

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES ADVISORY BOARD

01 March 2016

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 KEY VOLUNTARY SECTOR BODIES – GRANT SUPPORT

To agree grant support and Service Level Agreements for the next three years.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 We reported to the Board in January of this year drawing attention to the annual core grants currently being awarded to the following key voluntary sector bodies in the Borough:

Citizens Advice North and West Kent	- £111,000
Voluntary Action within Kent (now renamed Imago)	- £5,000
Voluntary Action Maidstone (now renamed Involve)	- £5,000
Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge	- £10,000
Age Concern Malling	- £10,000
Maidstone and West Kent Mediation	- £6,000

1.1.2 The report noted the Borough Council's on-going and challenging financial position and the consequent need to secure the agreement of those bodies to a reduction in annual grant for the next three years to assist with the delivery of the Council's savings targets as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It was agreed that these bodies should be consulted on reductions to grant support in general range of 15% - 25%.

1.2 Citizens Advice North and West Kent

1.2.1 Given the level of financial support the Borough Council currently provides to Citizens Advice North and West Kent, we have liaised with both their Chief Executive Officer and met with Board members to explore grant reductions. As a result of those negotiations, we have provisionally agreed a reduction in the core annual grant of £16,000 per annum giving a revised annual grant of £95,000 for the next three years.

1.2.2 Whilst this could have resulted in a need for the organisation to reduce the current level of services provided locally, the Board has agreed to draw on its financial reserves held specifically for Tonbridge and Malling to enable a similar level of support services to be maintained. In addition to retaining the level of service at the Tonbridge office, the Malling area will now be supported by 2 'roaming' advisers and 1 supervisor for 3 days a week. This will provide a more flexible support service and will enable support to be delivered at a range of different locations in the Malling area as well as some home visits. This service is additional to the outreach services funded from other sources including Snodland and Borough Green.

1.2.3 In conclusion, I believe the above proposals should be welcomed and endorsed by the Board. The very positive approach adopted by Citizens Advice North and West Kent is to be commended. A draft revised three year SLA is attached at Annex 1.

1.3 Other Voluntary Sector Bodies

1.3.1 All of the organisations received a letter notifying them of this review and each have recently had the opportunity to meet with officers to discuss the impact of a reduction in their grant support. Whilst the grant reductions were obviously not welcomed by the organisations, the meetings that were held were positive and the organisations understood the financial challenges being faced. Providers generally felt they would endeavour to continue the same level of service on a reduced grant with no need for any major amendments to their current existing Service Level Agreements.

1.3.2 Organisations felt a similar reduction for all five bodies that we fund would be a fair approach to adopt and felt that a new 3 year agreement on funding would give them some level of certainty on which to plan services. For all five organisations, good progress has been achieved against the objectives set out in the SLA's agreed last year. It is therefore recommended that these be carried forward for the next three year period and that the annual grants for each of these organisations is reduced by a flat rate of 20%.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 Addressed via adopted Service Level Agreements (Annexes 1-6).

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 As discussed in the report, the following reductions in annual grant support have been agreed with the bodies concerned and are now recommended:

Citizens Advice North and West Kent	- £16,000
Imago	- £1000
Involve	- £1000
Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge	- £2000

Age Concern Malling	- £2000
Mediation Services	- £1200

1.5.2 This therefore generates annual savings over the next three years totalling £25,200.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 N/A

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That Service Level Agreements for the key Voluntary Sector Bodies as set out in Annexes 1- 6 of this report **BE APPROVED**;

1.8.2 That the following annual grants **BE CONFIRMED** for the three year period 2016/17 – 2018/19:

Tonbridge and Malling CAB	- £95000
Imago	- £4000
Involve	- £4000
Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge	- £8000
Age Concern Malling	- £8000
Maidstone and West Kent Mediation	- £4800

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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Chief Executive