

## Report of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Personnel Policy

**CITIZENS ADVICE BROXTOWE – GRANT AID 2022/23**1. Purpose of Report

To consider the outturn position in respect of the Service Level Agreement with Citizens Advice Broxtowe following the commitment of a three-year grant funding settlement from 2021/22 in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Grant Aid Policy.

2. Recommendation

**Cabinet is asked to:**

- 1. NOTE the outturn report from Citizens Advice Broxtowe**
- 2. RESOLVE that the second year of the three-year funding settlement be released.**

3. Detail

On 8 July 2021, the (then) Finance and Resources Committee approved grant aid of £73,750 to Citizens Advice Broxtowe, including £10,000 towards the annual rental of accommodation in the Council Offices. The resolution included a commitment to award grant aid at this level in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, subject to a suitable Service Level Agreement being in place. This three-year funding settlement was seen to provide some much-needed stability for Citizens Advice Broxtowe and give it a platform to lever in additional funds from other sources.

Citizens Advice Broxtowe has now provided an outturn position in respect of the Service Level Agreement to 31 March 2022. This is provided in appendix two.

4. Financial Implications

The comments from the Head of Finance Services were as follows:

The committed award of £73,750 to Citizens Advice Broxtowe in 2022/23 (including £10,000 rental for accommodation at the Council Offices) will be the second year of this funding agreement. The overall budget for grants to voluntary organisations includes provision for this committed award.

5. Legal Implications

The Council is empowered to make grants to voluntary organisations by virtue of Section 48 Local Government Act 1985 (as well as other legislation). Having an approved process in line the legislation and the Council's Grant Aid Policy will ensure the Council's compliance with its legal duties.

6. Human Resources Implications

Not applicable.

7. Union Comments

Not applicable.

8. Data Protection Compliance Implications

There are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

As there is no change to policy an equality impact assessment is not required.

10. Background Papers

Nil.

## APPENDIX 1

## CITIZENS ADVICE BROXTOWE

1. Background

Citizens Advice Broxtowe ("CAB") provides advice and support to the public on a variety of issues including debt, housing, welfare rights, employment and legal matters. CAB was established in 2004 following the merger of the former Beeston and Eastwood bureaux to create a district-based structure with operations that are based at the Council Offices in Beeston and the Library in Eastwood, with some funded outreach sessions also being provided at the Stapleford Care Centre.

2. Summary Achievements

In the last 12 months, CAB has helped 8,132 clients with 14,779 issues which are wide ranging and complex. CAB has provided a summary analysis of the enquiries that were handled between April 21 and March 2022. The majority of these contacts related to debt and benefits matters, with the remaining enquiries being classified as housing, employment, signposting, legal, relationships, financial, consumer, utilities, health, tax, other, travel, immigration and education.

CAB has seen a large increase in people coming to us with housing related enquiries and work closely with Broxtowe Councils departments (rents, housing, income) to jointly assist clients.

CAB has also assisted clients in accessing £5.21 million of additional benefits, which makes a huge difference to their wellbeing as well as supporting the local economy. This is the largest amount CAB has ever gained for the residents of Broxtowe which shows the difference our service can make to those facing financial crisis.

The statistics in Schedule A demonstrate that the number of residents coming to CAB for help is now increasing rapidly post pandemic.

3. Staffing

CAB currently employs 22 paid staff. During the last 12 months CAB has recruited 13 new volunteers and is currently grateful for the support of 48 volunteers. Volunteers give their time freely and last year the value of the volunteer hours was in excess of £250,000.

This year the 'Help to Claim' contract which employed 7 people ended as the terms changed and the contract transferred to Nottingham Citizens Advice. CAB staff were successfully transferred over and CAB continues to work with them and signpost clients for help with claiming Universal Credit.

CAB took part in the DWP 'Kickstart' scheme and employed 3 trainee advisers (under 25 years of age and unemployed over a 6-month period). These people are now all employed by CAB on either permanent or fixed term contracts.

4. Accommodation

In January 2009, CAB moved its Beeston operation into the Council Offices. Lease terms were agreed for the accommodation at a market rental of £10,000 per annum. CAB previously paid a nominal rental for their former premises and the extra rental cost of accommodation in the Council Offices significantly increased their premises costs. Having only limited financial resources, CAB is unlikely to be able to sustain this charge.

5. Financial Position

CAB has been unable to provide its draft financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 due to the timing of this meeting of Cabinet.

