
Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

18th February, 2009

Report of
Councillor Mrs Bigham

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

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This reports sets out details of the work of **The Coventry Law Centre** over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 ***That Coventry City Council should nominate two elected members on the Coventry Law Centre due to the nature of its work and the level of financial support from the City Council. (This year, due to Councillor Foster becoming Deputy Leader of the City Council, he resigned as a Trustee.) Councillor Bigham was elected as a Trustee on June 25, 2008.***

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.'***¹
- 3.2 The Coventry Law Centre provides legal advice in the areas of Community care, Disability, Employment, Immigration and Asylum, Discrimination and Housing. It offers, 'specialist, high quality advice and representation.'²
- 3.3 In the year 2007/2008 Coventry Law Centre received £483,308 in Coventry City Council grant. The Council's grant allows Coventry Law Centre to help clients who are, 'among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our community by promoting legal solutions to many of the problems they face.'³ Two of the many achievements of the last year have been to gain for clients weekly increases in benefit for one year of £781,252 and arrears and compensation payments of £911,321.
- 3.4 The Coventry Law Centre produces an Annual Impact Report and the 2007-2008 report will be available for public inspection. The report details achievements from 2007-2008 with examples of the work that was done.

¹ Impact Report 2007-2008, p2

² Op.cit p2

³ Op.cit p.4

- 3.5 The Law Centre plays a leading role in Advice Centre Services Coventry (ASC) The Director of the Law Centre, Sue Bent, co-chairs this partnership which, 'has been successful in bidding for monies to strengthen advice services in the city.'⁴
- 3.6 During the last year the knowledge of members of the Coventry Law Centre has been enhanced by receiving time with the team supervisors in each area of the law to better understand the work being carried out at the Law Centre.

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

- 4.1 ***Members are able to set the direction for the Centre, are able to scrutinize annual accounts and are responsible for electing the Trustees who make up the Management Committee of the Law Centre.***

5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

- 5.1 Coventry City Council's representatives on the Coventry Law Centre are Councillors Mrs Bigham and Councillor Lapsa from May 2008, and Councillor Foster until May 2008. There were 9 Trustee meetings held in the period from January 2008 until December 2008 inclusive but Councillors were only eligible to attend 8 of these meetings. Council Mrs Bigham attended 3 of the 8 Trustee meetings and Councillor Foster attended 1 of the 3 possible meetings. Councillor Lapsa attended the AGM held on 18th November, 2008 but Councillor Mrs Bigham gave apologies as she had to attend a Regional Assembly Housing/Planning Partnership meeting held on that day.

- 5.2 There is no remuneration associated with the appointment

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection
Description of paper **Location** CH59
 Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies

⁴ Op.cit p.6