

REVIEW OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS- CUMBRIA LAW CENTRE AND COPELAND CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Gillian Troughton
LEAD OFFICER: Darienne Law
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WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS?

The extension of the Service Level Agreements through the year 2012/13 will allow the two organisations to continue to provide their advice and assistance services to Copeland residents.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE? (eg Key Decision, Policy recommendation for Full Council, at request of Council,etc.)

As required in the conditions set out by the executive to agree the extension of the Service Level Agreements, for the Cumbria Law Centre (CLC) and, Copeland Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), for the year 2012/13.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Service Level Agreements for the Cumbria Law Centre and Copeland Citizens Advice Bureau be extended for the financial year 2012/13.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Executive has previously agreed the principle of Service Level Agreements (SLA) with both Cumbria Law Centre (CLC) and Copeland Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The organisations are currently paid £15,000 and £32,000 respectively per year.
- 1.2 The payment and extensions of the Service Level Agreements are conditional upon:-
 - a. Budgetary funding being available for them ; and
 - b. Compliance with the terms and conditions of the Service Level Agreement during the previous 12 months.

- 1.3 The current agreements have been extended annually pending a full review of support to the voluntary sector due to take place later this calendar year.
- 1.4 The budget agreed at Council on the 23rd February 2012 includes budget provision for the continued payment of £47,000 in 2012/13.
- 1.5 For both the Cumbria Law Centre and Copeland CAB the SLA conditions include:-
- a. Provide an Annual report giving
 - The number of advice sessions held
 - The number of clients who are resident or work in the Council's area
 - The number of new cases (including one-off advice) taken on for the Council's residents and workers during the statistical period, broken down by type
 - Details of how the organisation has continued to look for efficiency savings and improved service and an indication of unit cost
 - Assurance that an AGM and regular Management Committee meetings are held
 - b. Keep proper performance monitoring records
 - c. Maintain properly audited accounts
 - d. To work with Copeland CAB/ CLC to maximise income from grants, donations and other sources
 - e. Develop and maintain a medium term Business Plan.
- 1.6 The organisations have provided reports as required under clause 6. These are attached at Appendix 1 & 2. These demonstrate that they have complied with the terms and conditions of the Service Level Agreements.
- 1.7 The work that the CLC and CAB do for the residents of Copeland supports the councils goal of **supporting the development of strong healthy and engaged communities** and corporate plan objectives of **tackling disadvantage and inequity** by helping people with particularly around the growing need to tackle indebtedness and help **financial inclusion**.

2. CONCLUSIONS

- 2.1 Based on the information provided by CLC and CAB and discussions held with officers the work CLC and CAB undertakes
- continues to support the councils strategic aims and objectives,
 - has been in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Service Level Agreement during the previous 12 months.
- 2.2 There is budgetary provision and hence it is recommended that the SLAs are extended for a further year (2012/13).

3. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer's comments are: Proposals are appropriate way forward in accordance with Council key objectives whilst maintaining services.
- 3.2 The Section 151 Officer's comments are:
The budget for these organisations is contained in the 2012/13 budget.
- 3.3 EIA Comments: This report aims to continue work that supports and facilitates the corporate plan objectives of tackling disadvantage and inequity by helping people with advice and support particularly around the growing need to tackle indebtedness and help financial inclusion.
- 3.3 Other consultee comments, if any: None.

4. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

- 4.1 The previous Head of Legal and Democratic Services was the contact point for the organisations, this is now the responsibility of the Head of Corporate Resources.
- 4.2 Core funding for the organisations is provided by organisations such as the Council. The major risks to the organisations other than the withdrawal of core funding are around the withdrawal of project based funding from organisations such as the Community Legal Service. Risks are currently managed by providing for a review of the SLAs each year.

5. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

- 5.1 Further details of the work carried out are in the Appendices and SLA

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Cumbria Law Centre - Report to Copeland Borough Council
Appendix 2 – Copeland Citizens Advice Centre – Report ref SLA

List of Background Documents:

SLAs with the two organisations.