For information, the previous financial statements show that for the year ended 31 March 2021, total income generated amounted to £583,695, which mostly related to grants and donations with £235,696 being in respect of unrestricted funds. The majority of unrestricted funding was provided by this Council and Nottinghamshire County Council (£93,091). Significant restricted funding was also received from Citizen's Advice (£192,931), this Council (£76,315) and East Midlands Money Advice (£68,302). Total expenditure amounted to £541,571 including £298,728 charged to the restricted fund. Total funds increased to £395,172 (before the pension liability) with cash at bank and in hand increasing to £387,321. The CAB reserves policy is to maintain a minimum level of general reserves equivalent to around six months operating costs plus any closure costs should this become necessary.

CAB has predicted a financial deficit budget of around £105,000 for 2022/23. The Trustee Board keeps a close eye on any deficit spending to ensure the CAB has enough reserves to cover any redundancy and contractual costs in the unlikely event of a closure situation.

6. Previous Grant Awards

The Council has supported CAB for many years with the grants awarded in the past five years being as follows:

	Grant Awarded £
2021/22 (including £10,000 rent)	73,750
2020/21 (including £10,000 rent)	73,750
2019/20 (including £10,000 rent)	73,750
2018/19 (including £10,000 rent)	73,750
2017/18 (including £10,000 rent)	73,750

The grant of £73,750 awarded to CAB in 2021/22 represented 44% of the Council's overall grant aid budget.

## 7. Request for Grant Aid

On 8 July 2021, the (then) Finance and Resources Committee approved grant aid of £73,750 to CAB, including £10,000 towards the annual rental of accommodation at the Council Offices. The resolution included a commitment to award grant aid at this level in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, subject to a suitable Service Level Agreement being in place.

CAB has provided an outturn position in respect of the Service Level Agreement to 31 March 2022 (appendix 2) and has requested the release of the second year funding of £73,750 in 2022/23 (being £63,750 towards general expenses and £10,000 towards the annual rental of accommodation in the Council Offices).

The release of the second year of the funding would be in line with the Council's existing commitment to award grant aid at this level to CAB in 2022/23 and is also in line with the Council's Grant Aid policy for the following key reasons:

- CAB is based within Broxtowe.
- The services provided by CAB benefit Broxtowe residents and are complementary to the services provided by the Council.
- CAB targets the needs of disadvantaged sections of the community.

## 8. Looking Forward – CAB Perspective

CAB, like many statutory and voluntary sector organisations, faces a large deficit budget this year. Funding is becoming harder to obtain and emergency Covid-19 related funds have now been used up. CAB could not operate its services without the core funding the grant aid provided by this Council or the help of our unpaid volunteer advisers.

However, the Trustee Board and staff remain optimistic that the CAB can continue to offer a high quality advice service which adapts to changing challenges for its partners and clients.

The cost-of-living crisis is a real threat to the financial sustainability of families and the long-term prosperity of Broxtowe's economy. It is considered important that the local community improves its financial resilience to economic shocks like the current cost-of-living crisis. CAB has seen a significant increase in client numbers since the beginning of 2022 with the greatest increase in April, up 63% (to 632 clients per month) compared to April 2021. CAB's own research suggests that most households working or economically inactive that receive Universal Credit (or just above entitlement) will experience a negative budget in 2022.

CAB is urging all those facing a negative budget to get in touch. Support is available but can be complex, provided by a variety of schemes. Residents are advised not to struggle alone. As a result, CAB has set up a Financial Resilience Project that systematically looks at a household's income, spending and assets and provides them with a plan towards financial security. CAB is currently gathering evidence and outcomes from this project to secure long term funding.

## APPENDIX 2

**SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2021-24**

Citizens Advice Broxtowe has provided the following information in accordance with the terms of the grant awarded and committed by the (then) Finance and Resources Committee on 8 July 2021 and the Service Level Agreement for 2021-24.

**SCHEDULE A – OUTPUT MEASURES**

Ref	Outcome Area	Total 2021/22
6.1	Number of new issues (problems) dealt with	14,779
6.2	Number of clients receiving support during the year	8,132
6.3	Average amount of debt handled per client seeking debt advice	£11,267
6.4	Estimated amount of benefits gained for clients seeking benefit advice	£5.21m
6.5	Please list the top five advice needs and the number of new social policy issues recorded for each <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits (including Universal Credit)</li> <li>• Debt</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Relationships</li> </ul>	6,860 2,136 1,957 601 422
6.6	Number of staff employed as at 31 March 2022	30
6.7	Number of volunteers available as at 31 March 2022	49
6.8	Number of new volunteers recruited in 2021/22	15
6.9	Number of volunteer hours worked in 2021/22	Pending
6.10	Value of volunteer hours given 2021/22	£250,000

