



**Report to**

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

17<sup>th</sup> April, 2013

**Report of**

Councillor Ruane

**Title**

Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau

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**1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the work of Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau 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 The Citizens Advice Bureau most significant achieve this year has been to diversify its funding base and increase the amount of social policy work that it is able to do. Highlights for the year are:

The Big Difference Fund

This programme was started in April and is a partnership between the CAB and Severn Trent Water with an investment of STW of £1 million over 2 years. The aim of the programme is to provide advice on benefits, debt and budgeting to Severn Trent Water's most vulnerable customer group alongside a grant that will clear their water arrears and pay for other costs that might be preventing them from budgeting effectively. The project is in a Pilot stage, but early outcomes are positive.

Contact Requests

CAB developed a new web-based service to improve access to the bureau and has been able to assist around 600 people this year through email or telephone advice following electronic requests. This has seen clients access the bureau at an earlier stage in their issue. The initiative was highlighted at the City Council's CityCamp conference and will receive support from Coventry University in 2013 to develop an enhanced version.

ChYPP Project

The Children and Young People's Project has developed significantly this year and the bureau now has an advice outlet in 35 schools across the city. In these schools, school staff have been trained to provide first-tier information and support to clients whilst also identifying advice needs and referring them into the bureau for advice and casework appointments and telephone advice.

Debt Casework

The CAB has continued to deliver a government contract through the Money Advice Service that enables around 1,500 clients to be helped each year through a full debt casework service.

Outreach in Health Centres

The CAB was awarded a grant from NHS Coventry to re-develop its previous service that delivered outreach services in the Wards of Canley, Tile Hill, Hillfields and Foleshill which attempts to meet gaps in provision of the Neighbourhood Advice Services across the city.

### Social Policy Work

The CAB was delighted to receive a national award from Citizens Advice for Campaigning Bureau of the Year at its conference in September. This was followed by a visit from Princess Anne who also launched the Big Difference Fund that gave the bureau some heightened profile. This increase in profile for the bureau has led to 2 pieces of filming by the BBC for the Newsnight programme, the first which was in support of a film about the Foodbank, and the second which will be broadcast at some point in February.

The bureau's policy team is working closely with the City Council and other partners in considering and planning for the Welfare Reform changes.

### SORTED

More latterly, the CAB was successful in a Big Lottery bid to the Financial Confidence Programme and will be launching its SORTED project in March 2013. This project will help to support new tenants and tenants who have had a change in income in managing their finances through practical training in a mock-up flat that has been developed in the bureau. This is an exciting and innovative project that will be delivered in partnership with Groundwork, the city's Housing Associations and the City Council's homelessness department.

### Quality of Advice

The CAB continues to review closely and monitor its systems for quality of advice and regularly is assessed as to the high standards it sets itself. The bureau currently has around 50 paid staff and around 100 volunteers delivering advice for 5 days a week from the bureau's main office through telephone, through home visits and through numerous outreach sites across the city.

### Advice Review

The bureau has contributed to the City Council's work in reviewing advice services and is committed to the work of Advice Services Coventry. It looks forward to working with the Council in improving access to services over the coming 2 years.

## **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 Councils representative on the CAB is Councillor Ruane. There were three Trustee Board meetings held of which Councillor Ruane attended one.
- 5.2 There is no remuneration associated with this appointment.

### List of background papers

Proper officer:

Author:  
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None

Papers open to Public Inspection

**Description of paper**

Schedule of City Council Appointments to outside Bodies

**Location:** CH59