

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU SERVICE FOR ROCHFORD DISTRICT

This report has been prepared jointly by Rochford CAB, Rayleigh CAB and the Head of Financial Services. The meeting will be attended by –

David Reynolds - Chairman Rochford CAB
John Edwards - Chairman Rayleigh CAB

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee held on 11 November 1999 Members considered the report on the position of the Citizens Advice Bureau Service within Rochford District. The question had been raised as to whether the current situation of two Bureaux serving the District is the right one, as limited funding has to be spread between the two Bureaux.
- 1.2 Members agreed that both Rayleigh and Rochford Bureaux should be invited to make a joint submission to the Council in respect of the future service.
- 1.3 Members agreed funding should be approved on the existing basis for 2000/01 and that the matter would be considered again prior to the determination of financial support for 2001/02.
- 1.4 Financial support for 2000/01 was agreed as follows:-

<u>Description</u>	<u>£</u>
<u>Grant Support</u>	
Rayleigh CAB	28,900
Rochford CAB	27,600
Rayleigh Home Visiting Service	4,100
Rochford Outreach Service	<u>1,500</u>
	62,100
Support of Premises Occupied by Bureaux	11,800

- 1.5 In addition to the above there is a provision within estimates of £1,000 for the mediation service undertaken by the CAB.

2 THE CURRENT SERVICE

- 2.1 The Rochford Service operates from premises in Back Lane adjoining the Old People's Day Centre. Rayleigh operates from the ground floor of the Civic Suite. Both Bureaux are long established and provide both general and specialist advice and support. Each Bureau has its own voluntary management committee and voluntary appointed posts such as treasurer, secretary etc.
- 2.2 The operation of the Bureau is a mixture of paid staff and volunteers. The employment terms and conditions are left to the individual Bureaux who operate within the guidelines set down NACAB. The Rayleigh Bureau has recently become a company limited by a guarantee.
- 2.3 The number of paid staff is currently as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Rochford</u>	<u>Rayleigh</u>
Organiser	30 hrs	31 ½ hrs
Deputy	12 hrs	

- 2.4 The number and quality of paid staff and volunteers are the key ingredients to the service delivery. Within a limited budget, paid staff with the appropriate qualifications cannot be employed to meet demand. Each Bureau relies on volunteers; however these have to be limited to maintain a realistic volunteer to staff ratio. This problem was seen to be increased by two Bureaux working separately.

3 THE WAY FORWARD

- 3.1 Following the decision to invite the Bureaux to report back on the options available a number of meetings have been held with representatives of both Bureaux. One of the early decisions of these joint meetings was to allow an exchange of management board members to the other management board. Although liaison between the two Bureau Managers has always existed this has now been increased.
- 3.2 Changes will not happen overnight but the outlying plan is action is now as follows:
- Move towards a single management committee for covering both Bureaux. The Authority will then deal with only a single body on the funding of the service and service and leased agreements.

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- Appoint a single manager to cover both Bureaux and bring together, where possible, a pool of volunteers.
 - Retain the two service delivery points but ensure that between the two locations there is better coverage of service hours.
 - The strength of each Bureau will be considered to ensure that specialist services are not duplicated and are delivered to maximum effect.
 - A single contact will be established for the community legal service for the Rochford District.
 - Non statutory funding from the community is a vital part of maintaining the CAB services. Initially the local fund raising sub-committees will be retained to provide a focus for the operation area.
 - The CAB welcomes Member and Officer involvement in the management and operation of the service. However, to get the most from this involvement the persons appointed must be active and be prepared to form real links between the authority and the service.
 - Future developments involving new technology will be introduced better on a whole service approach.

4 FUNDING

- 4.1 This exercise was not undertaken to reduce the cost of the service but to ensure that the benefits of the service were maximised.
- 4.2 Through the above plan of action it can be seen that the service will make some dramatic changes to the structure that currently supports the two Bureaux. These changes will not be implemented without some resource implications.
- 4.3 To achieve the objective of merging management and staffing structures there will be a requirement for an additional one-off sum estimated at £4,000.
- 4.4 The new structure will require the recruitment of a suitably experienced and qualified manager to oversee the new unified service. The new structure together with the existing structure is shown below:

Existing Structure

<u>Description</u>	<u>Rayleigh</u> £	<u>Rochford</u> £	<u>Total</u> £
Manager	18,400	15,100	33,500
Deputy		5,600	5,600
Total			39,100

<u>New Structure</u>	<u>New Structure</u> £	
Manager	23,600	<u>Full Time</u>
Site supervisors (2)	20,300	<u>At 20 hrs each</u>
Total	43,900	

As mentioned earlier in the report the number and quality of paid staff and volunteers are the key ingredients to the service delivery. Primarily the advisors are the volunteer staff who must undergo vigorous training (for one year) before they are able to give advice. The paid staff are predominantly managerial to ensure that the advisors are adequately supported, resourced and trained. Additionally they review the advisors case notes to ensure that inaccurate or inappropriate advice has not been given. The manager is responsible for the major tasks of: -

- Planning & development
- Financial management
- Staff management
- Administration
- Training & Development
- Funding

Initially the site supervisors have been included at 20 hrs per week. This is not regarded as sufficient. The bureaux will seek to raise other sponsorship to enable the hours to be increased to full time.

The proposal submitted to this sub committee would however ensure that the foundations are laid for the new structure and service.

It can be seen that the new structure will require additional resources of £ 4,800. Depending on the speed of implementation the new structure there will be some impact on 2000/01 but mainly on 2001/02. The additional resources required for 2000/01 is £ 2,000 and the full impact in 2001/02.

Members will be requested to approve the actual grant aid for 2001/02 at a later date. However, the Authority will need to agree that the indicative figures and structure will, in principle, be supported to allow recruitment to take place.

As previously mentioned both Chairmen will be in attendance at the Sub Committee to answer questions on the new structure and to outline in more detail the advantages of the new service.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

The service provides advice, which has an impact on crime and disorder.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 It can be seen that there is a one off request for additional funding of £4,000 in the current financial year and additional revenue grant of £2,000 in the current year. There will be an increase in the revenue grant of £4,800 for 2001/02.
- 6.2 There is no specific provision in the current estimates. However, if Members wish to approve the application it could be funded from contingencies pending the identification of virements later in the year.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposals will have implications for the current lease agreements with the individual bureaux and future agreements relating to the community legal service.

8 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Although the two bureaux are located in Rochford & Rayleigh they hold sessions in other parish areas and the services affect clients for the whole of the Rochford District

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**
- (1) That the plan of action identified above be agreed
 - (2) That an additional one off grant of £ 4,000 be agreed for 2000/01
 - (3) That the additional grant in respect of staffing support for 2000/01 of £ 2,000 is agreed
 - (4) That the additional financial implications of the indicative staffing structure be approved in respect of 2001/02

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- (5) That the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) be authorised to vary any existing agreements necessary as a result of these proposals.
 - (6) That Members consider the form of representation to the new CAB service. (HFS)

D Deeks

Head of Financial Services

Background Papers:

None

For further information please contact D Deeks on (01702) 546366