

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE			
PORTFOLIO AREA: Community Activities			
Date of Meeting:	19 th December 2002		
Public			
Key Decision:	Yes	Recorded in Forward Plan:	Yes
Inside Policy Framework			

Title: Review of Advice Agencies
Report of: Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Report reference: TC. 224/02

Summary:

At the request of the Executive, this report considers options for making budget savings on Advice Services.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to consider the details in the report and indicate whether they require any of the options offered, to be further investigated.

Reason for Recommendations:

To enable further progress on concluding the review of the agencies and settling of a budget for the year 2003/04.

Contact Officer: Rob Burns **Ext:** 7352

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2. **BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Executive has acknowledged the hard work carried out by Advice Agencies in the City. They have stated however that they are conscious of the high level of subsidy provided by this Authority to advice agencies and that they considered that there is an overlap of functions between the agencies. They therefore requested that a further report be brought forward within the Budget process to look at the various options, emphasising that the Executive supports the continuation of independent advice to the citizens of Carlisle. They have also set out their intention to give greater certainty to the appropriate bodies by granting them 3-year grant forecast, stated annually.

2. The Corporate Plan priority CO1 has a priority for action in 2002/03 to undertake a fundamental review of grant procedures to advice agencies ensuring there is a co-ordinated approach and the Council sees value for money.

1.3 The policy context is that financial support to the advice agencies has been provided for many years within the terms of the Council's Anti Poverty Strategy and more recently, as part of the Cumbria Community Legal Services' Partnership's Strategic Plan. This partnership is part of a national initiative, under the auspices of the Legal Services Commission (LSC), which seeks to incorporate a local body of funders and advice providers working in harmony to provide advice on a co-ordinated and strategic basis. The Council has committed to a Concordat and a Funding Agreement as appended. (A) Councillor Pattinson is the current chair of the Partnership Strategy Group.

4. As part of the Executive's process of consultation on this issue, the Community Activities Portfolio Holder met with representatives of the Agencies concerned and the notes of that meeting are appended. (B)
5. The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) and Law Centre were asked to respond to a series of questions about their service and the relevant correspondence is also appended to further inform Members (C), (D), (E).
6. As a key funder, through franchise contracts, of the Agencies and the 'driver' of much of the policy direction of the Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership, the Legal Services Commission's views have also been sought and notes from that consultative meeting are appended (F)

2.0 Current Position

1. Members will be aware that at present, the Council supports advice services as follows:

Current Grant Current Forecast

2002/03 2003/04

A) The Law Centre £87,090 £77,090

The remit of the Law Centre is to provide free legal, housing and welfare advice.

The Council last reviewed its financial commitment to the Law Centre in 2000/01 and reduced funding by £10,000 per year over a three-year period.

It should be noted that Allerdale District Council has given notice to withdraw it's grant contribution to the Law Centre from this year, although it is understood that this may be the subject of a judicial review and Copeland BC have also negotiated, with the Law Centre, a minor reduction in their grant this year.

Current Grant Current Forecast

2002/03 2003/04

B) Citizen's Advice Bureau £58,990 £47,530

The remit of the Citizen's Advice Bureau is to offer help, support, assistance and representation to clients, on a range of issues such as employment, welfare benefits, debt, consumer, housing, immigration and family matters.

Grant to the Bureau will be reduced by £12,580 in 2003/04 and £14,000 in 2004/05 as this is the end of the period to which the Council has committed to pay rental on the

building.

Current Funding Current Forecast

2002/03 2003/04

C) Benefit's Advice Centre £129,580 £137,170

The remit of the Benefit's Advice Centre is to provide a service offering advice and tribunal representation to any resident of the City on any aspect of welfare and social security benefits.

A. 'Independent' Projects

The Raffles Advice and Information Centre is a two year project, based in the old Raffles Neighbourhood Office, funded by SRB and run by a partnership including Age Concern, DACE (Disability Association Carlisle and Eden), and the CAB.

Other independent advice projects are under development at Botcherby and Brampton.

2.2 Although each Agency has the capacity to give advice on a number of similar categories, this rarely happens in reality.

3. The CLSP has developed a 'Referral Protocol' which each Agency has signed up to which is designed to ensure that there is no significant overlap in advice giving.

3.0 A Strategic Approach

3.1 The Cumbria Legal Services Partnership has produced a Strategic Plan for the year 2003/04, which identifies a significant level of unmet need in a number of advice categories. There are a number of identified legal categories of need and the categories currently covered by the agencies in Carlisle are as follows:

- Welfare Benefits
- Housing
- Employment
- Debt
- Mental Health
- Education
- Public Law
- Community Education
- General Help
- Immigration

In 2001/2 the Legal Services Commission awarded franchises to not for profit organisations in Carlisle worth over £235,000 to provide advice in these categories.

In addition, £237,000 was awarded for solicitors contracts and tolerances, for work done by solicitors who are not experts in that particular subject.

3.2 In attempting to meet the above need, there is not, to date, a statutory requirement on any one organisation to provide these services. The position of the Council is that it is acting in a discretionary, non-statutory, capacity in providing funding to advice agencies and does not itself receive any grants for this purpose from any other source.

3.3 The Council has clearly taken a proactive and positive approach in recognising the level of need within the community and has recognised that expenditure in this area can yield an economic benefit to local people and the community generally.

4. For instance, the Benefits Advice Centre alone, for an expenditure of £1.3m in recent years, has produced, on the basis of their own estimation, approximately £17m of economic benefit to local citizens, albeit mainly from other Government sources.

3.5 The quality provided by all services is high with each having been awarded a Community Legal Services Quality Mark in at least one category and much positive feedback from local people.

3.6 The question posed by the Executive is what the ideal strategic model for the provision of services should be in future.

