Title: PROVISION OF ADVICE & INFORMATION SERVICES BY LEICESTERSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

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1. Introduction

A report updating members on the advice and information service provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau since being awarded the contract in 2010 for a period of 3 years. Members are also asked to consider whether the provision of the service by the Citizens Advice Bureau be extended for a further period, as provided for in the service level agreement.

2. Recommendations

1) that members consider the report attached as an appendix on services provided in Oadby & Wigston 2010-13 by the Citizens Advice Bureau

2) that members consider recommending to the Policy, Finance and Development committee for a further 2 year extension of the agreement.

3. Information

A procurement exercise was undertaken in 2010 for the provision of advice and information for residents of the borough by the voluntary sector. The South and West Leicestershire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) was the successful bidder. The services to be provided for under the funding agreement are “assisted information” ie CAB staff are available to help clients access information and to identify where a client needs further information or advice and “general help” which include:-

- Diagnosing the client’s problems
- Giving information and explaining options
- Identifying further action the client can take and
- Giving basic assistance eg filling in forms, helping the client draft letters, and contacting third parties to seek information on the client’s behalf.

Additional services funded by other bodies that work in partnership with CAB which residents can benefit from are the Macmillan advice project and Money Advice service. These additional services will also shortly include a Fuel Poverty project to provide extra help to those most vulnerable in the borough.

These core services are available by letter, email and telephone and face to face. An office base in the borough has been established within the Leicestershire County Council office next to the Bassett Centre in South Wigston.

The appendix “Leicestershire CAB –report on Service provided in Oadby & Wigston 2010-13” sets out the achievements that have been made by CAB in the past 3
years in the borough, including anonymised case studies together with a customer satisfaction survey of 98% customer satisfaction. The report provides the information on the service as required under the agreement and it can be seen that the service has contributed to supporting residents of the borough with help and advice.

An area of concern for members has been the telephone answering provision and particularly the cost of calls for mobile callers. The report sets out the current provision for calls to a contact centre from a landline are charged at the local rate and a 0300 number for mobile callers. However recent attempts to call the CAB at various times throughout the day were not successful with no-one available to answer calls. There are no switchboard or hold facilities presumably because the message states they charge 5p per minute (minimum). The Answer phone message informs you that no one is available to take your call and then states the opening hours and that they have a website that may be able to provide assistance after this the call is ended. An update on the telephone answering and charges provision has been requested and this will be provided at the meeting on 5 June when Richard Evans, the Chief Executive and Liz Steiner, Director of Operations of CAB will be attending.

Since 2010 the CAB now provide a service to 6 out of the 7 districts of Leicestershire and Leicester City. This gives greater flexibility for residents eg if they live in the borough but work in Melton, they can be seen at the Melton office. The service is now known as LeicesterShire CAB. The CAB have aligned its priorities with those identified by Leicestershire Together such as Supporting Leicestershire Families and Welfare Reform.

The agreement is due to expire in August 2013. Within the existing agreement, it provides the agreement may be extended for a further 2 years subject to availability of funding resources and on suitable terms and conditions acceptable to the parties. The alternative would be to undertake a procurement exercise. In view of the achievements set out in the report and the work that the CAB is undertaking throughout the majority of Leicestershire and particularly the recognition of the support that can be given to local authorities with welfare reform and related issues members may consider it sensible to make use of this extension provision subject to assurances on the position with telephone answering provision.

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Background Papers:- none

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<tr>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Budget provision has been made for the year 13/14</th>
<th>No significant risks identified</th>
<th>The provision of help and advice should be available to all</th>
<th>No significant legal implications.</th>
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