

# Report

**Subject** : Additional support for Citizens Advice Bureau and Charities Information Bureau

**Report to** : The Cabinet

**Date** : Wednesday 25 February 2009

**Author(s)** : Partnership Team Manager

**Cabinet Member for Community Initiatives:** Councillor Brian Dalton

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## 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. On 28 January 2009, Cabinet agreed to take key actions to support communities during the current economic climate, which included implementing the SOLACE recommendations to encourage housing benefit take up and provide support for debt counselling through CAB and others.
- 1.2. Requests for additional funds to meet increased demand have been received from both Salisbury and District Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), and from the Wiltshire Charities Information Bureau (CIB) who run the South Wiltshire Funding Advice Service.
- 1.3. The Council has Service Level Agreements in place with both organisations. As part of these, the council has so far granted the Citizen's Advice Bureau £102,500 and the Charities Information Bureau £9,916 this financial year.
- 1.4. The letter from the CAB is included in Appendix 1. The CAB has requested an additional £25,000 funding in order to:
  - 1.4.1. increase the number of people receiving debt advice.
  - 1.4.2. help more people obtain the correct benefits.
  - 1.4.3. develop specialist advisers to deal with the increasing demand for employment advice.



*Awarded in:*  
Housing Services  
Waste and Recycling Services



- 1.5. The letter from CIB is included at Appendix 2. The CIB has requested an additional £7,622 funding in order to provide an extra half day per week funding advice to residents and local groups in South Wiltshire.
- 1.6. The Community Initiatives Grants budget currently has an underspend of £26,000. It is therefore proposed to use this underspend to provide additional funding for these two organisations.

## 2. Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1.1. Agree an additional £21,000 funding for Salisbury and District Citizen's Advice Bureau to meet additional demand and provide an additional service
- 2.1.2. Agree an additional £5,000 funding for Wiltshire Charities Information Bureau to meet additional demand and provide an additional service

## 3. Implications:

- **Financial** : The £26,000 additional funding can be met from the Community Initiatives grant budget.
- **Legal** : None at this stage.
- **Human Rights** : None at this stage.
- **Personnel** : None at this stage.
- **Community Safety**: None at this stage.
- **Environmental** : None at this stage.
- **ICT** : None at this stage.
- **Equality and Diversity**: This funding will enable groups that are particularly disadvantaged by the recession to receive additional support.
- **Council's Core Values**: The funding will support ' working together with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations to develop a better, more sustainable district.'
- **Wards Affected**: All

Councillor Paul Sample  
Leader  
Salisbury District Council  
PO Box 2117  
Salisbury  
SP2 2DF

10<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Dear Councillor Sample,

### **Supporting the local community through the recession**

As you will know, the Local Government Association and other bodies have published a number of reports about the economic situation and what councils are doing to help local people.

The Local Government Association report “Backing communities: local solutions – councils and voluntary and community organisations supporting people through the economic downturn”, published this month, includes over a dozen case studies involving Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Salisbury and District Citizens Advice Bureau is already dealing with a significant increase in demand for our services. We are helping people with debt problems (including threats of repossession and negotiating realistic repayment arrangements), providing employment advice, ensuring that people obtain their correct benefit entitlements, housing aid and much more. Last month we dealt with 1,174 new issues in the Salisbury District, including 476 debt enquiries, 327 benefits enquiries and 113 employment enquiries.

We have seen large increases of the number of people seeking support with, in particular;

- Costs of housing – mortgages and rents.
- Redundancy and unemployment.
- Unmanageable debt and associated problems – e.g. relationships, health.
- Increased utility costs.
- Managing on benefit income, and problems / delays making claims.

In light of this increasing demand we have recently secured funding from the government. This funding will enable us to provide an additional day at the Amesbury outreach (starting this month), and to open one evening a week at the Salisbury bureau (from October), until March 2010.

We have recently recruited a large group of volunteers to train as advisers, and they will be ready to start advising in October. We have reviewed our service delivery and will be introducing a new way of working in May. This will enable us to give initial advice to more people and to focus our limited specialist resources on those who are in greatest need.