3.7 In answering the question, a distinction can be drawn between general advice given to the public on demand on a wide range of topics and more specialist advice provided according to individual circumstances.

3.8 General advice is mainly given by the Citizen's Advice Bureau largely by trained volunteers, although they are able to give specialist advice in some categories through specifically and usually short term, funded projects. The CAB has the LSC Quality Mark.

3.9 Specialist advice is provided by the Benefit's Advice Centre in respect of welfare benefits on any aspect of the Social Security system, including representing individuals at appeals and tribunals.

10. The Law Centre has Legal Service Commission contracts to provide quality marked specialist advice in the following areas:

- Housing
- Education
- Community Care
- Employment
- Mental Health
- Public Law

4.0 Options for the Provision of Generalist Advice

A The Citizens Advice Bureau

4.1 The current situation is that the majority of generalist advice is provided by the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

4.2 The Council is the only core funder for this service, although the County Council substantially funds the provision of debt advice. Other funding is attracted for specific

projects, and withdrawal or reduction of the budget would result in severe restrictions in service or even closure, as their funding enables the employment of the only two paid members of staff who are responsible for the training and supervision of volunteers.

3. It is therefore recommended that the core funding grant be continued to provide this essential service and that the terms of the Council's grant be targeted to this end, by way of a Service Level Agreement. There is an issue however, in that the lease for the premises will expire in August 2003 and from the financial year 2003/04 funding for accommodation will not be available from the Council. If Members wish for the service to continue, then additional financial provision will need to be made available for alternative accommodation or other options will need to be investigated including possible co-location of the facility within the Civic Centre as space becomes available. Consultation with the agency is therefore essential.
4. The evaluation of accommodation options is important as the lease for the current premises expires in August 2003 in accordance with an agreement previously reached with them. Options will be investigated and be the subject of separate reports from the Council's Community Support Manager who will discuss these options with the organisations concerned, particularly in view of the expiry of the CAB's current premises lease arrangements in 2003 and the limitations of the BAC's premises.
5. The Council clearly stated when the grant for premises was made in 1998, that it would not renew the grant when it expires in 2003.

4.6 The Bureau's response to the series of questions posed as part of the consultation process, is appended. (D)

5.0 Options for Specialist Advice

1. The Benefit's Advice Centre

5.1 The Benefit's Advice Centre currently provides 3 direct public access 'drop in' advice sessions per week, together with outreach 'appointment only' sessions at Brampton and Longtown. A significant proportion of work involves representing individuals at appeals and tribunals and complex casework. The current model is driven by public demand and the Centre therefore cannot wholly control the casework undertaken.

5.2 The Manager is currently looking to improve provision by converting the drop in sessions to appointment based sessions to residents of Carlisle and District only. This is to provide a more responsive service and to better organise the workload.

5.3 Future options include concentration on appeal representation and complex matters only, as these are the areas of greatest need as identified in the Legal Services Commission's needs analysis and are not provided by any other agency. This option would be consistent with the Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership's Strategic Plan.

5.4 Alternatively, an option has been suggested that the service should convert to a general open door advice service on benefit related issues. This would largely remove any casework and representation capacity. As this would lead to duplication with the work of the Citizen's Advice Bureau and increase the already high level of unmet need for other categories of advice and representation, which there would be no resource to satisfy, it is not recommended.

5. The main options for consideration are therefore;

- a. to leave the service as at present, with the workload driven essentially by public demand. This would not however, result in any financial saving.
- b. If reductions are required, then it would be possible to concentrate the service on the complex casework and appeals representation for which there is no other agency operating in Carlisle and which is a priority area for the Legal Services Commission. This would mean not providing a direct public access service and would result in some saving on staff costs. Such a service could also be provided potentially from the Civic Centre or other existing Council or voluntary sector premises which would lead to further savings and would avoid the need for substantial adaptations at the existing premises at Old Post Office Court required by the Disability Discrimination Act. The issue of seeking alternative premises for the BAC's is one, which requires a commitment to undertake at an early date.

In this option, the role of the Manager of the Service would be changed to take a more strategic and enabling role in partnership management, partnership development generally and co-ordination within the community to identify alternative funding sources and ways of delivering advice and in raising community capacity. This could be a key role in the Council's drive to combat social exclusion and in the processes of both social and economic regeneration, particularly co-ordinating advice services and ensuring linkages between partnerships and regeneration programmes.

This option could be provided by retaining 2 x caseworkers, plus revising the Manager's post as above.

The approximate financial saving would be in the order of £45,000, on the basis that the package included a re-location of the staff to the Civic Centre. However, it would mean that 2 members of the current staffing establishment would not be required and unless alternative employment could be found there could be redundancies.

- c. A further option would be the total deletion of the Service, which would yields a net saving of £130,000 with possible, as yet unidentified, redundancy costs should redeployment within the Council not be possible.
6. It is felt that other avenues could be pursued in terms of attracting additional funding and although probably not for exactly the same service which is currently provided, it would still be for the provision of more focussed and targeted advice.

5.7 At this stage, no alternative funding sources have been identified in respect of this work, but potential sources of income for future examination include the Supporting People Initiative and the Rural Development Programme and Company.

1. The Community Law Centre

5.8 The Law Centre provides a comprehensive range of specialist advice as previously highlighted, enabled by the core funding provided by the Council and by substantial funds from it's franchises with the Legal Services Commission and other funders.

5.9 The current funding position is that the Council's core funding grant is reducing by £10,000 per annum for 3 years, which will eventually, in 2003/4, settle at a level of £77000, which is approximately 20% of their revenue budget.

10. The Law Centre's response to any further reduction is recorded in their reply to a series of questions put to them as part of the consultation process of this review and is appended to this report. (E)

In summary their view is:

- A 25% cut would reduce the service in the City by 33% and create one redundancy;
- A 50% cut would mean a 75% reduction in service and result in two redundancies;
- A 100% cut would mean the service would probably cease, if alternative funding was not found, and would result in three redundancies.

