
REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES TO COUNCIL

1 ADVICE SERVICES CONTRACT 2019-22

- 1.1 This item of business was referred by the Executive on 12 July 2018 to Full Council with a recommendation on retendering the advice services contract. An extract of the key elements of the report of the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services to the Executive is appended.
- 1.2 The Executive noted that:-
- Based on the experience of other authorities, the roll-out of universal credit in coming weeks is likely to cause a spike in the need for advice.
 - The proposed application of resources should be acceptable to meet service needs. Any reduction in the value of the contract could cause service level issues.
 - It would be appropriate to recognise that the Council provides tangible resources additional to the budget, such as accommodation, car parking and heating and lighting.
- 1.3 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** to note that the Advice Services contract be retendered for a further two year period, with the option for the Council to extend the contract for a further one year, and that the value of the contract continue to be £70,000.

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SUBJECT: ADVICE SERVICES CONTRACT 2019-22

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To agree that the Advice Services Contract starting in April 2019 should be retendered for a further 2 year period, with the option for the Council to extend the contract for a further 1 year. It is proposed that the value of the contract would continue to be £70,000 per year.
- 1.2 To recommend that this report is presented to Full Council on 17th July 2018 to endorse the proposals set out in Section 8 below.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Advice Services Contract is part of the Council's current provision to ensure that the general advice needs of residents of the District are met. Demand for free to end user advice remains high in Rochford District, particularly in relation to welfare benefits, debt, housing, money advice, employment and relationship and family issues. Funding a general advice service provides support that can help residents prevent an escalation of health, care and housing needs; which in turn reduces the likelihood of them requiring more intensive and costly support in a crisis.
- 2.2 Retendering is required to meet with current procurement advice, ensure transparency; achieve value for money and to provide some longer term certainty for the Council and the service provider.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 The current service provider is Citizens Advice Rochford and Rayleigh (CARR), who were awarded the Advice Services Contract for 2015-19. The service operates from bases in Rochford and Rayleigh. Quarterly monitoring meetings are held between the Council and CARR to discuss how clients access the service and the issues that they seek advice on. Focus is placed on specific outcomes. The 2017/18 end of year monitoring report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.2 As reported by the CARR service, from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 2,269 clients were seen presenting with 7,098 issues.
- 3.3 To date, the top five issues that clients have sought advice on are:
- Benefits and Tax Credits;
 - Relationships and Family;
 - Housing;

- Employment; and
 - Debt.
- 3.4 The Advice Services Contract assists the Council to carry out its early intervention and prevention duties, particularly in relation to housing and will have a continuing important role to perform in relation to budget planning as Universal Credit is rolled out across the District from July 2018.
- 3.5 The current Advice Services Contract has demonstrated social value and value for money.
- In 2016/17, for every £1 invested by the Council, £51 was returned into the local economy, which saved the Council £2 and the wider public sector £11 in costs avoided.
 - In 2017/18, local incomes have been increased by an estimated £486,647, primarily through identifying additional welfare benefits, and clients have gained £19,328 in reimbursements, services and loans.
 - Clients have been assisted in rescheduling debt and £56,527 of unmanageable debt has been written off.
- 3.6 Analysis undertaken by CARR on the impact of a reduction to value of the contract has highlighted the following:
- A 10% reduction in the price paid by the Council for the Advice Services Contract (assuming that no other material change to the terms of that contract) would result in CARR reducing the numbers of clients that it would be able to properly service – potentially 350-400 fewer clients a week ;
 - A 15% reduction would mean 650 fewer clients; and
 - A 20% reduction would mean 700 fewer clients (which amounts to around 2,000 issues).
- 3.7 Notwithstanding this analysis, it is concluded that a reduction in service i.e. the number of clients seen, would not be acceptable, and the likelihood is therefore that the current cost of the service will not change to any great extent. That said, Members will need to determine whether the current level of service is required for the district and, as a result, the likely anticipated value of the new contract. It is proposed that a specification would be developed prior to the start of the tender process that would use the information gained from the current contract monitoring process to ensure it remained relevant and robust.