Report to Copeland Borough Council

by reference to Service Level Agreement clause 6 “Conditions of Grant”.

January 2011 – December 2011

Number of advice sessions held	73. We have held an advice sessions as agreed, every Thursday. In addition, we provided a duty solicitor service at Whitehaven County Court, as contracted with the LSC, for housing possession cases, until the court transferred to Workington in the summer. We also provided additional coverage at Copeland CAB to deal with housing clients on other days of the week, 'on call'.
Number of clients who are resident or work in the Council's area	235
Number of new cases, broken down by type	85
<i>Housing</i>	46
<i>Employment</i>	27
<i>Education</i>	2
<i>Community Care</i>	2
<i>Debt</i>	0
<i>Welfare Benefits</i>	0
<i>Consumer / other</i>	8

<p>How the Law Centre has continued to look for efficiency savings and improved service and an indication of unit cost</p>	<p>We already run an exceedingly low cost service in Whitehaven, thanks to Copeland CAB who currently allow us to use their premises at low cost. By cross-subsidising the work with Legal Aid earnings, we can continue to deliver.</p> <p>We have also succeeded in bringing in additional funding through the Equality and Human Rights Commission, for anti-discrimination casework; a service that we can make available to Copeland's residents thanks to Copeland's grant funding.</p> <p>In 2010 we entered into a consortium with Copeland CAB to tender for legal aid work (they doing the debt and benefits work, and ourselves doing the housing – alongside Allerdale CAB). We won the tender, and have secured the joint contract to deliver on casework through to March 2013.</p> <p>We have streamlined the way we operate at the Law Centre, so that all new calls and enquiries are taken by a "triage caseworker", whose task it is to direct all new clients to the correct source of specialist help. This fits well with the manner in which the CAB operates. Our continuing work, through Cumbria Advice Network, continues to make partnership working a high priority. That in turn enhances the experience of clients resorting to one agency, in smoothing the path to other kinds of help where needed.</p> <p>Unit cost £64 per client</p>
<p>Hold AGM + regular Management committee meetings</p>	<p>Our AGM was held on 15 November 2011 (and it was good to meet Copeland councillor and portfolio-holder Cllr Gillian Troughton at the event), and management committee meetings held every second month during 2011. We have not had the benefit of a representative from Copeland on our committee this year, and we recognise that holding the meetings in Carlisle, over 40 miles away, does present a significant barrier to participation. We are nonetheless anxious to ensure we are properly responsive to local need in Copeland and perhaps this is something to discuss, as we welcome and value elected member involvement.</p>
<p>Inform council of meetings / allow to be represented</p>	<p>Done – see above.</p>

Publish Annual report	<p>Done. Copies are being mailed to all Copeland councillors – we will enclose further copies with the hard copy of this report.</p> <p>Members and officers may also like to visit our website: www.cumbrialawcentre.org.uk</p>
Keep performance monitoring records	Done
Maintain audited accounts	Done. We enclose a copy herewith.
Work together with Copeland CAB	<p>Done. We are proud of the constructive working relationship we have built with the CAB, and believe this has real benefits for all our clients. Both we and the CAB are active participants in the Cumbria Advice Network project (see www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk – see below)</p>
Ensure level of service maintained	Our service has been delivered consistently as set out in the service level agreement. Indeed, we believe we have exceeded levels set.
Maintain Business Plan	We do maintain a business plan. We are currently working on a new draft, for discussion by the Management Committee on 9 March this year.
Work with CAB, Council and wider partnerships	We are proud of the partnership work we have done with the CAB and Shelter to form the “Cumbria Advice Network”. We are seeking ways in which to work also with officers at the Council to take advantage of funding opportunities that local government may have access to, particularly in these financially straitened times.

Paul im Thurn, senior solicitor
Cumbria Law Centre
2 February 2012