We are keen, however, to do more to help our local community during this difficult time. You may be aware that our counterparts in North Wilts and West Wilts have received funding from their District Councils this year, over the above the funding allocated through their service agreements, to enable them to increase their debt advice services. I am writing to ask whether Salisbury District Council could consider an additional payment of £25,000, which would enable us to

- increase the number of people receiving debt advice.
- help more people obtain the correct benefits, so that they are better able to cope with the increased cost of living. This helps the client, and the wider community as such money is normally spent in local shops etc. Some £10 billion of benefits go unclaimed every year.
- develop specialist advisers to deal with the increasing demand for employment advice.

This would make a real difference to your local advice service at a time when it is needed more than ever. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Godfrey  
Chief Executive



11 February 2009

Robin Townsend  
Head of Community Initiatives  
Salisbury District Council  
The Council House  
Bourne Hill  
Salisbury  
Wiltshire SP1 3UZ

Dear Robin

**Recession funding advice support in Salisbury District**

I'm sure that you are aware that our service in Salisbury District covers funding advice to groups, funding information to individuals in financial distress and charity governance expertise in constitutions and charity registration, although some of the latter may be provided by Wessex Community Action at a basic level.

We are experiencing an increased demand on our services in South Wiltshire, which, with our own low level of existing and anticipated resources, we will find hard to meet without additional financial support. We have a fully booked funding advice surgery being held in Salisbury next week and have received some enquiries that require in-depth support above and beyond the amount of time we are able to give them from other funding (currently an absolute maximum of 1.5 hours per enquiry). We anticipate this increased demand to become the norm over the coming months as the recession starts to bite and affect groups locally.

I note that from the minutes of your Cabinet meeting on 28 January 2009, you are recommending to the new Wiltshire Council ways to tackle the current economic climate that will benefit the residents of Salisbury District. Our proposal will help to meet the following recommendations:

- *continue to provide the support and help to local residents that is currently provided by Salisbury District Council (CIB will continue to target Salisbury District residents with our service)*
- *provides assistance to those local organisations which work to help individuals and families overcome financial difficulties (CIB provides information and advice to groups working with those in need and direct to individuals in financial distress)*
- *examines regeneration activities such as the Salisbury Vision and, where appropriate, works to bring forward projects for early delivery (CIB can support regeneration projects with funding and governance advice)*

Further to a conversation with Ariane about this demand for our services in South Wiltshire and about the current limitations on delivery of our service after 1<sup>st</sup> April, please find attached a proposal for some additional work to meet these needs. Our current funding from you covers the provision of a monthly funding advice surgery, the Salisbury funding alert and quarterly meetings of the South Wiltshire Funding Advice Service. These we will continue to provide under the SLA after 1<sup>st</sup> April. Additional resources from you would enable us to give in-depth and quality support for a half day per week for one year. All costs are on a full cost recovery basis.

Charities Information Bureau South & West, Unit 7a, Bath Road Business Centre,  
Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1XA Tel: 01380 729279  
rosemary@cibwilts.org.uk

I hope you find the proposal helpful in your own drive to support the local community in these difficult times and that we can finish our partnership work with you (prior to the Unitary Authority) in a positive way that provides greater benefits for the residents of Salisbury District, whilst at the same time providing excellent value for money.

Finally, but most importantly, I would like to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge the positive support to CIB by Ariane in her time on our Service Level Agreement group. It has been fundamental cementing the Joint Service Level Agreement, which will allow us to continue with some security under the new Authority, and has made a real difference to us being able to provide an effective service in Salisbury District. Please pass on our thanks to the Council for its generosity to us over the years, which has always been constructive, positive and welcomed.

Please get in touch if you would like further information. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Hopgood  
Chief Executive



### **Estimate for CIB additional support to Salisbury District - 2009-2010**

All figures are calculated on our charging out basis of £37 per hr and allow for our travel time and expenses to Salisbury.

Figures below are **additional to the support agreed for April 2008-March 2009** under the Joint Service Level Agreement between Wiltshire County Council, North Wiltshire District Council, Salisbury District Council, West Wiltshire District Council and CIB.

#### **In-depth funding advice to support groups in Salisbury District:**

½ day per week for one year

(ie 3.5 hrs staff time per week spent on work with Salisbury District groups)

@£37 per hour x 3.5 hours

£6734

#### **Project management**

Monthly liaison with Wessex Community Action 12 x 2 hrs

@ £37 per hour

£888

**Total**

**£7622**