

Title of Report: Advice Services 2019/20 and approval of updated Advice Strategy 2018 - 2021	Officer Presenting: Director of Health & Community Author: Head of Community Development & Leisure
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval to extend funding allocations to current Advice Providers for the first three months of the 2019/20 financial year based on the allocations provided for 2018/19.
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval to advertise for one Trial Provider during the 2019/20 year.
- 1.3 To seek Members' approval for the updated Advice Strategy for 2018-21 (Appendix 1).

2 Background

- 2.1 Members will be aware of Council's approved providers (Dove House, North West Citizens Advice, and Resource Centre Derry) for generalist advice services for the period 2016/19 (HC149/16).
- 2.2 Members will also be aware that Council has been working with all providers in relation to Quality Standards. All three providers have now achieved the Gold standard for Advice Provision.
- 2.3 The Advice Strategy seeks to set out Derry City and Strabane District Council's plans for generalist voluntary advice provision in the Council area in the period from 2018 to 2021.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 At an Advice Panel meeting on 16th January 2019 Members agreed to recommend to Council to extend the current three Advice Providers Commissioning Agreement for one year allowing for the implementation of a new Trial Provider to commence in June/July 2019 for a six – month trial period.

- 3.2 The Advice Panel also recommended the advertisement for one new Trial Provider which would be advertised during the 2019/20 financial year. Any new Advice Provider would be required to achieve a minimum Bronze award at the end of the trial period in order to be considered for a three year Commissioning Agreement in April 2020.
- 3.3 The Department for Communities (DfC) has yet to confirm the annual allocation in respect of Advice Services Provision for 2019/20, however in recent years this budget has remained ring-fenced.
- 3.4 The Department for Communities (DfC) confirmed for the 2018/19 financial year that due to the review of the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP), the Department would divert the total budget of £200k previously allocated to the Northern Ireland Advice Consortium (NIASC) to the advice budget administered by Councils. While budgets have yet to be confirmed by the Department for 2019/20 it is anticipated that this level of funding will remain as in 2018/19 and will again be allocated to Councils.
- 3.5 At the Advice panel meeting in January Williamson Consulting presented the draft Advice Strategy to Members confirming that elected members and Advice Providers had provided their feedback in relation to the Strategy and the necessary changes had been made.
- 3.6 During the 2018/19 financial year the CAB Regional Office went into administration and all of the Advice providers are now members of Advice NI. One of the implications of this change is that the Advice Providers have had to change to a new recording system, i.e. from CARMA to Advice Pro.
- 3.7 Members will be aware that Council use the statistics from the recording system in order to allocate funding to providers and this change has resulted in difficulties in accessing accurate statistics for the 2018 calendar year.
- 3.8 It is therefore proposed that funding is allocated for the first three months on the basis of the previous years' allocation. Officers will provide support to all three providers during March 2019 – May 2019 in order to ensure that statistics are being recorded consistently and accurately by all three providers. This will allow for an accurate analysis of contacts in order to provide the required information which will be utilised to determine the final allocation for the 2019/20 financial year in June 2019.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

- 4.1 Based on 2018/19 the finance allocation within Community Development budgets for Generalist Advice Services is a total budget of £718,299. This includes £419,591 from the Department for Communities and £298,708 from Council's Rates Budget. An amount of £13,000 is required for support services in relation to the Quality Standard. Therefore the amount for allocation in relation to the delivery of Generalist Advice Services is £705,299.
- 4.2 An additional allocation of £22,678.33 was also provided by the Department for Communities in 2018/19 in respect of generalist advice due to the redirection of the RISP funding as outlined in 3.4 above.
- 4.3 An amount of £12,000 has been identified in savings within the 2018/19 Health and Community Directorate budgets in order to provide the necessary finance for a Trial Provider in 2019/20 financial year.
- 4.4 The Department for Communities has not yet confirmed funding for the 2019/20 financial year. However, it is not anticipated that there will be any reduction in the amounts outlined above. Funding from Derry City and Strabane District Council has been confirmed within the Rates estimates.
- 4.5 As a result, the allocation of Generalist Advice Provision funding for the first quarter of 2019/20 is proposed as follows subject to confirmation of DfC funding;

Name of Provider	Amount Allocated
North West Citizens Advice	£132,296
Dove House Community Trust	£ 29,005
Resource Centre Derry	£ 15,023
Total Amount Funded	£176,324

Discussions are ongoing with the Department for Communities regarding funding to support Appeals and Tribunals. A further meeting of the Advice Panel will take place before the end of March in this regard. The additional allocation anticipated from RISP as outlined in 4.2 will be considered as part of these discussions.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That Members approve the allocation of £176,324 as outlined in 4.5 above in respect of current Generalist Advice Services Provision for the first three months of the 2019/20 financial year subject to confirmation of funding from Department for Communities (Dfc).

- 5.2 Members approve an allocation of £12,000 towards the total cost for one new Trial provider.
- 5.3 Members approve the updated Advice Strategy for 2018-21.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Advice Strategy