

## LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 28 NOVEMBER 2018

### PART I - DELEGATED

#### **6. CITIZENS' ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18 (CED)**

##### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 The Committee will receive a presentation from the Director of the Citizens' Advice Service in Three Rivers (CASTR) highlighting their performance and achievements for the financial year 2017/18.

##### **2 Details**

- 2.1 Three Rivers District Council has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with CASTR and pays over an annual grant of £257,340 which is VAT exclusive.
- 2.2 The next formal review of the SLA is in March 2019.
- 2.3 The Council also meets the lease costs of Council premises used by CASTR in Rickmansworth.
- 2.4 In addition the Council provided CASTR with a £10,000 capital grant in 2018 towards the refurbishment costs of their new South Oxhey branch.
- 2.5 Council funding and support enables CASTR to deliver the following services for the residents of Three Rivers:
- Provision of advice to residents principally covering: benefits, consumer rights, debt, education, employment, finance, health, housing, immigration, law, relationships, signposting, tax, travel and utilities.
  - Access to 3 bureaux in Rickmansworth, South Oxhey and Abbots Langley from Monday to Friday, as well as outreach services in other areas.
  - Home visits for people who are housebound.
  - Access to specialist debt advice and budgeting courses.
  - Representation by CASTR for clients in repossession hearings in court and clients at benefit tribunal hearings.
  - Provision of information to partner organisations and membership of the Three Rivers Local Strategic Partnership.
- 2.6 The CASTR annual report is within Appendix A.
- 2.7 Appendix B contains the CASTR Strategic and Management Performance Indicators for 2017/18 along with any feedback from CASTR.
- 2.8 Based on the significant over performance against target for the CP28 and CP30 Strategic Indicators, officers raised the targets for 2018/19.

### **3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 To note the performance and achievements of the Citizens' Advice Service in Three Rivers for 2017/18.
- 3.2 To raise any questions following the presentation by the Director of the Citizens' Advice Service in Three Rivers.

### **4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policies are entitled the Strategic Plan 2018-21.

### **5 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The budgeted funding for the SLA for 2018/19 is £257,340.
- 5.2 The Council also meets the lease costs of Council premises used by CASTR in Rickmansworth. A market rent figure of £35,000 is entered into the Council's accounts for transparency, which shows an income figure in the Property cost centre and a matching expenditure figure in the CAB cost centre. This is purely a notional accounting entry and has a nil effect on the Council's revenue account.

### **6 Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

- 6.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 6.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Community Partnerships service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.
- 6.3 There are no risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation.
- 6.4 There are no risks to the Council in rejecting the recommendation.

### **7 Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre and Communications & Website Implications**

- 7.1 None specific.

### **8 Recommendation**

- 8.1 To note the performance and achievements of the Citizens' Advice Service in Three Rivers for 2017/18.

Report prepared by: Karl Stonebank, Partnerships Officer

**Data Quality**

Data sources: CASTR SLA Performance Report – 2017/18

CASTR Strategic/Management Performance Indicators Returns – 2017/18

Data checked by:

- Andy Stovold, Head of Community Partnerships
- Bryan Collett, Assistant Finance Manager - Accountancy

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A - CASTR Annual Report 2017/18

Appendix B - CASTR Strategic & Management Performance Indicators 2017/18



## CITIZENS ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

(Abbots Langley, Oxhey & Rickmansworth Bureaux)

Issue Distribution	Number of issues	% of work
Benefits	6,430	35
Consumer	499	3
Debt	3,543	20
Discrimination	157	1
Education	100	1
Employment	1,265	7
Financial	545	2
Health	361	2
Housing	1,780	10
Immigration	174	1
Legal	964	5
Relationships	1,412	8
Tax	236	1
Travel	392	2
Utilities	325	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,183</b>	<b>100%</b>

Staffing	Number of hours per week	
<b>PAID HOURS per week across all 3 CABx, of which</b>	279	
<b>Core funding:</b>	249	
<b>External funding:</b>	30	
<b>Full time equivalent for core hours</b>	6.7	
<b>VOLUNTARY HOURS per week</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>Hrs</b>
<b>Advisers</b>	65	520
<b>Administration</b>	2	10
<b>Trainees</b>	5	27
<b>Trustees</b>	8	4
<b>I.T.</b>	1	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>569</b>