- 3.8 All Members have been previously forwarded the contract monitoring reports on a quarterly basis.
- 3.9 Under Best Value Statutory Guidance, a local authority intending to reduce or end funding (where ‘funding’ means both grant funding and any fixed term contract) or other support to a voluntary and community organisation or small business, should give at least three months’ notice of the actual reduction to both the organisation involved and the public/service users. Consequently, the timetable being followed is outlined below:-

Dates	Action
July 2018	Members approve tender process
July 2018	Publish tender
Sept 2018	Return of tenders
Oct 2018	Evaluation of tenders and select preferred supplier
Nov 2018	Members approve contract award

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The only option considered was the “do nothing” option and to allow the current contract to lapse without retendering and, therefore, to effectively discontinue the services. This option has not been fully considered because of the benefits which it brings to the Council, as set out above. Instead, consideration has been given to whether the price paid to the provider should be revised and, if so, by how much.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 CARR has delivered a good level of service to residents over the period of the current contract and is a key partner and referral pathway for supporting the Council’s most vulnerable residents. A reduction in the current advice services provision would impact adversely on the wellbeing of residents and would significantly increase the workload of Council staff in areas such as benefits and housing, impacting on prevention outcomes and associated savings. It is a service that many residents use and have come to rely on over a number of years for support and independent advice.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The value of the contact, subject to Members' views on the service level required, is anticipated to be £70,000 per year for two years from April 2019 with the option of extending for an additional year. This would be funded from the Advice Services budget. Funding for subsequent years would be reviewed annually based on delivery of the previous year's outcomes.

8.2 It is anticipated that the Council owned accommodation used by the current service provider at the Civic Suite, Rayleigh and Back Lane, Rochford would continue to be made available at a peppercorn rent. That said, Council owned assets are under constant review with one of its priorities in the current Business Plan being 'Maximising Assets'. Therefore, the provider would be expected to discuss and consider future accommodation options through the period of the contract.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Contract will be subject to a procurement process and awarded to the successful bidder.

9.2 The successful bidder will be granted the use of the Council premises in the on a licence for the initial 2 years and extendable by 1 year to ensure it mirrors the contract awarded. A termination clause will be inserted into the licence if either party wishes to terminate earlier than the full term or if there are any breaches in the obligations.

9.3 Obligations within the licence will include the licensee to be responsible for keeping the premises clean and tidy, only to use the premises for the permitted use of advisory services and have in place public liability insurance.

10 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and, victimisation
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- 11.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnerships, pregnancy/maternity.
- 11.3 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a protected characteristic.

Advice Services Monitoring Report 2017/18

Citizens Advice Rochford & Rayleigh

NB *Case recording system changed 4/12/17.	2016/17 baseline (equivalent ¼ previous year)	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
1. Number of Clients Number of new individual clients advised during the monitoring period (quarterly). Individuals must only be counted once in a period.					
*** explanation of statistics in minutes of quarterly monitoring meeting *** new case recording system introduced 4/12/17	750	641	661	617	707
2. CLIENT PROFILE - Ward Please give number of clients for each, if known.					
From Oct 16 - change of Wards					
Downhall and Rawreth	35	35	25	25	33
Foulness and The Wakerings	10	14	15	7	2
Hawkwell East	27	35	25	17	19
Hawkwell West	28	27	24	15	16
Hockley	19	17	26	20	22
Hockley and Ashingdon	27	21	19	16	21
Hullbridge	38	34	27	22	28
Lodge	29	26	21	22	25
Roche North and Rural	42	54	51	38	41
Roche South	34	26	46	30	23
Sweyne Park and Grange	35	26	33	32	29
Trinity	29	35	32	21	28
Wheatley	45	48	37	31	31
Not recorded/not applicable	0	0	0	1	0