5.11 If consideration were to be given to reducing the Law Centre's grant, then depending on the quantum, a significant period of notice would be given to allow the centre to strategically plan for that eventuality.

6. SUMMARY

1. The requirement of the Executive to identify options for substantial budget savings drives the need to reflect on the cost of the provision of advice services.
2. Various options are presented for Members to consider, including:-
 - a. Retaining the grant to the CAB whilst upgrading the terms of their Service Agreement and giving further consideration to the accommodation issues, post August 2003.
 - b. Re-focusing the work of the BAC to concentrate on complex casework and representation at appeals and tribunals and on the Manager taking a more strategic and enabling role in the development of advice services generally.
 - c. Reviewing the grant to the Law Centre.
 - d. Investigating the options to attract additional funding, particularly to supplement the work of the BAC.
1. Any decisions taken as part of the budget process will require more detailed reports on implementation and should be carried out in accordance with a commitment to the Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership and in full consultation with the relevant agencies and other partners, including the Legal Services Commission.
2. It is clearly for the Council to make whatever decision it feels is in the best interests of the residents of the City.

6. CONSULTATION

1. Consultation to Date –
 1. Meeting of Council officers and the Community Activities Portfolio Holder with Advice Agency representatives and follow up correspondence.
 2. Meeting with Legal services Commission representatives on 3rd December 2002
2. Consultation proposed – Further discussion with Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership and relevant local agencies.

7. STAFFING/RESOURCES COMMENTS

Identified in report.

8. CITY TREASURER'S COMMENTS

None at this stage.

9. LEGAL COMMENTS

None at this stage.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to consider the details in the report and select a preferred option for further investigation.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To respond to the request of the Executive and to enable further progress on concluding the review of the agencies and settling on a budget for the year 2003/04.

Town Clerk & Chief Executive

1st November 2002

Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership Concordat

We, the undersigned, are committed to the development of a Community Legal Service which benefits Cumbrian citizens.

By working in partnership with each other, and encouraging others to take part in a local network which the partnership listens to and consults with, we aim to ensure that the key elements of the Government's vision for a Community Legal Service are addressed.

The Government's vision for a Community Legal Service is:-

- a network of quality providers
- supported by co-ordinated funding
- delivering services to local communities
- based on a clear picture of local needs

As partners, we agree the Cumbria Community Legal Service partnership should have a number of key aims:-

- to look at people's needs for legal advice across the county
- check whether people can access legal advice when they need it
- help ensure they receive quality advice
- co-ordinate our funding to achieve best value
- develop training and referral arrangements
- encourage new initiatives which help local people

We will refine and review these aims as the partnership develops.

As partners, we will strive to help shape the future of community legal services in Cumbria.

Signed by:

W. Minto
W Minto CBE DL
Leader, Cumbria County Council

Barbara Cannon
Barbara Cannon
Chairman
CLSP Strategy Group

J. Borer
Jennifer Borer
Leader
South Lakeland
District Council

M. Hill
Myrna Hill
Manager
Benefit Advice Centre

M. Tennant
Mark Tennant
Chief Officer
Disability Action

Peter Stybelski
Peter Stybelski
Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Carlisle City Council

C. Southward
Chris Southward
Chair
Community Law Centre

Lorraine Greenwood
Lorraine Greenwood
Liaison Officer
West Cumberland Law Society

Mark Fryer
Mark Fryer
Leader
Allerdale District Council

J. Hayton
Jackie Hayton
Project Manager
NCH Action for Children
Family Mediation Service

Sharon Ombler-Spain
Sharon Ombler-Spain
Director
North Cumbria
Health Action Zone

Tony Kent
Tony Kent
Chair
Citizens Advice Bureau,
Cumbria

J. Mark Crompton
J. Mark Crompton
President
Westmorland Law Society

V. N. Walker
Mrs N Walker
Chairman
Eden District Council

Ch. Hacker
Rt Rev George Hacker
President
Age Concern Cumbria

David Addy
David Addy
Regional Director
Legal Aid Board

Lois Willis
Lois Willis
Chief Executive
Morecambe Bay Health Authority

Phil Ashcroft
Phil Ashcroft
County Trading
Standards Officer

Tom Campbell
Tom Campbell
Chief Executive
Barrow Borough Council

Geoff Blackwell
Geoff Blackwell
Mayor of Copeland

Robin McLeod
Robin McLeod
Chief Executive
North Cumbria Health Authority

A.S. Pritelard
Adrian Pritelard
Caseworker, Shelter

M. Cousins
Michael Cousins
President
Carlisle District Law Society



Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership

Funding Principals

- We agree to work together to develop a more integrated and co-ordinated approach to funding, subject always to the question of the level of any funding to be contributed by any individual partner being entirely a matter for that partner.
- We agree to share information on our funding priorities and restrictions on an ongoing basis.
- We agree that all funding for Legal and Advice services should be complementary, planned and that its purpose can be clearly identified.
- We agree that it is appropriate for providers of Legal Services to inform the planning of these services, within the funding guidelines that we provide.
- We agree that the planned services must work together, in order to provide the Best Value services to the community.
- We agree that accreditation to the CLS Quality Mark must be a key objective of information and advice services funded by us. We will work towards ensuring that all services we fund are Quality Marked at the appropriate level.

Signature:

Organisation:

Date:

Cumbria Community Legal Service Partnership

Draft Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Cumbria CLSP Strategy Group is to provide an effective policy and planning framework; give strategic direction; establish appropriate structural arrangements to achieve the objectives of the CLSP, and promote and develop the CLS.

The structure of Cumbria CLSP is set out in Appendix 1

2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Community Legal Service is to establish a network of quality providers of legal services, supported by co-ordinated funding, delivering accessible services to local communities based on an effective assessment of local needs.

