

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT CITIZENS' ADVICE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Cabinet 14 December 2023

Report of: Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Approval

Also considered by: People & Places Advisory Committee - 30 November 2023

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: This report sets out details of the proposed Service Level Agreement for Citizens' Advice in the District and seeks approval for funding to support their work over the next three years.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Community & Corporate Plan

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Dyball

Contact Officer(s): Kelly Webb, Ext. 7474

Recommendation to Cabinet:

That the draft Service Level Agreement for 2024-27 be approved.

Recommendation to People & Places Advisory Committee

That the report be noted.

Introduction and Background

1. The existing three-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Citizens' Advice North & West Kent and Citizens' Advice Edenbridge & Westerham was approved at the Cabinet meeting on 18 March 2021 with a subsequent approval of financial changes to the SLA on 1 March 2022.
2. The SLA three-year agreement started on 1 April 2021 and will finish on 31 March 2024.
3. Quarterly monitoring meetings are held between officers and Citizens' Advice Offices and an annual review meeting is held between the Portfolio Holder and Deputies, Chief Officer People & Places, Citizens' Advice Trustee Chairs and Managers.

4. The information required from Citizens' Advice for quarterly meetings is set out in Schedule B of the Service Level Agreement 2024/27 and that required for the Annual Review Meeting is set out in Schedule C. The annual review period was historically from October to September each year but for this new three-year agreement will be from April to March each year. Review meetings and the Annual Review Meeting will be adjusted accordingly.

Details of Service Level Agreement (SLA) 2024-27

5. Discussions regarding the three year SLA to cover the period 2024-27 have taken place during 2023.
6. Suggested changes have been incorporated into the draft SLA set out at Appendix A. The key changes are set out below:
 - Some updates to the Housing Advice Service to account for changes in regulation.
 - Inclusion of a list of areas of the district that each of the Citizens' Advice covers.
 - The annual review period was historically from October to September each year but for this new three-year agreement will be from April to March each year. Review meetings and the Annual Review Meeting will be adjusted accordingly.
 - A provision has been added to allow for the Council to adjust the payment sums included by giving a minimum of three months' notice in writing to the Citizens' Advice. The Citizens' Advice will respond with any resulting changes in their service and a variation to the SLA will be agreed.

Key Implications

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Financial

7. The level of grant for the SLA in 2024-27 in the Council's budgetary financial plan is £98,540 per year for the General Advice Service and £18,000 per year for the Housing Advice Service and these sums are included in the draft SLA.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

8. This is a Service Level Agreement as opposed to a contract that has contractual liabilities. Accordingly, this is a statement of what is expected from Citizens' Advice and the Council with a requirement for the Citizens' Advice to provide performance data on the level and nature of advice given to clients.

9. The SLA covers statutory obligations, including Child Safety, Equalities and Safeguarding policies.

10. The SLA includes a requirement on the Citizens' Advice to maintain an up-to-date risk assessment relating to the provision of the service and make this available to the Council.

Equality Assessment

11. Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this report directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against	No	The SLA includes obligations on the Citizens' Advice to comply fully with the Council's commitment to ensuring that the service is non-discriminatory and that clients can access the service taking account of

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
different groups in the community?		any vulnerability or other specific housing needs.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	The SLA provides for the Citizens' Advice to work to reach and promote its services to those most in need. The Council will work with the Citizens' Advice to achieve this.
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		No negative impacts identified

Conclusions

This paper asks that you approve the Citizens' Advice Service Level Agreement for 2024-27.

<p>Appendices</p> <p>Appendix A - draft Citizens' Advice SLA 2024-27</p> <p>Background</p> <p>N/A</p>
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Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – People & Places