

COMMUNITY AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - 17 MARCH 2020

CITIZEN'S ADVICE NEW FOREST – FUNDING FOR 2022/23

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Citizens Advice New Forest (CANF) is an independent charity run by a board of trustees, which includes representative from the District Council. It provides free, independent confidential and impartial advice to residents on a range of matters from debt, benefits, housing and employment as part of its core work. Additional support and advice is undertaken through specific projects which usually targets vulnerable groups, such as Help to Claim and MacMillan. CANF have five offices in Hythe, Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood and Totton and also an outreach service in Fordingbridge and Ashley.
- 1.2 New Forest District Council is the principal financial supporter to CANF and granted £255,000 to CANF in 2017.
- 1.3 A Task and Finish Group was set-up to work with CANF and review the funding arrangements. In 2019 the Council agreed a rolling three-year funding agreement with CANF, commencing 1 April 2019, with the funding of the third year to be considered annually. The purpose of this agreement is to provide CANF with future funding amounts to enable CANF to budget and plan ahead.

2. FUNDING AGREEMENT

- 2.1 In deciding the funding agreement members took into consideration a reduction in council funding of approximately 30%, meaning the council having to transform operations, focussing on efficiencies and income generation whilst maintaining service delivery. Although Members were mindful of the workload of CANF and the valuable service it provides to residents, Members considered CANF should review its operations, income and fundraising streams, and work with the council to modernise service delivery and identify and implement efficiencies. The funding agreement with CANF reflected the 30% reduction in council funding by reducing the grant by 10% each year over the three-year period, as follows:

Year 1 commencing 1st April 2019: £229,500
Year 2 commencing 1st April 2020: £206,550
Year 3 commencing 1st April 2021: £185,895

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

- 3.1 Task and Finish Group met on 6 December 2019 and received a verbal update from CANF.
- 3.2 Members were informed that demand continues to increase, as does the complexity and variety of problems CANF helps residents with. Members were informed that since the

Task and Finish Group began this process CANF have made progress in achieving the aims of the funding agreement. This includes:

- Reducing accommodation expenditure from £69,906 to £54,329 by 2021/22 by relocating offices in libraries at Ringwood and New Milton, relocating and merging the Lymington offices into the Town Hall to form “a hub”, outreach work and working in partnership with It’s Your Choice in Totton
- Reviewing staffing structure and significantly reducing employee costs from £164,852 to £118,456 by 2021/22 and utilising paid staff to working flexibly
- Identifying that further work on donations and fundraising is included in their strategy

3.3 With the core funding of £185,895 for 2021/22 current budget projections are for a deficit. Members were advised that any further reductions in funding may have an impact on service delivery as any further reductions in costs could result in potentially closing an office.

3.4 CANF continue to review their service delivery model, income and fund-raising streams, which Members encourage. The group felt that CANF should continue to promote the awareness of their service as an independent charity which received no Central Government funding.

3.5 It was agreed that the Task and Finish Group would receive information on CANF’s Business Plan and Financial summary to consider a recommendation and that CANF Representatives should be invited to attend the March Community and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting to present their future plans on budgets, service delivery and fund-raising. A briefing note from CANF is attached as Appendix 1.

3.6 Officers will also work with CANF to agree Target Outcomes and will monitor and review these on a quarterly basis.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 That the Panel consider the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group that funding from 1 April 2022 is £185,895.

4.2 That the Task and Finish Group is wound up and future funding is considered by the Community and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel after receiving an annual presentation from CANF.

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

CANF Strategy 2018-2020
CANF Key Message Report