

REQUEST TO ALTER TERMS OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr. Norman Williams
LEAD OFFICER: Martin Jepson – Head of Legal and Democratic Services
REPORT AUTHOR: Martin Jepson – Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Summary: Asks for permission to amend the current Community Law Centre service in Copeland including for them to take place at differing times.

Recommendation: That the requested changes to the Service Level Agreement for the Community Law Centre as described in the report be approved.

Impact on delivering Corporate Plan objectives: The proposed alternative arrangements are intended to provide at least as good a service as is currently provided.

Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21): A better service to its customers should help to reduce crime and disorder.

Financial and human resource implications: A small amount of work will be involved in amending the Service Level Agreement if the report is approved. There are no financial implications.

Project & Risk Management: Work in monitoring the Service Level Agreement would not change if amendments are approved. It is not considered that there is a risk of there being a lower use of the Community Law Centre's services if the amendments are approved.

Key Decision Status

- **Financial:** None
- **Ward:** None

Other Ward Implications: None

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council has recently concluded a Service Level Agreement with the Community Law Centre. That Agreement provided for advice to be given as follows:-

- (a) By appointment at Whitehaven on Tuesday mornings;
- (b) Mobile advice sessions in Cleator Moor fortnightly Wednesday mornings;
- (c) Mobile advice sessions in Millom on Thursday afternoons.

- 1.2 At a recent meeting with the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Norman Williams and the Council's Community Law Centre representative, Councillor Robert Salkeld, the Manager of the Community Law Centre asked that the above arrangements be altered.

2. REASONING

- 2.1 For Millom the Community Law Centre proposes that the service is reduced from a fortnightly to a monthly visit. This is due to the falling take up of the service over recent years. However, they are confident that the move to pre-booked appointments and their proposal to work in partnership with Copeland Citizens Advice Bureau will make the monthly sessions far more effective. They believe that the Council will gain greater value for money from the Law Centre in this way and confirm that they are in discussion with Copeland Citizen Advice Bureau about the possibility of them allowing the Law Centre to operate from their office on these monthly visits.
- 2.2 For Cleator Moor, they propose that the service is doubled. In other words, they would visit every week, rather than fortnightly. Again, this would be by a pre-booked appointment service, which they believe would provide a much better service for local people.
- 2.3 For Whitehaven, they propose that the service is increased by one half hour. This enables them to see two "full" as well as some "diagnostic" appointments.
- 2.4 Telephone access would remain as before.
- 2.5 On a minor issue they have also advised me that they no longer have a contract with the Legal Services Commission to provide "Specialist Advice and Representation in Community Care and Public Law" as described in the Service Level Agreement. However, they do still provide general help and casework in Community Care and Public Law. This would be a minor amendment to the Service Level Agreement which I would recommend be made for the sake of completeness.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The proposed revised services are shown in more detail in the Appendix to this report.
- 3.2 It is considered that the changes proposed will provide a better and more focussed service, even though at Millom, the service would only be monthly rather than fortnightly.
- 3.3 It is therefore recommended that authority be given to amend the Service Level Agreement with the Community Law Centre to provide for the services shown in the Appendix and the minor change described in 2.5 above.

List of Appendices:

A: [Proposed Weekly Service Plan - Copeland](#)

List of Background Documents:

SLA with CLC

Letter from CLC dated 14.09.06

List of Consultees:

**Corporate Team, Executive, Councillor R Salkeld,
Millom Councillors & Cleator Moor Town Council**