

## **COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE (Minute 316/00)**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report is to update Members on the progress of discussions with Castle Point Borough Council and to give a background for the brief presentation at the meeting of this committee by Mr Karl Demian, the Regional Planning and Partnership Manager of the Legal Services Commission
- 1.2 The presentation has been arranged further to the resolution of this committee at the meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> April 2000.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Community Legal Service was officially launched on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2000 as an initiative of the Lord Chancellor's Department. The Legal Aid Board is now known as the Legal Services Commission and in partnership with local authorities is seen as the link with the providers of legal advice such as Solicitors, Law centres, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and other agencies. This will create a seamless service for the residents of an area so that they can receive the help that they need from the person most qualified to give that help at the right time. Within this district, the main providers of advice are the local CAB's and to date the experience of the CAB's has been that working in partnership provides the opportunity to assess the area's needs, identify gaps and plan cohesively for funding the needs.
- 2.2 The local CAB's have been part of the South Essex Legal Aid Consortium and Rochford and Castle Point CAB's have the legal aid franchise. The idea of setting up this partnership is simply an extension of an existing arrangement, which brings with it the experience, and knowledge of both organisations.
- 2.3 In summary, the Community Legal Service Partnerships are at the heart of the Community Legal Service, bringing together those who fund legal and advice services including the Legal Services Commission, the local authority, local and national charities, lawyers and advisers.

### **3 THE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP**

- 3.1 The proposed partnership with Castle Point Borough Council will assist in reducing the cost and resources in setting up an independent partnership for the district. The spread of Officer time is also a cost saving measure.

- 
- 3.2 The Community Legal Service will not bring any additional funding with it. What will happen is that available funds will now be better harnessed for the purpose of reaching those who need it.
  - 3.3 Local authority participation is in kind rather than in cash. The partnership will expect input in terms of attendance at meetings and exchange of information about the gaps in the provision of advice in the area.
  - 3.4 The Legal Services Commission will provide funding of £5000.00 and afford a secretarial service amongst other resources.
  - 3.5 The draft guidance for partnerships has been issued and the consultation period ended on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2000. It is not anticipated that there will be any significant amendment to the draft, but members will be advised otherwise.
  - 3.6 The spirit of the partnerships is in line with the ethos of Best Value in terms of strategic planning for the district. The partnership will be able to compare, compete, challenge and consult thereby endorsing the service so as to enhance its credibility with other funders and open the gateway to better funding.

#### **4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A more co ordinated advice service should help to bring together organisations working on issues of community safety, nuisance and anti social behaviour. It should also address some of the indirect causes of social exclusion like debt and homelessness.

#### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The only clear resource implication is in terms of Officer time to work with the partnership. The Legal Services Commission advises that this will not be excessive.

#### **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 As set out in the report, participation in the partnership accords with the government's initiative and will assist in developing independent and accessible sources of legal advice within the District consistent with the objectives of the new legal service.

---

**7 RECOMMENDATION**

**7.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee RECOMMENDS**

That the proposed partnership arrangement with Castle Point Borough Council be undertaken, and that Members be kept informed of its continuing progress. (HLS)

Albert J. Bugeja

Head of Legal Services

---

**Background Papers:**

Draft Guidance for Community Legal Service Partnerships

For further information please contact Ladi Lapite on (01702) 318131