3. Channels						
Phone		209	142	196	283	240
Face to face		354	320	294	327	354
Email		57	43	47	49	21
Webchat		46	25	16	24	64
Letter		2	0	1	0	21
Outreach		0	0	0	0	7
Number of hours provided by paid staff - av per week						
		97	100	97	97	105 (incl project worker)
Number of hours provided by volunteers - av per week						
		240	230	250	255	255
4. Issues/Work Categories						
We acknowledge that some clients may be counted in more than one issue or work category.						
Presented by Client:						
Category	Benefits and Tax Credits	687	591	531	490	714
	Benefits Universal Credit	n/a	17	19	31	31
	Consumer Goods and Services	60	72	58	50	93
	Debt	225	130	224	228	221
	Discrimination	14	13	19	6	19
	Education	3	16	10	5	7
	Employment	162	125	90	122	213
	Financial Services and Capability	47	58	72	56	104
	Health and Community Care	44	36	33	44	52
	Housing	194	140	223	155	191
	Immigration and Asylum	10	24	12	9	17
	Legal	130	103	116	103	143
	Other	21	36	9	14	12
	Relationships and Family	219	203	158	169	343
	Tax	44	18	21	26	33
	Travel and Transport	19	12	10	18	36
	Utilities and Communication	40	46	48	31	30
	TOTAL	1919	1640	1653	1557	2259
5. Further analysis of above categories						
Benefits	Council Tax Reduction	44	34	31	36	46
	Housing Benefit	60	66	77	52	70
Universal Credit	Personal Budgeting Support (10/UG)	0	0	0	0	0
	Help with completing initial UC applications	0	5	5	16	6
	Housing Element	Not known	9	6	6	1

Housing	Total number of clients seeking housing advice	129	103	137	101	100
	Actual homelessness	12	9	9	7	10
	Threatened homelessness	31	10	33	16	14
	Landlord enquiries	0	3	1	3	3
	See attached for further breakdown of housing issues for current quarter	n/a	√	√	√	√
6. Outcome	Output					
Reduction in levels of Debt	Number of signposting pathways to self-help debt information		55	60	*Unable to determine	*Unable to determine
	Number of clients advised on debt issues	104	67	108	89	98
Improved money management skills	Number of clients advised on improving their money management (financial capability)	9	3	12	9	32
Increased income from employment	Number of back to work benefit checks (advised on JSA, UC, WTC)	88	72	56	68	33
	Number of volunteering opportunities (at Citizens Advice) that led to paid work ie volunteers who left to take up paid work)	0	1	1	2	1
	Number of unemployed seeking paid employment (that we are aware of)	47	48	27	37	51
	Number of clients advised on applying for jobs	3	2	1	0	2
Tackle fuel poverty (to link in with reporting on current Energy Best Deals project)	Number of clients advised on fuel poverty issues	11	6	8	1	10
	Number of clients referred/signposted to additional support in reducing energy consumption	4	0	0	0	0
	Number of clients provided with information on how to get a better tariff	11	6	7	4	5
Improved access to online services (linked to Universal Credit roll out)	Number of clients directly supported to access online services (e.g. benefit claims online)	1	1	0	0	1
	Number of clients referred/signposted for support in online and/or digital capacity	0	0	0	0	0

	Number of attendees at digital skills awareness sessions (improvements in confidence in using online services recorded)	0	0	0	0	n/a
	Training sessions held with RDC Customer Services staff to enable them to act as Navigators to provide basic signposting	0	0	0	8 attended	0
Reduction in homelessness	<i>NOTE - 'Homeless' taken as threatened homelessness</i>					
	'Homeless' clients supported to keep/stay at home	4	3	4	* not available	3
	'Homeless' clients with landlord disputes, where dispute was resolved/kept home	0	1	2	* not available	1
Increased awareness of support for residents on low income	Number of clients supported in making and managing benefit claims	56	42	48	43	44
	Value of additional welfare benefit identified	£180,629	£130,993	£131,907	* £141,556 estimate	£117,161
	Number of benefit checks completed	102	67	69	68	74
Increased support for relationship issues	Number of issues relating to relationship/family disputes	102	91	67	78	183
	Number of issues relating to neighbour disputes	10	12	24	5	5

