborough

In respect to partnerships outside of Wellingborough we work with many partners including Job Centre Plus, a range of Children’s Centres, Northampton Volunteering Centre and others.

We have also enjoyed excellent partnerships with a number of corporate over the years including Barclaycard and Nationwide.

**Are accounts available for the past three years?**

If yes, please attach copies.

[Available from the committee administrator on request.]

**Effect on the community of cutting grant from the council by £5,000 (or, if grant is below £5,000, the effect of cutting the grant entirely)**

A revised budget for the bureau determining the bureau’s mid year position shows a deficit which is significant but also tolerable given the prudent level of reserves established by the boards of both bureaux leading up to merger. When looking at each budget heading, by far the most significant level of deficit is in respect of services in Wellingborough. Funds from this authority equate to £50,000 whilst funds from the Advice Services Transition Fund (ASTF) equate to £58,333 of which £23,333 is allocated directly to partners. There is no definitive distribution of ASTF funding between Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire but as can be seen and save for small incomes from other sources and Legal Aid funding, (worth up to £15288 to the benefit of Wellingborough clients plus the potential of certificated work), it can be seen that overall funding in Wellingborough is significantly lower than in previous years. This was one of the precursors to merger – a process which has already achieved some cost savings in terms of management and administrative overheads.

With further analysis its possible to say that, in fact, this deficit is principally a result of the decision to continue to offer advice on topics other than those funded through funding from the council such as relationship issues, housing advice (not

otherwise funded by Legal Aid), consumer advice (not otherwise funded through our Consumer Empowerment Partnership funding), relationship advice (in respect to divorce/separation/children etc and not funded at all) or immigration advice. This may be one way in which the board resolves to reduce the deficit in respect to Wellingborough services but these topics are integral to the offer made by Citizens Advice Bureau and often inter related with and difficult to separate from the presenting issue.

Not with standing, as a consequence of this position, the bureau has been vigorously pursuing opportunities for funding from other sources and to secure a similarly diverse range of funders for services in Wellingborough as has been achieved in Northampton over the years. For example an attempt to secure funding through the Lloyds TSB “Older Peoples” Programme was made resulting in initial shortlisting as one of 30 applications (from over 200 made) but we were not selected amongst the final 10.

Funding from both the Advice Services Transition fund and from Legal Aid are also indicative of our intentions. However it should be borne in mind that competition for funding is fierce and funding is increasingly scarce. Accordingly the bureau has a newly formed “fundraising” committee – aimed at securing funds from individual donors and from smaller trusts and foundations. We are also pursuing a number of commercial opportunities. It is too early to say to what extent these measures will bring rewards but it is likely they will not fully replace that income lost in previous years – even if achieving at the higher end of our expectations.

Accordingly, therefore a cut of £5000 would be detrimental in the sense that – even though Wellingborough services are running at a loss – the extent to which this loss could be tolerated by the board into subsequent financial years is such that it is likely that the bureau would need to consider radically changing the extent of services it could provide and the way in which it would provide them.

An important element of our thinking may be in respect to “fixed costs” and the board may determine that providing services in the borough but without a fixed and permanent basis wholly or mainly occupied by us could be a way forward. However, a “high street” presence is also, as the board recognises, an important element in securing the support of local elected representatives in respect to funding.

The other major expense we have of course, is wages and whilst funding from the Advice Services Transition funded is intended to make advice services more resilient to cuts in “core” or traditional funding (and this is the spirit in which we have made plans to spend it), there will be a “lead in” time necessary to ensure volunteers are trained to ensure (as we intend to) they can undertake those roles, in most bureaux fulfilled by paid staff. This is quite an innovative undertaking with some risk. Therefore even with a reduction in fixed costs and the development of volunteers to undertake more advanced work, it is very likely that a reduction of the sort hypothesised, would result in a **noticeable** reduction in the numbers of clients being supported and logically this would likely be 10% of those client numbers reported as part of mid year monitoring. With less success in respect to either, the reduction of fixed costs or the development of volunteers, then it is likely that such a reduction would aggravate a *significant reduction* in the scale of services.

Given the outcomes achievable through the provision of high quality advice, the overriding impact on the community would be significant. Fewer clients would have

access to services particularly effective at helping people to respond to crisis' but also in ensuring their ongoing ability to resolve future problems

**Effect on the community of increasing grant by £5,000**

This is difficult to say. Within the overall funding mix of the bureau there are a range of possible options about the way in which £5000 could be deployed. All other things remaining the same, we could for example:

- Open services in the evening.
- With some changes to staffing arrangements, open at the weekend.
- Expand "financial capability" services across the borough.
- Support more volunteers to increase the number of clients we were able to help within our existing framework of services.
- Provide specific support in respect to the "digital by default" element of Universal Credit and, in particular, support individuals to claim and manage their benefits "online" as they will be required to do. This specific activity is outside of the remit of our current Service Level Agreement

The effect on the community of this increase would be to help individual's better deal with their problems and provide a more extensive service.