### Noteworthy Trends

- Total number of advice issues in 2017/18: 18,183 (+5% on 2016/ 17).
- Total number of new clients in 2017/18: 7,685 (+5% on 2016/ 17).
- 40 % of our clients are disabled or have a long term health condition.
- We offer email advice to Three Rivers residents via our website: [threeiverscab.org.uk](http://threeiverscab.org.uk).
- We also provide advice via webchat to increase our channels of access.
- We joined Adviceline, the Citizens Advice county phone service, five years ago and are the only Herts CAB to have their dedicated local phone service linked to Adviceline.
- We provide an outreach at Watford County Court, to represent and defend clients facing possession hearings: success rate 100%!
- We provide advice outreaches at Mill End and South Oxhey foodbanks, plus outreaches at Croxley and Chorleywood libraries.
- Our caseworkers represent clients at benefit tribunals: success rate 96%.
- We offer a full home visiting service for the housebound in Three Rivers.
- Money gained for local community in past year: £1,523,768 (+9% on 2017/ 18)
- 31,200 hours donated by 81 volunteers last year, equating to £530,400 if paid man hours.
- Courses on financial awareness given to local community groups, pensioners and schools (241 attendees) plus individual budgeting sessions.
- Research and Campaigns work – working with local MPs and council officers.
- District manager LSP board member, vice chair of LSP subgroup and until 3/16 was chair of Herts CAB managers' group.

## **External Funding initiatives 2017/ 18 – Total raised £136,807**

- Herts County Council – welfare, foodbank and DRO applications funding (£26,109 pa to end March 2019).
- Herts County Council – Universal Credit support and advice to West of Herts (£32,000) to end March 2019.
- Herts Healthy Homes Fund from Herts County Council (£15,000 for Herts CABx).
- Thrive Homes - extra CAB debt advice hours (£12,000 p.a.).
- Access to Justice Foundation – provision of family law casework to end Dec 2018 (£9,000).
- South Bucks DC management fee for general advice service (£8,000 p.a.).
- Abbots Langley Parochial Church Council – rent subsidy (£6,004 p.a.).
- Herts PCC - Scams advice to elderly and vulnerable to end Mar 2018 (£8,554).
- Martin Lewis Fund – Outreach work (£5,000)
- Watford Rural Parish Council – Oxhey caseworker (£4,000 p.a.).
- OFGEM – courses for local community on utility bill savings (£3,600).
- Co-Op – new Oxhey CAB phone system (£3,220).
- Abbots Langley Parish Council – Abbots caseworker (£2,000 p.a.).
- Croxley Parish Council – Library outreach (£785)
- Chorleywood Parish Council – Library Outreach (£785)
- Waitrose – Local Community Fund £750

### **Home Visits & Casework:**

Service available at all 3 sites.

### **Legal Advice Sessions:**

Available at Oxhey and Rickmansworth.

### **CAB Premises:**

Also used by hearing assistance charity, Signpost youth charity and Mill End Foodbank.

### **Opening Hours:**

Total of 77 hours per week including Tuesday late night.

### **The Future:**

Concern that in 2019/20 current frontline services may need to be reviewed; South Oxhey CAB relocation – extra rent of £13,500 pa; consequences to clients of Universal Credit and Brexit

Appendix B

**CASTR Strategic & Management Performance Indicators - 2017/18**

Strategic Indicator	Target Q1	Result Q1	Target Q2	Result Q2	Target Q3	Result Q3	Target Q4	Result Q4	17/18 Target	17/18 Result	Exception Report / Other Feedback from CASTR
<b>CP27:</b> Total Number of Clients Supported									7,685	7,685	
<b>CP28:</b> Nos. of clients that now receive benefits they are entitled to following CAS in Three Rivers Intervention	733	1338	367	1023	367	926	733	841	2,200	4128	Surge in demand due to Universal Credit and shrinking disposable incomes from welfare reform/inflation. There has also been an increase in rent arrears as clients struggle to pay everyday costs.
<b>CP29:</b> Nos. of clients onto a Debt Relief Order (DRO)	11	8	6	11	5	4	11	11	33	34	DROs can only be processed when client meets strict criteria
<b>CP30:</b> Nos. of clients no longer at threat of eviction that were at threat	100	131	55	127	45	121	100	118	300	497	
<b>CP31:</b> Nos. of clients still at threat of eviction that were at threat	11	10	6	9	6	5	12	5	35	29	

Management Indicator (no target set)	2017/18 Result
Total of income gain for clients, £	1,523,768
Total of client debts written off, £	238,020
Nos. of clients who are paying their debts off	835
Success rate (%) in representing clients at benefit appeals	96
Success rate (%) in representing clients at repossession hearings	100