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**Report to**  
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

11<sup>th</sup> January, 2006

**Report of**  
Cllr Kevin Foster

**Title**  
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Coventry Law Centre

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### **1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2005, the Cabinet approved a process of reporting back to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on the work of those outside bodies appointed to by the City Council. This reports sets out details of the work of Coventry Law Centre over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Council should continue to nominate two elected members as its representatives on the Coventry Law Centre due to both the nature of it's work and the level of financial support received from the City Council.
- 2.2 Scrutiny Co-Ordination Committee notes the forthcoming review of the role of members of the Coventry Law Centre.

### **3 Information on Work of Outside Body**

- 3.1 The Coventry Law Centre describes it's purpose as "*To fight Social exclusion in communities and to effect change in society by increasing rights awareness and using legal processes to fight poverty, inequality and discrimination*". The Law Centre employs professional, legally qualified staff to deliver it's work and prides itself on a high standard of advice.
- 3.2 The Law Centre provides legal advice in the areas of Community Care, Welfare Rights, Immigration, Housing, Employment, Education, Mental Health and Public Law. The Coventry Law Centre in common with similar centres specialises in many areas of law that private legal firms do not practice.
- 3.3 In the year 2004/2005 the Law Centre received £446,443 in grant funding from the City Council. The Law Centre also received £271,740 from the Legal services Commission. The Councils grant allows the Law Centre to provide aid and assistance to some clients who do not qualify for Legal Aid, but do not have the resources to pursue their cases privately.

3.4 In one year the Law Centre managed to recover on behalf of it's clients £978,326 in arrears of benefit and compensation and weekly increases in benefit totalling £1,203,612.

3.5 The Law Centre produces an Annual Impact Report and the 2004/2005 report is available for public inspection. The report details examples of cases that the Centre has dealt with

#### **4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment**

4.1 The benefits to the City Council of this appointment is that members are able to set the direction for the centre and are able to scrutinise the annual accounts.

4.2 The Law Centre is currently reviewing the role of the members of the centre to enable them to get a greater understanding of the Centre's work and to be more involved.

4.3 In addition to being one of the Council's members Cllr Foster was elected as a Trustee of the Law Centre in November 2004. Cllr Foster sits on the Management Committee of the Law Centre in that capacity. Members may recall that former Cllr Edwards was also a Trustee of the Law Centre until his recent resignation.

#### **5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment**

5.1 The only formal requirement is for members to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Law Centre that is held in November. Whilst all elected members are invited only the nominated members have a vote on certain items of business. Cllr Foster attended this meeting as a member. (Cllrs Lakha & Bigham attended as observers).

5.2 Members of the Law Centre receive no remuneration for their appointment.

#### List of background papers

Proper officer:

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Other contributors:

Papers open to Public Inspection

<b>Description of paper</b>	<b>Location</b>
Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies	CH61