The Objectives of Cumbria CLSP are as set out in Concordat Agreement signed by all of the partners in March 2000, contained at Appendix 2

The Strategy Group will review the objectives on an annual basis or more often if required in response to changes in the CLSP Guidance.

3. Area of Operation

Cumbria CLSP will operate within the geographical boundary of Cumbria County Council.

4. Membership

The Strategy Group will consist of: -

- 1 representative from the LSC.
- 1 representative from each of the following; Allerdale Borough Council, Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council, Carlisle City Council, Copeland Borough Council, Eden District Council, South Lakeland District Council and Cumbria County Council.
- 1 representative from Morecambe Bay Health Authority and 1 representative from North Cumbria Health Authority .

- 2 members representing the range of Cumbria CLSP Suppliers Board.
- 1 representative of "user or community" interests in the County.
- Additional members as considered appropriate to the work of the Partnership.

5. Terms of Office

Strategy Group Members (other than Local Authority and Legal Service Commission representatives who have standing membership by virtue of their role,) will retire at the end of a two year period of office, but may be appointed for a further two year period.

Provider representatives will be nominated through the Partnerships Suppliers Board. Procedures will ensure that members from the statutory and voluntary (non CAB) sectors are represented.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

All Members of the Strategy Group are expected to actively contribute to the strategic work of the CLSP and further its effectiveness in meeting the Baseline Requirements and Performance Indicators set down by the Legal Services Commission and the Lord Chancellors Department.

As a minimum commitment, all members will be expected to attend Strategy Group meetings as set out in the terms of reference and make best use of their particular roles and experience for the benefit of the CLSP. It is anticipated that some members will be able to take the lead in progressing an area of work, or facilitating task groups or events.

Member organisations whose representatives do not attend for 3 consecutive Strategy Group meetings or more than half in any 12-month period, without good reason, may have their membership of the Strategy Group withdrawn by the Partnership. Membership may also be withdrawn if in the view of the Partnership a member behaves in ways that are not conducive to the effective working of the Partnership. The decision on cessation of membership will rest with the Partnership.

7. Conflict of interest

Any member who has a personal interest in any matter shall forthwith disclose that interest, but may remain speak and vote, unless the interest is clear and substantial in which case the member shall withdraw from the room. A personal interest may be a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest. Non pecuniary interests include those of the members family and friends as well as those arising through membership of or association with clubs or societies and other organisations such the Freemasons, Trade Unions and Voluntary bodies.

*****The issue of conflict of interest with reference to the Strategy Group members was raised as an issue. Should Strategy Group members be required to declare any conflict of interest at the start of each meeting?*****

8. Chair of Strategy Group

A nominated County Council Member will normally be the Chair, but this may be changed by agreement of the Strategy Group and minuted at a formal meeting. In the absence of the chair, the Strategy group will appoint a temporary chair for the date of the meeting.

Urgent decisions required outside of the cycle of Strategy Group meetings will taken by the Chair of the Strategy Group, the Legal Service Commission representative , in consultation with the District Councils represented on the group.

9. Quorum & Decisions

The Strategy Group will be quorate if at least 5 members are present including 1 representative from the Legal Services Commission, 3 representatives from the Local authorities, and 1 other organisation.

All Members are entitled to vote. In the event of a tie the Chair has a second (or casting) vote. Local authority Member representatives may be accompanied by an officer, who shall have no voting rights.

10. Secretarial Support

The Legal Services Commission and the County Council will jointly take primary responsibility for the production of the Annual Report, in full consultation with the Strategy Group, which will approve the final document.

IIINSERT AGREED SEC SUPPORT

11. Boards

A Suppliers Board (Service Providers Board) has been established convened by representatives from the LSC. Other members of the Strategy Group will contribute in ways appropriate to their role and expertise.

Initially, the Suppliers Board is currently open to all agencies that provide services potentially within the framework of the CLS, but from October 2001 it will only be open to those organisations that have achieved the CLS Quality Mark.

The Suppliers Board will meet at least quarterly, with terms of reference to be agreed at a meeting of the Suppliers Board and approved by the Strategy Group.

A Funders Board will be established with key funders operating within the CLSP area of interest. The Funders Board will be convened and co-ordinated jointly by the Legal Services Commission and the Local Authorities. The Funders Board will have responsibility for co-ordinating funding decisions in relation to service development issues identified by the Strategy Group, and outlined in the Annual Plan.

The Funders Board will meet at least twice a year, with terms of reference to be agreed at a meeting of the Funders Board and approved by the Strategy Group. The Funders Board will consist of the Strategy Group minus representatives from user organisations and the Suppliers Board, plus any other identified Funders of services in the County.

13. Meetings

Strategy Group meetings will be held at least 4 times a year.

Meetings and events will be held in premises which are accessible to people with mobility needs.

Dates of meetings will be scheduled at least 12 months in advance.

14. Consultation

Cumbria CLSP will establish appropriate arrangements to consult with users and/or groups representing users. The consultation process will be agreed by the Strategy Group.

15. Monitoring Arrangements

The Strategy Group will establish monitoring procedures in respect of the CLSP Baseline Requirements and Performance Indicators set out in CLSP Guidance and publicise the results on an annual basis.

The Strategy Group will agree an outline strategic plan, which will be reviewed and revised on a regular basis.