10.11 Breakdown of service users and volunteers by gender, age, ethnicity and disability for 2021/22:

Description	Service Users		Volunteers	
Gender				
Male	3,252	40%	17	33%
Female	4,879	60%	32	67%
Age				
19 and under	33	1%	-	-
20-49	1,897	23%	5	10%
50-64	1,012	12%	23	48%
65 and over	448	6%	21	42%
Not stated	4,742	42%	-	-
Ethnicity (No. of people who consider themselves to be):				
White British	6,830	84%	44	90%
Black British	406	5%	1	2%
White Other	325	4%	1	2%
Black Other	-	-	1	2%
Asian	571	7%	2	4%
Chinese	-	-	-	-
Other ethnic group	-	-	-	-
Not stated	-	-	-	-
Disability (No. of people who consider themselves to be):	3,984	49%	2	2%

6.12 Please provide a summary analysis to indicate the extent to which the services of CAB have benefited clients.

The need for advice is as much in demand now as ever due to the cost of living crisis, private rents soaring and people struggling to get back on their feet post pandemic. CAB have worked tirelessly during the pandemic and the service has never stopped running. We have a number of projects to help the residents of Broxtowe, although many of these are short term funded.



CABs funding strategy which is approved and monitored by the Trustee Board sets out our aim to reduce our deficit budget and secure long term funding.

The projects include:

- Mental Health Hubs working with Nottinghamshire Mind
- Mediation
- Advice in foodbanks and GP surgeries/health care settings
- Financial Resilience Advice
- Money Advice
- Housing Advice
- Our generalist service, the core (which is funded by Broxtowe Borough Council and Nottinghamshire County Council).

- 6.13 Please provide a summary analysis of client surveys, to indicate the level of satisfaction with the services of CAB. Also tell us about any changes you have made/plan to make as a result of feedback received.

Information pending as at the publication date of this report.

- 6.14 Please provide feedback from volunteers around the level of satisfaction with the training and support they have received, and any specific outcomes achieved e.g. moving into paid work:

Information pending as at the publication date of this report.

- 6.15 Please tell us about some of your work around improving the policies and practices that affect people's lives. Tell us about any changes which have been made both locally and nationally in relation to the top five advice needs:

Research and campaigns remains a core part of the work of Citizens Advice, delivered by our dedicated staff and committed volunteers. This work helps ensure we can resolve more issues for clients, and address the underlying causes so that the issues do not continue to affect clients.

Research and campaigns is one of the twin aims of our service. It aims to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

As a service we have a huge amount of insight and data about the problems our clients and their wider communities face. Through research and campaigns, we use this insight to:

- help us research issues further
- influence decision makers to change policies and practices
- campaign to get decision makers to change policies and practices.

Research and campaigns gives Citizens Advice Broxtowe the opportunity to widen our impact, allowing us to help those who may not be able to access

our advice service, prevent issues from recurring and therefore help with demand and capacity issues.

Citizens Advice Broxtowe Research and Campaigns team work with other local Citizens Advice and advice agencies to collect this evidence and contribute to policy discussions about how to improve the lives of Broxtowe residents.

Our Help to Claim Best Practice Lead was involved in a research project on behalf of Citizens Advice looking at developing The Early Warning System in response to the £20 Universal Credit cut and the rising cost of living. This piece of research carried out an in-depth review of case notes flagged with the 'UC Cut' tag. National Citizens Advice have used the findings for their national influencing work.

We were active on social media supporting national campaigns for Scams awareness, Consumer week, Big Energy Saving, Pension week, 'What they didn't teach you at school' and the rising cost of living. On our website we published a monthly Newsletter. In September the Newsletter focused on the impending removal of the £20 a week Universal Credit increase and in March the focus was the rise in the cost of living and what support we can offer to clients.

We responded to a number of Network panel surveys and requests from the national team, covering subjects such digital exclusion, Clients on legacy benefits moving to Universal Credit, Disability benefits, support with childcare costs in Universal Credit Fuel vouchers, Cost of living, Household Support fund and Homelessness Prevention grant, Letter delays and Long Covid.

Our MPs have been contacted by us about issues relating to the Universal Credit cut and the rise in the cost of living and energy prices. We have been working with Broxtowe Borough Council on a number of housing related issues.

Members of the R&C team have contributed to the work and influence of other local services providers. We contribute to the Safer Nottingham Board, Fraud Against Vulnerable People Action Group, Primary Care Network, Life Chances (Nottinghamshire Early years), The Stapleford and Eastwood Focus Groups and Broxtowe Welfare Reform Group.

Over the past year we have strengthened our work by joining forces to work collaboratively with Citizens Advice Ashfield and Citizens Advice Sherwood & Newark, to consider advice issue trends across mid-Nottinghamshire and engage in peer to peer campaign activities.

During 2022-2023 CAB will continue to gather evidence on the cost of living crisis, Ukraine, energy prices, scams and consumer issues.

- 6.17 Please provide case studies to indicate some of the outcomes achieved for clients to evidence the top advice needs:

Please note that all names have been changed for confidentiality reasons.

