

## **Delegated Officer Report**

**Decision Maker:** Rebekah Sutcliffe  
Strategic Director of Communities and Reform

**Date of Decision:** 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Subject:** **Award and allocation of Priority Programme Funding to Citizens Advice Oldham for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

**Report Author:** **Natalie Downs, Stronger Communities Manager**

**Ward (s):** Boroughwide

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**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 (CAO) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 for the delivery of legal and advice services.

**Summary:** Approval of funding to CAO for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 was incorporated within a separate delegated decision report titled 'Award and allocation of Priority Programme and Community Cohesion Funding to the voluntary, community and faith sector in 2021/22'. The funding award was requested for six months initially to allow time for the Place Based customer and financial support offer to be developed, which would incorporate the services provided by CAO. However, the implementation of this workstream has been delayed and as a result, a further request is sought to extend the current arrangement with CAO until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

***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 Economic and Social Reform has previously been consulted on the proposal.

**Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that £130,000 be awarded to Citizens Advice Oldham for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 for the delivery of legal and advice services.

**Implications:**

*What are the **financial** implications?*

The preferred option is to award a further six-month funding to CAO at a cost of £130k.

The payment to CAO is fully budgeted in the Community Cohesion budget for 2021/22. Therefore, there are no adverse financial implications.

(Nicola Harrop – Finance Manager)

*What are the **legal** implications?*

Legal services can assist with the drafting of a relevant grant funding agreement to ensure required outputs are achieved.

(Colin Britain – Assistant Borough Solicitor)

*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 Specialist)

*What are the **Human Resources** implications?*

Although there are no staffing implications for the Council, if the recommended option were not approved then there would potentially be significant staffing implications for Citizens Advice Oldham

**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.

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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**

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<b>Report Author Sign-off:</b>	
Neil Consterdine Assistant Director - Youth, Leisure and Communities	
<b>Date: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>	

Please list and attach any appendices:-

<b>Appendix Number or Letter</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Background to the decision

In consultation with Rebekah Sutcliffe, Strategic Director of Communities and Reform.

Signed :



Date: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021

## **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 A grant allocation of £260,000 per annum is currently ringfenced to Citizens Advice Oldham (CAO) within the Council's Priority Programme Fund budget. Approval was previously granted to award £130,000 to CAO for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. This report seeks approval to award a further £130,000 for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 for the delivery of legal and advice services in relation to Level 1 and Level 2 general advice, Level 2 general help in the areas of debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment, immigration and asylum and Level 3 Specialist help in the area of housing to residents not eligible for Legal Aid.

### **2. Current Position:**

- 2.1 The Council would usually seek approval at the start of the financial year to award the total grant allocation for legal and advice services to Citizens Advice Oldham. However, the Council has been working with internal service managers and partners to develop options for creating a Place Based customer and financial support offer, which would incorporate the services provided by CAO. As a result, approval was initially sought to award funding for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
- 2.2 The expectation was that the new customer and financial support offer would be implemented by the end of September 2021. CAO's grant funding was therefore extended for a six-month period to allow sufficient time to explore a redesign of the service delivery model. However, the need for further negotiations with service managers and compliance with internal governance processes have resulted in the workstream being delayed.
- 2.3 In order to allow time for the workstream to develop further, there is a need to extend the existing grant arrangement with CAO until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and award the remaining £130,000 allocated in 2021/22.