Appendix 1 Minutes of Consultation with representatives of the Advice Agencies

B

NOTES OF A MEETING BETWEEN COUNCILLOR ELLIS, COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES PORTFOLIO HOLDER AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE ADVICE AGENCIES

Tuesday 9 July 2002 at 10.45am

PRESENT – Councillor Ellis (Portfolio Holder for Community Activities)
A Scott Fisher (Carlisle Council for Voluntary Services)
T Brown and P Thurn (Community Law Centre)
A Auld (Carlisle Citizens Advice Bureau)
M Hill (Benefits Advice Centre)
A Parsonage (Legal Services Commission)
R Burns (Head of Community Development)
S Halstead (Senior Committee Clerk)

Councillor Ellis indicated that he had invited the Advice Agencies to this meeting following the response of the Executive to a report from the City Treasurer on the first forecast of the three year budget 2003/04 to 2004/05.

The Executive's response in relation to Advice Agencies had been as follows:-

"The Executive acknowledges the hard work carried out by the Advice Agencies in the City. We are, however, conscious of the very high level of subsidy provided by this Authority to the Advice Agencies. It is also clear that there is a degree of overlap of functions between the Agencies. The Executive therefore instructs the Director, in consultation with the appropriate portfolio holder, to bring forward a report assessing the options. It should be emphasised that the Executive supports the continuation of independent advice to the citizens of Carlisle. It is our intention to give greater certainty to the appropriate bodies by granting them a three year grant forecast, stated annually. This would be subject to an appropriate Service Agreement with them."

Councillor Ellis invited the representatives of the Advice Agencies to give a general background to the work of their organisations and the representatives took the opportunity to do so.

The following main points were made by the agencies' representatives:-

The three advice agencies in Carlisle specialised in specific areas of advice work and operated the Community Legal Services partnership for advice in the locality, whereby a system of demarcation was operated to refer clients to the most appropriate advice agency depending upon the type of enquiry being made. The suggestion that there was an overlap in service provision was, therefore, incorrect. All the agencies were currently working at full capacity, there being a significant demand and need for their services in Carlisle.

The CAB and Community Law Centre relied upon the City and County Councils for core funding. The Legal Services Commission provided funding for advice workers salaries but did not provide core funding. Should core funding be taken away then the Legal Services Commission would no longer be able to provide their funding. Similarly, the ability to draw in funding from outside agencies would be adversely affected.

The Citizens Advice Centre provided a source of training for volunteers and many had gone on to paid employment.

Two of the three advice agencies owned their own premises. They considered themselves to be efficiently run organisations with no spare capacity in their administrative support. If all the agencies were located in one premises, there would not necessarily be significant savings. This concept had been tried unsuccessfully elsewhere.

Any funding cuts which were targeted at one of the agencies would almost certainly lead to its demise with the consequent loss to the City of expertise in the particular advice field. The agencies considered that they provided quality services to the residents of Carlisle.

Ms Parsonage (Legal Services Commission) pointed out that, from national statistics, there was a high level of need for advice across the subjects in Carlisle. She suggested a joint funding agreement could be drawn up between the City and County Councils and the Legal Services Commission for the advice agencies in Carlisle.

The advice agency representatives sought clarification on the extent of the reduction in financial support.

Councillor Ellis indicated that no arbitrary figure had been set and, if a reduction was to happen at all, it would be dependent on the rest of the finances of the Authority. When asked if the potential for reductions in financial support was due to LSVT, Councillor Ellis indicated that spending on advice agencies had to be looked at regardless of LSVT, but that LSVT and the implications for the Authority had resulted in the options being investigated now, in the immediate term. LSVT had, therefore, provided the impetus, but the review had not been dependent upon that issue.

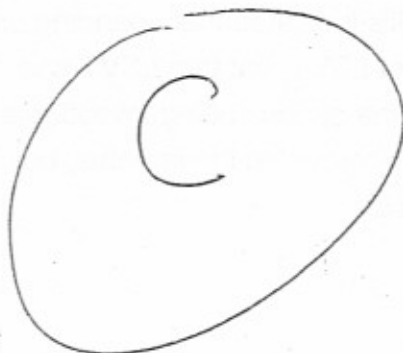
It was agreed as a way forward that –

- (a) The Head of Community Development would write to the advice agencies with a list of questions aimed at identifying the effect of funding cuts on advice services in the City.
- (b) Councillor Ellis would visit the advice agencies to see the work they carried out.

(The meeting ended at 12.35pm)

Leisure & Community Development Department

Director: Euan Cartwright BA
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Please ask for:

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Rob Burns
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RB/VH

20th August 2002

Dear

As you know, the Council is investigating ways to reduce its overall budget and one of a number of service areas under discussion is the advice agencies i.e. the Law Centre, the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Benefits Advice Centre.

You will recall from our discussion with Cllr Ellis a few weeks ago, that the proposed reviews may lead to cuts which may be significant and the Council wishes to minimise the effect as much as possible.

It was suggested at that meeting that there may be room for some saving, by sharing certain functions and enabling more collaboration between service providers.

In order to establish how realistic a possibility that may be, I would be grateful if you would let me have a response to the following questions:

1. Do you consider your organisation might have any capacity for expansion of its activities, assuming your current staffing levels and building accommodation?
e.g. could you accommodate more staff or offer a wider range of advice?
2. Briefly, what would be the effect to the service and to the organisation, of the following levels of reduction of the Council's current financial contribution;

25%?

50%?

100%?

3. In the event of such cuts, what areas of your service would you prioritise for continuation?
4. What % of your current budget is spent on general running costs and administration e.g. heating, lighting, staff training (including supporting volunteers)?
5. How many staff undertake particular tasks? (express in full time equivalents or volunteer))

admin/clerical?
casework?
management?
6. Can you also put a cost to each of those areas of work?
7. Is it possible to break down your costs to allocate against specific advice categories? e.g. how much on employment, housing, welfare benefits, debt, mental health, community care, education, etc
8. Could you highlight any way in which some of these activities could be shared with other agencies to produce a cost saving?
9. If cuts are to be made, do you think they should be made across the range of advice services or would it be better to take the majority or all of the saving, from a particular area or advice category, bearing in mind the CLS's needs analysis?
10. If the Council does find itself in a position to have to make significant cuts from its budget for provision of advice services, do you have any constructive views on how this might be achieved?
11. If, following the review, cuts are proposed to your grant, do you think it would be possible to obtain increases in grants from other Bodies and if so, how much and against what timescale?