7. Other help/assistance (notional costs)

	Pro bono solicitor assistance (£250 per case)	x	3	2	10	13
	Immigration specialist (£500 per case)	x	0	0	0	0
	Free Representation Unit (£1,000 per case)	x	1	2	1	2
	Bar Pro Bono (£1,000 per case)	x	2	1	2	2
	MoneyPlan (£250 per case)	x	5	2	5	4
	Other	x	4	12 (Expert Advice Team, DWP visiting Service)	10 (Expert Advice Team, CA Will writing service, DWP visiting Service)	12 (Expert Advice Team, CA Will writing service, DWP visiting Service)

8. Additional funding						
	Amount of additional funding applied for		Variable, fundraising events being planned, applications pending 16/17 accounts.	CSP - £500 scams awareness, OACS £1400, Rayleigh Rotary £558 - pc, ROSCA - £1200, Parish Council letters sent, Coop - £660 - pc, Comic Relief £68,820 - project & contribution to core costs, Healthwatch (ECF) application £9890	Awards for All £9,890 IT server replacement, Rochford Rotary Club £634, St James' Place £1000 pcs,	Rayleigh Town Council (Nov 17) £750, Sanctuary Housing £800
	Amount of additional funding received		£4,320	General - £4989, PCs £558	General - £4002 Restricted - £650	Awards for All £10,000 - replacement server, Co-op Causes £712, Rayleigh TC £750, Sanctuary Housing £800, Citizens Advice £500, Local organisations total £550, ECC £3027

	Breakdown of funding secured		EBDx £750	CSP, ROSCA, Rotary Club of Rayleigh Mill, Parish Councils x 3	Heathwa tch project £9890 (Nov 17 - Oct 18) EBDx £750	Sanctuar y Housing - Financial Capability £800, IT £10,712
	% of total funding that comes from RDC / ECC		80%	80%	75% approx (spreadi ng Healthw atch over 12 months	57% (spreadi ng Healthw atch over 12 months)

9. Details of innovation / joint project work

Q4 - Meeting with the Care Co-ordinator Team at Coombewood, Rayleigh to develop closer links to assist both our clients and their service users. Possibility of developing joint work in the future.

Charging for Community Care Advice - project begun and being publicised - Neighbourhood Watch, Community Agents, Essex County Council, Sanctuary Housing, Stroke Club Rochford, Rochford Integrated Neighbourhood Design Team,

**2 supervisors visited JC+ - awareness of their service, procedures etc
Shared information about our service with Castle Point, Rochford & Rayleigh Wellbeing & Recovery Team
Coombewood Centre on access to food parcels
Banner and flyers available at Rochford District Parish Summit**

Sanctuary Housing Project - Smart Money - financial capability

Q3 - Met Ian Kenlin Hullbridge Parish Council - exploring opportunities in Hullbridge area.
Job Centre Plus visit - 12 staff came to our premises learn how our service can assist their claimants
Attendance at Community Development Partnership meeting
Meeting with Manager of RRAVS to explore possibility of a joint project
Mental Health Awareness training for staff and volunteers from REACH (Trust Links)
Visit from the Chairman of Rotary Club of Rayleigh Mill to learn more about our work and publicise their recent grant.
Visit to 22 South Street with Jeanette Hurrell, RDC Housing and Homelessness Team
Training session held with RDC Customer Services staff to enable them to act as Navigators to provide basic signposting. 8 staff attended. More planned.
Attendance at RDC Member Training Housing and Homelessness incl Allocations and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
Met Project Worker, South Essex Domestic Abuse Hub discussing joint working and setting up referrals both ways.
Publicity displayed for DA Awareness Week and National Consumer Week including Social media
Consumer Awareness week publicised
Presence at Hullbridge Christmas Lights Switch on - raising awareness of the service
Attendance at RRAVS AGM
Attendance at Rochford Integrated Neighbourhood Design Team meeting