### Case Study One - Money Advice

We worked in partnership with the Housing Manager at Broxtowe Borough Council who looks after Hopkins Court in Eastwood. He referred me a client who had arresting officers at his door sent by Nottingham Magistrates Court. We worked together to suspend the Client's arrest for non-payment of a fine and eventually helped the client present himself at court which was in his best interest. The debt was reduced, a satisfactory payment plan was set up, the client applied for Personal Independence Payment which was back dated and he paid the debt off.

A good case study to show partnership working at its best to get a good outcome for the client. The debt and benefits issues took 4 months to resolve.

### Case Study Two - Financial Resilience Advice

Ruby is a Mother of three who was experiencing Domestic Abuse: her husband was financially controlling, used coercive behaviour and was emotionally abusive. Having used the service before, Ruby reached out to Citizen's Advice to ask for advice on how to leave this relationship safely. After speaking with one of our advisers, Ruby left her home and temporarily moved in with her mother outside of the Nottinghamshire area.

She was also unable to secure Discretionary Housing Payments to support her deposit and initial rental costs as the Nottingham City team mis-identified her tenancy agreement and believed she did not need to pay for the first month's rent in advance.

Our team worked with Ruby from the initial point of contact to help her leave the household in which she was experiencing DA. Our contact with the Broxtowe Borough Council, Women's Aid and other local support networks found solutions where they were previously not available. Our contact with the Broxtowe Borough Council allowed Ruby to use Homesearch at the correct band. We were also able to secure UC for Ruby and a DHP that allowed her to enter a council property and avoid going into serious debts in her private rented accommodation.

Ruby is now:

- In a much safer living environment and out of a domestic abuse situation.
- Much better financially and not needing to maintain expensive private rent just to be close enough to school.
- Empowered to support others in similar situations and training to volunteer with the Citizen's Advice service.

- DHP awarded - £347.48 to support initial housing costs.

### Case Study Three - Housing Advice

Tracey, a 32-year-old woman with four children, living in a Broxtowe Borough Council property.

Over the years the client has always only ever come to us at crisis point and has been at eviction stage numerous times. CAB have always been successful in suspending to keep the property and the family prevented from becoming homeless. Benefit issues have always been the problem as she lives a very chaotic life.

Client entered back into employment for a while and was doing really well but then the chaos set in and I believe she is now back in receipt of benefits.

As well as court CAB have dealt with benefits/tax credits/bailiffs. Each time successful.

To avoid future crisis and eviction client has now moved onto our Early Intervention Mental Health project and is now stable and doing well.

**SCHEDULE B – FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION**

In accordance with the Service Level Agreement, Citizens Advice Broxtowe has provided the Council with financial monitoring information. The predicted 12-monthly outturn to 31 March 2022 is as follows:

	Budget 2021/22 £	Actual 2021/22 £	Variance £
<b>Income</b>			
Donations	10,000	1,536	(8,464)
Charitable Activities	376,985	729,295	352,310
Other Income	111,063	49,316	(61,747)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>498,048</b>	<b>780,147</b>	<b>282,099</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Salaries	466,602	481,553	14,951
Staff and Volunteer Expenses	5,954	5,342	(612)
Office Costs	40,544	43,019	2,475
Premises	19,259	18,640	(619)
Governance Costs	1,200	1,800	600
Payments to Partner Organisations	42,178	307,011	264,833
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>575,737</b>	<b>857,365</b>	<b>281,628</b>
<b>Deficit/(Surplus)</b>	<b>77,689</b>	<b>77,218</b>	<b>(471)</b>

Variances can be explained as follows:

Income

- Additional income from Nottinghamshire County Council for our new financial resilience advice service (Covid Funds) to help us remain open throughout the pandemic.
- Additional income from Broxtowe Borough Council to prevent homelessness.
- Additional income to run set up new outreaches in GP surgeries (1-year pilot) and in the Hope Nottingham foodbank (3-year funding).

Expenditure

- Additional staff costs as we continue to grow the service to cope with demand.
- Additional capital costs for new equipment as our older computers start to fail.
- Partner payments - we run Lottery and Notts County Council projects with the other 5 Citizens Advice offices. Broxtowe are the lead so pay out to partners as per contract.

We are predicted to have a large deficit budget by the end of March 2023 (approximately £105,000). We have a fundraising strategy which is renewed and agreed by the Trustee Board each year. Post Covid we are aware that long term secure funding is getting harder to find. We have had a cut in our Nottinghamshire County Council grant from April 2021 which runs for four years so will not increase during that time.

We are also working closely with the other five Citizens Advice offices across Nottinghamshire to share best practice and resources where we can to make our money go further. This includes some infrastructure support such as IT and some shared staff roles.