I appreciate that any cut at all is likely to have an impact in some way or other and it will be a difficult decision for the Council to have to make.

However if the decision is made, it will clearly be better if reductions can be made in the areas where negative effects will be minimised and your comments will be important in that respect.

I thank you in anticipation of your co-operation and would be grateful for your early response.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

R S Burns

Head of Community Support

cc Euan Cartwright
Tony Bramley
Councillor Gareth Ellis



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

3



LEISURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	
RECD	13 SEP 2002
REFER	
MAIL	4694



Carlyle's Court
St Mary's Gate
Carlisle CA3 8RN



11 September 2002

Mr Rob Burns
Leisure & Community Development
Civic Centre
Rickergate
CARLISLE
CA3 8QG

Telephone 01228 633909
Fax 01228 633919

To Rob

In response to your letter of 20th August 2002 I feel it would be useful to provide some background information before responding to your questions.

Carlisle CAB has recently undergone a service & staffing review where we looked at the level of staffing each funder provides for.

The City Council pays the CAB £59 696 - included in this amount is a contribution to rent.

This core funding pays for a 3 day a week Manager, 2 day per week Advice Session Supervisor and 1 day Admin support - as well as part of our running costs. [All budget heads in the running costs have been streamlined over the past 12 months.]

Funding from other sources (Legal Services Commission, Cumbria County Council, Single Regeneration Budget, Health Action Zone & the Housing Department) is ring fenced and provides for a full-time Money Advice Support Worker, ½ time Welfare Benefit Worker, ½ time Housing Worker & a three-day outreach worker. There is an element of management and admin support from these funds.

The CAB also has approximately 30 volunteers who have to be supervised by paid staff.

The current opening hours are Monday 10 am - 4 pm general appointments; Wednesday & Thursday 10 am - 4 pm drop-in sessions, Friday 10 am - 4 pm appointments and drop-in session, Saturday 10.30 am - 12.30 pm drop-in session.

We are currently in the process of recruiting a Housing Worker and a Welfare Benefit Worker and the intention is that, upon starting, these workers would offer appointments on a non drop-in day (probably a Tuesday).

The premises lease at Carlyle's Court expires in August 2003 and the CAB is currently investigating alternative premises sites.

~~LS~~ LS

In response to your questions: -

1. The CAB offers the widest possible range of advice. In our current premises we are not in a position to accommodate more staff.
2. Any cut to the core grant will be catastrophic.

i. £12.5k cut i.e. approx 25%

This would result in either the loss of the three day manager OR the loss of the Advice Session Supervisor + reduction of the manager hours to 2 days per week. Either way the CAB could not open to the public without this supervision.

ii. £25k cut i.e. approx 50%

This would result in the loss of the Advice Session Supervision and the three-day manager. Without this supervision the CAB could not open to the public.

iii. Total cut

The CAB would be forced to close.

In practice should any of the above cuts be imposed then this will effectively result in the CAB closing down.

Furthermore, the CAB are the lead organisation in the Raffles Advice Project (with Age Concern and DaCE) which is part-funded by the Health Action Zone, Single Regeneration Budget and the Housing Department. Should the core budget be cut then the CAB could not provide the level of supervision required to successfully run this project.

This is not a dramatic over-reaction to proposed cuts, merely a realistic consideration of the effect of such cuts.

3. See the above answer
4. 7%.
5. The full answer to this is "not nearly enough" – the CAB are not able to fully meet demand for our services.

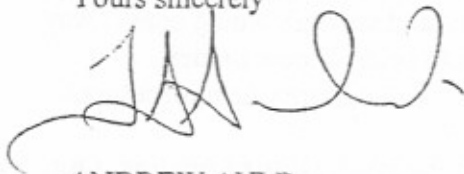
Admin	0.8 FT + 7 days voluntary
Casework	2.6 FT + 26 days voluntary
Management	1.4 FT

6. Admin	£15000
Casework	£60520
Management	£34000

The City Council grant does not pay for any paid casework time.

7. It is not possible to break down costs to allocate against specific advice categories. The CAB is organised so the majority of the casework is done by volunteers supervised by paid staff. This means that management, for example, cannot be allocated to specific areas as volunteers are supported in all issues and enquiries. Clients will often receive advice on a number of issues during the same interview, e.g. they may come in for benefit advice and during the course of the interview the adviser finds that employment law and money (or debt) advice is also necessary – the adviser will give the client full advice on all issues and not just the presenting problem.
8. No, I am not aware of any way in which these activities (i.e. advising on specific issues or categories) could be shared further. The organisations already share some activities through the use of the LSC referral protocol. For example, if a client calls in to the bureau asking for representation at an Employment Tribunal then we would use the referral protocol to look at other organisations in Cumbria who offer specialist help in employment law. The Law Centre is the only organisation in the Carlisle area offering free representation at Employment Tribunals so the client would (with their consent) be referred to the Law Centre. Likewise, whilst we are in the process of recruiting 0.5 of a Welfare Benefit worker, such is the volume of benefit work that we will also use the LSC referral protocol to refer clients to the Benefits Advice Centre for representation at appeals, as we have done in the past.
9. Bearing in mind the CLS's needs analysis I do not believe there can be any cuts without this resulting in a gap (or gaps) in the needs map.
10. It is impossible to offer constructive views on how cuts might be achieved without knowing the figure involved.
11. I do not think it will be possible to obtain increases in grants from other Bodies if cuts are made to our grant. Neither the LSC nor the community fund will replace core funding. Should we lose core funding then this will make it difficult to get other project funding.

