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**Report to**  
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

15<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**Report of**  
Councillor Gazey

**Title**  
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau Management Board 2010-2011

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

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the work of the Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau Management Board over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that the City Council continue to nominate a Member to the Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau Management Board.

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

- 3.1 In November, the bureau celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that was recognized by a civic reception hosted by the Lord Mayor.

The needs of the clients of the bureau have changed over the course of the last 70 years and the bureau continues to develop and innovate and develop in order to become more accessible. In the last year, the bureau has further increased access through the development of new outreach service to complement those already in operation and the introduction of an evening advice session, particularly aimed at people in work or with caring responsibilities, but in need of advice and support.

The bureau has a diverse team of 96 volunteers, encompassing 17 nationalities and bringing the number of languages spoken in the bureau up to 36. It has also established a formal partnership with Coventry University in order to offer placements to students in the Law Department. During the year, the bureau Trustee Board reviewed its staffing structure, creating a leaner management team and investing further infrastructure capacity around its volunteer team.

Nationally, the bureau has a reputation across the CAB network as something of an innovator, and has developed a number of new initiatives in the past year around volunteer training, partnership working, and the delivery of information services that have all been recognized nationally.

The bureau currently has capacity to help around 10,000 people a year deal with around 24,000 issues.

- 3.2 The year has brought significant funding challenges, as a number of large streams of income have been reduced or have ended altogether. The high profile ending of the Financial Inclusion Fund that provides funding for the bureau's entire debt caseworker team would have significantly damaged the bureau's service model, had it not been for a change in direction from the government who now intend to keep the scheme for at least a further year.

With such funding uncertainty, the bureau Trustee Board is grateful for the continued support of the City Council whose grant represents around 25% of the bureau's total income. It has been able to set a balanced budget for 2011/12 that maintains 95% of the current service level.

The bureau continues to be involved with advice agency partners in the work of Advice Services Coventry, and also represents the voluntary sector on the Local Strategic Partnership. The bureau is an elected member of the Voluntary Sector Assembly and is one of the founding members of the Voluntary Sector Consortium that aims to improve commissioning arrangements between the public agencies and the voluntary sector.

- 3.3 The bureau Trustee Board will shortly begin to develop a new strategy for the service, having completed the objectives it set by the 2008 – 2011 strategic plan. Future priorities for the bureau will include a new financial and fundraising strategy, the protection of face-to-face and outreach services that demonstrably meet the needs of the most vulnerable, and the impact locally of the transfer of the Consumer Direct service into Citizens Advice.

Further information and a copy of the Bureau annual report for 2009/10 (70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue) can be requested from the bureau (024 76 223284) or downloaded from its website [www.coventrycab.org.uk](http://www.coventrycab.org.uk)

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

- 4.1 The Citizens Advice Bureau is one of a number of advice services funded by the City Council; membership of the Board of Trustees ensures that the Council is involved in determining the policy of the Bureau and ensures involvement in performance monitoring and management of resources.

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

- 5.1 Coventry City Council's representative on the CAB is Councillor Gazey. In the period March 2010 and February, 2011 inclusive there were six Trustee Board meetings held of which Councillor Gazey attended four. There was also the CAB AGM on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2010 which Councillor Gazey also attended.

- 5.2 There is no remuneration associated with this appointment.

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

**Description of paper**

Schedule of City Council Appointments to outside Bodies

**Location** Council House, Room 59