

Delegated Officer Report

Decision Maker: Rebekah Sutcliffe
Strategic Director of Reform

Date of Decision: 2nd October 2019

Subject: Award and allocation of Priority Programme Funding to
Citizens Advice Oldham in 2019/20

Report Author: Natalie Downs, Stronger Communities Manager
Neil Consterdine, Assistant Director Youth, Leisure and
Communities

Ward (s): Boroughwide

Reason for the decision: The purpose of this report is to seek approval to award grant funding from the Council's Priority Programme Fund to Citizens Advice Oldham for the period 1st July 2019 to 31st March 2020 for the delivery of legal and advice services.

Summary: Priority Programme Funding (PPF) has been provided by the Council for many years as the main form of grant assistance to the voluntary, community and faith sector in the Borough and supports three strands of activity namely:

- Third Sector Infrastructure
- Legal and Advice Services
- Community engagement and development

Following the termination of the Housing and Social Welfare Advice contract with First Choice Homes Oldham, there is now a need to enter into a new grant agreement with Citizens Advice Oldham for the delivery of legal and advice services for the period 1st July 2019 to 31st March 2020 to ensure continuity in service.

The allocation of grant funding for third sector infrastructure will be subject to a separate report. The allocation of grant funding for community engagement and development was previously

approved on 16th July 2019.

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

If the Council chose not to enter into an agreement with Citizens Advice Oldham, residents would have no access to free legal and advice in the Borough, other than that provided by the Council's Welfare Rights service and lower level help provided by organisations (e.g. help with completing forms).

Consultation: including any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted.

The Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Communities has been consulted on the proposal.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that £195,000 be awarded to Citizens Advice Oldham for the period 1st July 2019 to 31st March 2020.

Implications:

What are the financial implications?

The cost of this proposal is £195k for 9 months to 31st March 2020. The funding for this proposal is available in the base budget of the Homelessness Team. The budget has been agreed to be transferred over to the Community Cohesion Service in 2019/20.

Carl Holdaway - Accountant

What are the legal implications?

A Grant Agreement will need to be executed between Pennine West Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd, trading as Citizens Advice Oldham, and Oldham Council to provide the funding, prescribe its use and associated conditions and minimise any risks to Oldham Council

Mark Hope – Legal Services

What are the procurement implications?

Citizens Advice Oldham are funded by external sources to provide legal and advice services. Oldham Council are now agreeing to contribute to that funding to enhance the service and ensure demand levels can be met for residents across the borough of Oldham. A robust grant funding agreement must be executed, and regular performance management reviews undertaken to ensure outputs are being achieved.

Dan Cheetham - Procurement

What are the Human Resources implications?

There are no employment law implications.

Radhika Aggarwal - Principal Employment Solicitor

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment attached or not required because (please give reason)

There are no adverse equality and diversity implications arising from the proposals contained within this report. However, an Equality Impact Assessment would be undertaken in the event that funding is not granted or reduced/withdrawn at any future point.

What are the property implications

None

**Risks:
Co-operative agenda**

The grant award supports the Council's Co-operative Agenda by providing funding which contributes towards the core running costs of a voluntary organisation and ensures that it is able to provide services that help communities address disadvantage, equality of opportunity and improve life chances for residents. Furthermore, the core funding enables Citizens Advice Oldham to attract further investment into the borough, as well as providing volunteering opportunities to residents.

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

Yes


Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?

Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

No

**List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:
None**

Report Author Sign-off:	
Neil Consterdine, Assistant Director Youth, Leisure and Communities	
Date: 2nd October 2019	

Please list and attach any appendices:-

Appendix number or letter	Description
1	Background to the decision

In consultation with Rebekah Sutcliffe, Strategic Director of Reform.

Signed :



Date: 02/10/2019

APPENDIX 1 BACKGROUND TO THE DECISION

1. Background:

- 1.1 Priority Programme Funding (PPF) has been provided by the Council for many years as the main form of grant assistance to the voluntary, community and faith sector in the Borough and supports three strands of activity namely:
- Third Sector Infrastructure
 - Legal and Advice Services
 - Community engagement and development
- 1.2 Until 2015, grant funding for the delivery of legal and advice services was awarded to Citizens Advice Oldham. However, in May 2015, the Council incorporated legal and advice services within a wider restricted tender for Housing and Social Welfare Advice services, which was awarded to First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO). FCHO provided the housing related aspects of the contract (e.g. housing options, homelessness etc.) and Citizens Advice Oldham were sub-contracted to provide legal and advice services.
- 1.3 The legal and advice requirements of the contract were to provide:
- Level 1 and 2 general advice via a telephone advice line for a minimum of seven hours per day and more detailed self-help information via the Citizen's Advice Oldham website.
- Level 2 General Help in the areas of debt; welfare benefits; housing; employment; and, immigration and asylum.
 - Level 3 Specialist help in the area of housing to residents not eligible for Legal Aid.
 - Five hours per week of outreach delivery within existing district locations, ensuring a spread across the Borough. The services are available to all residents within Oldham irrespective of where they live (For example, a resident from Failsworth could access provision in Chadderton and vice versa). Residents are therefore provided with flexibility and choice over where and when they access the services.
- 1.4 In 2019, FCHO issued the Council with notice to terminate the contractual agreement. As a result, the housing related services, which formed part of the contract, were transferred to the Council with effect from 1st July and are now delivered in-house.
- 1.5 The termination of the contract with FCHO has resulted in there being no contractual agreement in place with Citizens Advice Oldham to deliver legal and advice to residents for the remainder of this year.

2. Current Position:

- 2.1 The current model for delivering legal and advice services i.e. from outreach locations has been in existence for eight years and has achieved some outstanding results on behalf of Oldham residents.
- 2.2 Four out of six Districts currently commit funding to enhance outreach provision available in their respective areas and Shaw Parish Council provides additional monies to support Citizen's Advice services delivered at Crompton library. In essence, funding provided by Districts and Shaw Parish Council either bridges the gap to provide weekly, rather than fortnightly services (such as those funded by Failsworth and Hollinwood and East Oldham); increases the number of outreach sessions available at an existing delivery location (such as Chadderton Well-Being Centre); or creates opportunities for services to be delivered from new locations (such as those funded in West Oldham). However, Districts are now requesting that the Council identifies funding from central resources for this additional activity, rather than it having to be met each year from District budgets. A separate report will be prepared for consideration in relation to this.
- 2.3 Citizens Advice Oldham previously received £260,000 per annum for the delivery of legal and advice services from Priority Programme Fund monies. It is therefore proposed that the Council re-enters into a grant funding agreement with Citizens Advice Oldham for the period 1st July 2019 – 31st March 2020 at a cost of £195,000.
- 2.4 The continuation of a grant agreement with Citizens Advice Oldham would allow time to explore funding options in respect of sustaining the current delivery model from 2020/21 onwards. A report will therefore be presented for consideration in relation to this at a later stage.