Yours sincerely



ANDREW AULD
Acting Manager

Your ref: RB/VH

Our ref:

Date: 10th September 2002



Community Law Centre

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Rob Burns
Head of Community Support
Carlisle City Council
Civic Centre
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Carlisle

PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	
RECD	16 SEP 2002
REFER TO	KIN
MAIL LOG	4657

Dear Rob,

Council Investigating Reducing Services.

Further to your letter of 20th August 2002 I have considered your questions and agreed this response with Alan Stubbs, Law Centre Treasurer. It is our view that any decision regarding the funding of advice services should be taken after consultation with the Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership. This response is made taking into account the Needs Mapping undertaken by the Legal Services Commission.

- 1) The Law Centre currently specialises in Housing, Employment, Community Care, Education, Mental Health, Welfare Benefits and Public Law. Given current staffing levels and funding we are unlikely to be able to expand services. Our building does have potential for development which would allow greater occupancy if developed. Additional staff could lead to a review of the range of services performed.
- 2) A 25% cut would lead to a reduction of one third of the services in the city and one redundancy. 50% cut would result in two redundancies and a 75% reduction in services. A 100% cut will result in three redundancies and services would cease. Any reduction in core funds makes it much more difficult to bring in new money. Organisations such as the Legal Services Commission will not provide replacement funding.
- 3) All our services are prioritised according to need and the availability of funding. Our policies are decided by an elected Management Committee and reviewed on a regular basis.

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4) The accounts for 2001 show that:

Direct expenditure on provision of legal advice and services	£300,897
Expenditure on Management and administration	£ 74,475

Included in the Management and administration expenditure is the following –

• Telephone	£ 7,655
• Repairs	£ 3,163
• Insurance	£ 4,514
• Disbursements	£ 523
• Legal Fees	£ 1,194
• Volunteer expenses	£ 9,478
• Printing Stationery and Postage	£11,075
• Heating and Lighting	£ 1,845
• Rent	£ 1,216

- 5) The particular tasks of staff are not uniform. Some staff perform a combination of duties, but for the purposes of this report I have simplified the position. There are three admin and clerical staff, six caseworkers, one management, two development workers, and one driver/receptionist. We also use volunteers throughout the year for a variety of tasks.
- 6) It is not possible to separate the work to provide you with any meaningful costs.
- 7) We are not required to provide costs allocated to specific advice categories. This information would be time consuming and costly to produce.
- 8) If our premises were developed our capacity could be increased, allowing higher staffing levels. The Law Centre already shares activities with the Benefit Advice Centre and the CAB on a regular basis using the Referral protocol of the CLSP.
- 9) I am unaware of the need for any cuts. The CLSP needs map does not highlight over capacity.
- 10) Any discussions on reducing services should be considered by the Council and the advice agencies through their representatives on the CLSP.
- 11) It is very unlikely that cuts made by Carlisle City could be replaced by any other body. As you are aware the Law Centre is losing Community Fund income and attempts to replace this from other sources will have more chance of success if we can show stable income base and the ability to match fund our services. The Law Centre is always looking at alternative or additional funding opportunities and we are well aware of the problems facing us in our efforts to gain support.

Yours sincerely



Tony Brown

F

**NOTES OF MEETING WITH
LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION
TUESDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2002 AT 3.00 PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Ellis (Portfolio Holder for Community Activities)
Councillor L Fisher (as an Executive Member observing the meeting)
Councillor Mrs Pattinson (as Chairman of the Cumbria Community
Legal Services Partnership)
Alison Parsonage (Legal Services Commission)
Carolyn Schofield (Legal Services Commission)
Peter Stybelski (Chief Executive)
Rob Burns (Community Support Manager)
Myrna Hill (Benefits Advice Centre)
Elsbeth Mackay (Committee Clerk)

Myrna Hill declared an interest in any specific discussions on the particulars of, and funding for, any of the advice agencies and she advised that she would be prepared to leave the meeting if necessary. As she was attending the meeting in a general policy role, she was asked to remain in the meeting, but it was agreed that she should leave if there was discussion on particulars relating to the Benefits Advice Centre. It was clearly stated that she would not be involved in any decisions on funding of Advice Agencies.

The Chief Executive welcomed everyone to the meeting and after introductions, he advised that the meeting was being held to consult the Legal Services Commission as part of the Review of the City Council's financial support to Advice Agencies. He outlined the political process in relation to the budget and gave an update on Officer responsibility for the area of Advice Agencies in the light of the recent Organisational Review.

Ms Schofield and Ms Paronsage confirmed that they had received a copy of the Report which had been submitted to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The report set out options for the Council in relation to the provision of financial support to Advice Agencies, principally the Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau and the Benefits Advice Centre.

The Chief Executive then outlined the budgetary process which would be followed:

- the Executive meeting on 19 December 2002 would propose changes in the budget
- there would then be a public consultation on some elements of the budget and there would be an opportunity to continue consultation with Advice Agencies, Legal Services Commission and the Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership
- final budgetary decisions, including any decision on funding of Advice Agencies, would be made by the full Council in February 2003.

The Executive, at the meeting on 19 December, will have all the information in front of them for consideration including any reports, any petitions received, any correspondence from the Legal Services Commission and a note of this meeting.

Ms Schofield welcomed this opportunity to be consulted and commented on Members and officers' appreciation of the different services provided by the Agencies both in terms of a general help and specialist roles.