Q2 - AGM - attendance by Parish Councils and representatives from RDC, local groups. Annual Report distributed - MPs, Councillors, Parish Clerks, website
Meeting re Local Dementia Action Alliance - we have become a member of Rochford DAA
Hopeworx - Emergency Food Parcels issue - resolved

Meeting with Sarah Orchard, RDC, discuss awareness sessions for Customer Services officers - now booked - Nov 17
Meeting with Claire Malcolm, RDC, Council Tax Protocol between agreed between LGA and CA - working towards adoption locally
Meetings with Citizens Advice Managers and Chairmen in Essex with ECC
CCG - contact details included in letter being given to celiac patients.
Meeting with Cllr Laureen Shaw informing her of our service.
Meeting with Associate Director, Mental Health Services at EPUT - re mental health provision

Q1 - Meeting with Lesley Goodwin - JC+ - potential joint working
Shadowing at JC+ - 2 supervisors. Return invitation given.
Meeting with Richard Jordon, Area Dean of Rochford Deanery- possible contacts in Canewdon.
Attendance at LSP (x2) and CDP
Meeting with Matt King, Chief Executive, Trust Links including access to training for our supervisors.
Meeting with Jeanette Hurrell, RDC Housing and Homelessness Team
Meeting with Citizens Advice Southend - exploring new Assisted Digital support for Immigration. Three advisers/supervisors taking part in project for local clients
Universal Credit training and updates for staff and volunteers with Gill Close, DWP
Meeting with Cllr Mike Webb, Portfolio Holder - Community, explaining our work
Research into availability and access to food parcels for SS6 residents

10. Outreach activity. Maintain a communication plan – outline outreach activity undertaken

**Q4 - Attendance at Senior Safety Roadshow in Rayleigh. Publicising service and networking.
Promoting Community Care Advice
Scams Awareness session in Sheltered Housing complex supported by Sanctuary Housing
Scams Awareness session Rochford Stroke Club - supported by CSP
Scams Awareness session Rochford Day Centre - supported by CSP
Scams Awareness session Todman Centre - supported by CSP
Attendance at Community Development Partnership - promotion of Community Care Advice Project
Attendance at JC+ Wellness session helping people find work - spoke with 14 people
Promotional material available at JC+ Lone Parent session
Attendance at Hockley Chamber of Trade Drop in Business Advice Event - networking and engaging with 9 attendees and stall holders.**

Q3 - 2 workers attended Job Centre Plus 'Skills Match' and spoke with 20 claimants, raising awareness of our service and on particular subjects including employment, benefits, food vouchers, care home fees, housing.
Home visits and out of hours appointments continue to be available
Scams Awareness sessions continue - more to book in Q4

Q2 - working towards attendance at Hockley Farmers Market - raising awareness
Out of hours appointment booked for Oct. No other requests received.
Home visits continued. JC+ awareness for staff planned Oct 17
Scams Awareness session in Sheltered Housing complex - aborted as Scheme Manager not present.
Rescheduled for 3/10/17
Flyers distributed - RRAVS computer sessions, Bereavement Group, Dementia Action Awareness Day at Rochford.

Q1 - JobCentre+ Lone Parent day - engaged with 22 people
Speaking at Barling Evergreens, Great Wakering; Hullbridge Parish Council; Hockley Townswomen's Guild
Attendance at Senior Safety Day, Rochford -
Attendance at Carers Day at Rayleigh Baptist Church, organised by RRAVS
Scams Awareness sessions (x3) in Sheltered Housing complexes supported by Sanctuary Housing
Flyers distributed at Wild Woods Day in conjunction with RRAVS

11. **Client satisfaction** - Using a random sample of clients across the range of outcomes, the wider effects of their lives following Citizens Advice intervention, such as better health confidence, capacity, peace of mind, increased independence will be reported on six monthly basis.

