

**Decision Session – Executive Member for  
Adult Social Care & Health**

15 March 2018

Report of the Assistant Director (Customer & Digital Services)

**Service Level Agreements with Citizens Advice York and the  
Welfare Benefits Unit**

**Summary**

- 1) This report is brought to the Executive Member to seek approval for a one year funding agreement to March 2019 with Citizens Advice York (CAY, formerly CAB) and a four year agreement to March 2022 with the Welfare Benefits Unit (WBU).

**Background**

- 2) In accordance with the York Compact we have previously negotiated three year partnership funding agreements with CAY and WBU in York; those previous agreements are due to finish in March 2018. This report proposes renewed funding support on an individual basis with reasons for this given in the report detail below.

**Funding offer and agreement for CAY**

- 3) The service level agreement (SLA) proposed is contained at Annex A to this report. The funding element is for the council to pay £128,000 core funding for one year to March 2019 an increase of £5.5k from the current 2015-18 level (£122,500).
- 4) Whilst the revised funding level seeks to address increases in costs experienced over the last three years it will also allow CAY to offer within its 'core funding' three drop in sessions with a greater number of advisers available. These sessions are anticipated to be more cost effective and reach more service users than the current four drop in sessions (two days of which are core funded and two days funded from one off funding approved jointly by the Executive Member and Executive Leader on 14th September 2017). CAY will then seek to provide further welfare benefits support and advice for a day each week.

- 5) The one year agreement is in essence a 'holding agreement' whilst the CAY fundamentally review its funding arrangements going forward. The agreement has some variations to the last version but no radical departures either in services offered or funding proposed. During this holding year, CAY will undertake a comprehensive review leading to a new business plan and service level agreement. In this process CAY will work in partnership with key stakeholders and with service users on how CAY can better serve their needs within the available resourcing models available.
- 6) Outside of this agreement are one off project based funding streams which provide support and advice to residents, some of which are funded by the council and are summarised in Appendix 1 to the SLA. The council currently funds the following projects as part of the Financial Inclusion grant funding scheme '*Improving Finances, Improving Lives*':
  - a) a specialist two year Debt Support Service ( granted £49,875);
  - b) the following outreach based services for one year:
    - i) GP Surgeries Advice Service (granted £33,361)
    - ii) Information and budgeting cafes (granted £19,089).

### **Funding Offer and agreement for WBU**

- 7) The service level agreement proposed is contained at Annex B to this report. The funding element is for the council to pay £22,700 per annum for four years to March 2022. There is no proposed change to the amount of funding.
- 8) The agreement has contains some very minor amendments essentially around changes in staffing resources and operations. The main change is the period it covers, which has increased from 3 to 4 years. The reason for this relates to North Yorkshire County Council's decision in 2016/17 to renew its funding of the WBU for 5 years which assists in the sustainability of this vital key second tier advisory service to CYC benefits advisors and Advice York partners. WBU's support is critical in supporting the council's response to welfare benefits changes, and importantly Universal Credit and its associated complexities.
- 9) The council also has contributed £16,070 in 2017/18 to the Welfare Benefits Unit's '*Universal Credit Focus*' project as part of

the Financial Inclusion grant funding scheme *Improving Finances, Improving Lives*.

### **Options**

- 10) It is open to the Executive Member not to offer the proposed funding or increase or offer a different level of funding.
- 11) The Executive Member could reject or change the proposed length of agreement recommended for both SLAs in this report.

### **Analysis**

- 12) The funding levels and length of SLAs are recommended in order to secure the objectives set out in the respective agreements.

### **Council Plan**

- 13) The actions set out in the report contribute to all three key corporate priorities set out in the Council Plan 2015-19 which drive the council's Financial Inclusion Strategy by helping to ensure that:
  - **a prosperous city for all** - residents have good quality jobs, housing and opportunities
  - **a focus on frontline services** - to ensure all residents, particularly the least advantaged, can access reliable services and community facilities
  - **a council that listens to residents** - to ensure it delivers the services they want and works in partnership with local communities.

### **Implications**

- 14) **Financial** – The £5.5k increase for CAY for 18/19 will be managed within Customer & Corporate Services overall budget allocation for 2018/19. Budgets for 19/20 onwards will be considered as part of the budget strategy.
- 15) **Equalities** – this funding enables support to the most vulnerable sections of the community.
- 16) There are no Financial, Legal, Property, Human Resources, Crime and Disorder, or Information Technology implications arising from this report.

## Risk Management

17) The level of risk associated with this proposal is “Acceptable”.

## Recommendations

18) The Executive Member is asked to approve:

- i) the two levels of funding set out in paragraph 3 and 7 and the associated service level agreements set out in the annexes;
- ii) a one year holding agreement with CAY; and
- iii) a four year agreement with WBU;

all subject to the reporting and performance conditions set down in the respective SLAs.

Reason: To demonstrate the delivery of expected outputs and accountability for public expenditure.

## Annexes

A – Service Level Agreement: CAY

B – Service Level Agreement: WBU

## Contact Details

<b>Authors:</b>	<b>Chief Officer Responsible for the report:</b>		
Pauline Stuchfield Assistant Director, Customer & Digital Services	Ian Floyd Director of Customer & Corporate Services		
	<b>Report Approved</b>	✓	<b>Date</b>
<b>Specialist Implications Officer(s):</b> N/A			
<b>Wards Affected:</b>			<b>All</b> ✓
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>			

**Background Papers:**

Report to Executive Member Decision Session for Adult Social Care & Health – 14th December 2017 ‘Options for the Additional Provision of Financial Advice/Support Following the Introduction of Universal Credit.’ which can be found at:

<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/documents/s116898/Universal%20Credit%20Support.pdf>

**Abbreviations:**

SLA Service Level Agreement

CYC City of York Council

CAY Citizens Advice York

WBU Welfare Benefits Unit