The meeting then discussed the various matters falling under the following principles or issues:

1. The importance of any changes proposed by the Executive being viewed within the context of a partnership approach through Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership

Ms Schofield provided information on how other local authorities within the Cumbria area funded Advice Agencies. South Lakeland had cut £20,000 off the whole of their Advice budget and had moved towards a more co-ordinated approach to funding, with a focus on identifying and addressing needs and gaps in service. Copeland had cut approximately £10,000 and had got two Citizens Advice Bureaus and the Law Centre round the table in an effort to co-ordinate work e.g. dates for visiting small towns, referrals etc. Allerdale were making retrospective cuts in funding, although the exact amounts were unclear. It seemed that funding to the Law Centre was being stopped but there was increased funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership was discussed. Ideally, if used to its full potential, it could ensure a more co-ordinated approach to the provision of advice and legal services. However, there were difficulties with local authorities and advice agencies either not attending meetings or attending and then "doing their own thing". A specific issue was referred to in relation to the new Home Care Charges and the action the County Council had taken independently of the existing advice agencies and the Partnership. It was a common view that high level representation at Partnership meetings may assist in the overall co-ordination of Advice Services.

Ms Schofield commented on the national context, where many local authorities were having to re-examine the funding of Advice Agencies in the light of financial constraints. She gave examples of some instances where funding cuts had led to the closure of agencies and others where organisations which had been able to draw out new funding, or efforts which they had taken to restructure or combine services.

In summary, funding changes proposed should be within the County wide context of the Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership and it would be better if they were managed within a Partnership-based approach.

2. Viability of Agencies resulting from changes in core funding

In response to questions about the impact of reductions in funding, Ms Schofield and Ms Parsonage advised that it was a condition of Legal Services Commission

funding that the Agencies funded had to have other sources of funding in addition to Commission funding. These additional sources of income were usually, but not always, local authority funding. An Agency would have to be seen as viable before the Legal Services Commission continued to provide funding. If significant local authority funding was withdrawn, this could mean that individual agencies may not be seen as viable. Viability would depend on the amount of reduction and on individual circumstances. If Commission funding was withdrawn, contracts would be put out to tender. If Private practices or advice agencies in other areas were not interested, there may not be a natural successor to provide advice services.

The Executive should consider the viability of individual advice agencies in any proposals to reduce or withdraw funding. To assist the Council in considering funding options the Legal Services Commission agreed to provide further information about financial viability thresholds.

3. Provision of Adequate notice of changes in funding

If changes were to be made to local authority funding, an adequate period of notice would have to be given to the advice agencies to allow these organisations to adjust.

Councillor Ellis advised that the Council had previously entered into three year agreements with the Law Centre and any budgetary decisions which were made would not break previous agreements but would come into force for 2004/05. Ms Parsonage and Ms Schofield commented on the importance of any new funding arrangements being planned on a three year basis as advice agencies need to know funding levels for the planning and development of their work.

4. A consortium approach of the advice agencies would be welcomed by the Portfolio Holder and the Legal Services Commission.

There was discussion on a number of examples of where advice agencies had shared locations e.g. an Advice Arcade which had various Agencies operating with shared management and reception facilities.

The Chief Executive commented that with the planned creation of a Customer Contact Point in the Ground Floor of the Civic Centre, co-location of services provided by local authorities and services provided by advice agencies could be a possibility for discussion.

Ms Schofield and Ms Parsonage suggested that this was a positive approach being piloted elsewhere in the country but there would still have to be a degree of independence with Advice Agencies being independent enough to be able to take action against the Council if this was required.

The Legal Services Commission would welcome a true partnership approach to the provision of advice services in Carlisle.

5. Service Level Agreements and Joint Monitoring Arrangements

Discussions identified that it would be good practice for any future funding of advice agencies to be accompanied by a Service Level Agreement stating exactly what the Council and other funders would be buying. In addition, a Service Level Agreement could set out any expectations in terms of joint working and referrals and should have a common monitoring system.

Mr Burns commented that the Partnership had introduced standard monitoring arrangements but, it had been difficult to maintain as not all local authorities had adopted arrangements.

In discussing the above issues, the importance of understanding the impact of any potential cuts in funding within a wider Cumbria context was recognised. No-one had any definitive answers on what other local authorities were intending to do in terms of cuts in funding and the Legal Services Commission could not provide a definite figure as to the level of cuts would threaten the viability of an agency. Ms Schofield advised that they would look into this.

Actions Agreed

The following actions were proposed:

- (A) The Cumbria Community Legal Services Partnership should ask its partner agencies what their financial intents were in relation to the provision of funding for Advice Agencies.
- (B) Rob Burns should draft letters to send out, under the Chief Executive's name, to the following:-
 - Copeland District Council and Allerdale District Council, asking about their financial intent in relation to the funding of Advice Agencies in their areas.
 - Cumbria County Council - also asking about financial intent in relation to the funding of Advice Agencies within the County, but also expressing concern about the approach which had been taken in relation to Home Care charges. Specifically, concern that the Advice Agencies may be left to deal with problems arising from this independent approach.
- (C) The Legal Services Commission to advise the level of funding they consider crucial to keep local Agencies viable.
- (D) The Chief Executive should raise the issue of Advice Agencies at the next Chief Executive's Group and encourage a high level of participation at Partnership meetings.

Myrna Hill then left the meeting as there was consideration of the specific individual agencies involved, including the Benefits Advice Centre.

In conclusion, Councillor Ellis could not give any indication as to what the Executive's proposals in relation to the budget may be. He did advise that considerations would take into account the consultation which had been undertaken over the past weeks

and months. He advised that, as part of the budgetary process, there would be a consultation with the public and after discussion in the meeting, he agreed that there could be a further consultation meeting with the Agencies after the Executive make any proposals at their meeting on 19 December 2002.

Ms Schofield then commented that it was important to look at the needs in relation to advice and to try to fill the gaps in service which existed throughout the County as a whole. The Legal Services Commission were attempting to move towards a more targeted approach throughout Cumbria.

Councillor Ellis then thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting, commenting on the value of engaging in this type of consultation.

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

kr minutes EM Notes of Meeting with Legal Services Commission 03 12 02