In addition, conduct and provide a summary of client satisfaction levels encompassing the following elements:

- Are they treated with respect?
- Given appropriate and timely advice, clear information?
- What other services would they like the Provider to cover?
- Customers reporting the benefit of the Provider working together with other partners (i.e. appropriate referrals)

Insufficient feedback to produce robust outcomes. More information should be available next period.

12. **The quality of advice** given and record-keeping of all paid staff and volunteers who advise the public will be monitored by the Provider on a frequent and regular basis.

Date: Very good advice and very good client journey - Mar 2018

October 2017 - Advice Quality Standard being renewed for a further 3 years.

13. Case studies/testimonies of longer term benefits. (1 per quarter)

Quarter 1	Enquiry	CI considering separating from her husband, has dependent children. Possible domestic abuse, no immediate danger. Her health was affected. Where could she live and what benefits could she be entitled to.
	Support provided	Gave advice on Safer Places, how to divorce, finding work, child maintenance, benefit entitlement (Income Support, Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, Child benefit and Council Tax Reduction). Helped her claim the benefits identified.
	Outcome	Identified potential benefit gain of £18,633 pa
Quarter 2	Enquiry	CI aged 58 (Hawkwell East resident) with health issues, including depression and anxiety, came to us for help with a benefit appeal for ESA. She receives PIP. She was in fuel poverty, lives alone in private rented accommodation. Our client had been 'just about managing' for a long while. The change in her circumstances, through no fault of her own, brought things to a head. Her condition evidenced itself in not being able to manage with all the things happening at once ie; benefit appeal, dwindling savings, increase in energy costs. Although she was not in debt, she was drawing on her savings to manage financially which she realised could not be sustained.
	Support provided	Assisted ci with an ESA appeal, advised on contradictory advice from the DWP, wrote letters to RDC requesting CT Support be backdated following reinstatement of ESA. HB reinstated. We offered an appointment for budgeting advice including getting a good deal on her energy supply.
	Outcome	ESA & HB reinstated, ci switched energy supplier saving approx £180 pa, ci acknowledged better able to cope following our advice and support.

Quarter 3	Enquiry	CI (Roche South resident) has learning disabilities, living independently with support. A social worker applied for Working Tax Credit on his behalf in 2005. He worked on average 16 hours per week at that time but hours were reduced due to reduction in the employer's business needs. Reduced hours meant he was no longer eligible. HMRC identified an overpayment of approx £5000. CI now has a support worker, he is on medication for depression. CI's social skills and learning disability meant he was not able to deal with this himself. His parents were unaware of the situation as the Social Worker had dealt with this. They became frustrated at not being able to resolve the issue.
	Support provided	We arranged to be CI's intermediary. We drafted a letter requesting HMRC consider writing the overpayment off due to our clients mental health issues. Advice was given on preparing the medical evidence to support this. Letters were received stating differing amounts outstanding. We sought clarification.
	Outcome	Overpayment totalling £5740.32 was written off, the 2 minimum payments that had already been made as part of a repayment plan were returned. We helped the family understand the system to enable them to manage a further claim for benefit for their son. Letters received had panicked our CI: our intervention enabled him to be more settled and relieved it had all been resolved.
Quarter 4	Enquiry	Client with multiple health issues including panic attacks and suicidal thoughts (Foulness and The Wakerings resident) was in receipt of enhanced rate of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) for both Daily Living and Mobility components. Following reassessment PIP was reassessed and not awarded. She requested a mandatory reassessment which again was turned down. PIP stopped. Client came to us as although she did not feel mentally able to deal with an appeal her family had persuaded her to appeal. She had received the necessary forms to appeal the decision but did not feel able to cope with them. The decision had an adverse affect on both her physical and mental health.
	Support provided	With our clients involvement we submitted a late appeal to the HMCTS. Using our evidence the DWP reassessed their decision, reinstated the original award and backdated it. The appeal was dismissed as the decision had be replaced by a more beneficial one.
	Outcome	Our client received £2781.69 in backdated award and the ongoing award of £141.10 per week. Our client said she was very relieved to know there was someone there to help her. She felt the adviser was very knowledgeable, kind and helpful.