

Delegated Cabinet Member Key Decision Report

Decision Maker and Portfolio area:	Cllr Abdul Jabbar, Cabinet Member for Finance & Corporate Resources
Date of Decision:	11 th August 2025
Subject:	Priority Programme Fund – Legal & Advice Services
Report Author:	Mark Edmondson, Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits Rachel Dyson, Thriving Communities Lead (Public Health)
Ward (s):	All

Reason for the decision: To allocate grant funding for legal and advice services, renewing the existing grant for one year (25/26).

Summary: The purpose of this report is to seek approval to allocate funding for the renewal of grants to Citizen's Advice Oldham for one year until 31st March 2026, at a total cost of £378,200.

Due to the cancellation of the Cabinet meeting in August approval has been given for this decision to be delegated further to Rule 14 of the Council's Constitution which outlines the protocol for urgent decision making, as any further delay would be unreasonable.

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

Option 1 – Decommissioning: This is not regarded as a viable option. For Citizen's Advice this would represent the loss of their core funding and may result in a significant reduction in the services they are able to offer and could result in closure of the service.

Option 2 – Renew the grant agreement for one year (25/26): This would sustain funding

enabling Citizen's Advice to continue to provide services to residents at a time when demand for advice and support is increasing due to cost of living increases and their impacts.

Recommendation(s):

Option 2 – Renew the grant agreement for one year (25/26): This would sustain funding enabling Citizen's Advice to continue to provide services to residents at a time when demand for advice and support is increasing due to cost of living increases and their impacts.

Implications:

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

The total of the allocation to Citizen's Advice Oldham is £378,200.

This is made up of grant held within 11610 Housing & Council Tax Benefit for £240,440 and £137,760 Summons Costs Recoveries Income, also held within 10300 Council Tax Collection.

There are sufficient resources held to approve the funding allocation to the CAB.

Jamie Kelly

*What are the **procurement** implications?*

There are no procurement implications as this relates to the approval of Grants. In this instance Rule 14 – Special Urgency has been called upon however it should be noted that retrospectively acquiring authority to grant should not be common practice. Recommendation that the Key decision in future should be carried out in a timely fashion and prior to the date required.

Angela Porter – Senior Category Manager
Procurement

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

The CAB offer an important advisory service to the residents of the Borough and the residents who utilise the service are often families or vulnerable residents. The recommended option helps assure the Council that it is maintaining a resident focus. Should the recommended option be approved it is important that the grant agreement be signed and monitored and regular liaison with the CAB is maintained to ensure that the grant funding is being correctly utilised by the CAB.

Alex Bougatef - Legal Services

What are the **Human Resources** implications?

None

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

No vulnerable group will be disproportionality affected from the proposals contained within this report. However, an EIA would be undertaken in the event that grant funding is not agreed or is reduced or withdrawn.

What are the **property** implications

None

Risks:

None

Co-operative agenda

Citizen's Advice Oldham are key partners in empowering residents and communities to help themselves and supporting them where needed with legal and advice services, reducing demand on Council and partner services.

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

Reason why this Is a Key Decision

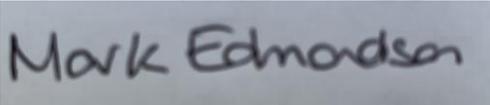
(1) to result in the local authority incurring expenditure or the making of savings which are, significant (over £250k) having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates

In line with paragraph 14 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules within the Council's constitution, special urgency procedures have been applied so that a decision can be made to award funding to Citizens Advice Oldham, as this cannot be reasonably deferred because of the cancellation of the Cabinet meeting due in August was cancelled and it would be unreasonable to delay the decision further. As

this procedure rule applies, this decision is exempt from call-in.

This item has been included on the Forward Plan under reference FCR-06-25.

There are no background papers for this report.

Report Author Sign-off:	Mark Edmondson
	Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits
Date:	11.8.25

Please list any appendices:-

Appendix number or letter	Description

Background:

1.1 The Council has, for a number of years, funded a range of voluntary, community and faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector organisations through its Priority Programme Fund (PPF). The fund has had three main strands, alongside supporting a small number of community events:

- Voluntary Sector Infrastructure
- Community Centres and Organisations
- Legal and Advice Services

The focus of this report is grants for Legal and Advice Services.

As part of the VCFSE review consideration has been given to the grant funding of Citizen's Advice and whether the Priority Programme Fund remains the most appropriate means to fund those services. It was proposed that there would be benefits to the realignment of the available funding within the wider Financial Support and Advice Services offer as this would present opportunities to better integrate the service offer operationally and to bridge the funding gap for Citizen's Advice to enable services to be maintained in a more sustainable way longer-term.

1.2 Citizens Advice Oldham provides legal and advice services to residents and has been instrumental in supporting our response to the cost-of-living crisis, responding to increasing demand and changes in residents' circumstances providing advice around benefits, debt, housing, fuel poverty etc. Citizens Advice Oldham services now also form part of the placed based offer in each of Oldham's five districts, ensuring that residents have face to face access to timely housing, debt and welfare benefit advice at a number of locations across the borough.

Proposals:

- 2.1 In 24/25 Citizen's Advice Oldham were awarded a total grant of **£378,200** made up of funds from the Priority Programme Fund and the Cost-of-Living response. As part of the Council's budget proposals agreed for 2025/26 it has been agreed that the two contributions will be brought together in a single budget as part of the wider Financial Support and Advice Services offer under Revenues & Benefits. This will include **£240,440** from the Priority Programme Fund budget and **£137,760** from the Cost-of-Living budget. The total grant awarded will remain at **£378,200** for 2025/26.
- 2.2 Work is being undertaken during 2025/26 to review and restructure the wider Financial Advice and Support Services offer within the Council to ensure that it can respond effectively to increased demand and need while remaining resident focussed. This includes consideration of more effective integration of front doors for services, pathways and referral routes, and financial support offers. The aim of this is to ensure residents are able to access information they need to help themselves, as well as access any support they need easily through a single point of access, so improving the customer experience and reducing failure demand. Citizen's Advice have a key role to play in this offer, and it is proposed that they are involved in the redesign work to ensure their services are integrated within the wider offer, as well as to inform the scope of their service offer going forward. This will be undertaken with the intention to move towards a longer-term funding arrangement alongside an updated specification to take into account the developing context of service delivery.

Conclusions:

- 3.1 It is recommended that the grant agreement is renewed for one year (25/26) utilising the available budget. This would sustain the current level of funding enabling Citizen's Advice to continue to provide services to residents at a time when demand for advice and support is increasing due to cost of living increases and their impacts. This would allow for the review work to be completed to inform future funding arrangements with Citizen's Advice.

Signed:



Cllr Abdul Jabbar, Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate Services and Sustainability

Date: 12.08.25

In consultation with:



Fiona Greenway, Executive Director Resources

Date: 12.08.25