

Rother District Council

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	27 February 2023
Title:	Citizen's Advice Contract
Report of:	Joe Powell – Head of Service, Housing and Community
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Prochak
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To extend the Citizen's Advice Service Level Agreement to March 2024 and align commissioning timeframes with wider East Sussex partners.
Decision Type:	Non-Key
Officer Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the Citizen's Advice 1066 contract continue and an extension of funding of £85,000 for a further one-year period be approved.

Introduction

1. In March 2022, Cabinet approved the extension of the contract the Council held at that time with Rother District Citizen's Advice (RDCA) (Minute CB21/97 refers). The reason for the extension was that RDCA had been through a very challenging few years as it tried to operate a service during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Citizen's Advice 1066 (CA1066) has recently amalgamated with the former RDCA and is under contract with both Rother District and Hastings Borough councils. Over the last year we have been supporting the Chief Executive Officer of CA1066 as she gets to grips with delivering money, welfare benefits, debt and related advice and support to residents. We have received quarterly performance reports from CA1066 and it is positive to observe the improved performance and outcomes they are achieving.
3. In parallel, the Council has been an active member of the East Sussex Welfare Benefits and Debt Advice Independent Review Steering Group (ESBDAIRSG), led by the East Sussex Integrated Care Board (formerly the Clinical Commissioning Group, CCG). As a member of the group we have contributed to the commissioning of an independent review of welfare, money and debt advice services across East Sussex with a view to identifying opportunities for shared investment and the potential for co-commissioned money, welfare benefits and debt advice services from March 2024.

Performance

4. CA1066 has been reviewing the delivery of its services in Rother as it works to improve these services following challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

which had a detrimental effect on performance. A performance summary for Quarter 3 2022/23 can be found at Appendix A, alongside a service demand summary.

5. The reports capture the outcomes that CA1066 is achieving presently and the value the service is now adding to some of our most vulnerable residents. In summary, during Quarter 3 2022/23 CA1066 was successful in improving the income of Rother residents by a total of £125,000 as well as supporting a total of £15,000 worth of debt to be written off. The impact of these outcomes in supporting people to manage the cost of living more effectively and avoid homelessness should not be underestimated. The Council will continue to monitor the quarterly performance of CA1066 and support them to continue to improve the service.
6. In addition, CA1066 has secured a range of additional grant awards, independently of its two council contracts, since April 2022. Trussell Trust have funded 1 FTE financial capability adviser to work in Battle and Bexhill Food Banks and funding has been secured from the Utility Company Consortium to fund an energy adviser in the various 'warm spaces' that have emerged throughout the district. Energy Redress have provided funding for a further 2 FTE energy advisers for East Sussex. Finally, CA1066 has re-established outreach at both Battle and Rye, as well as locating advisors at Rural Partnership events.
7. CA1066 and its CEO have built upon their existing leadership role within the Rother district and are a key partner within the Anti-Poverty Steering Group and the delivery of the Anti-Poverty Strategy Action Plan (Minute CB22/18 refers). We continue to rely on the expertise of CA1066 and the wider national Citizen's Advice network to which they have access, to inform future strategy direction and the delivery of effective money, debt and welfare benefits services within the district.

Future Commissioning

8. The Council notes that the ESBDAIRSG has timetabled to have in place a revised countywide commission in place by March 2024. Therefore, officers recommend that the existing contract be extended by a further 12-months in order for our future commissioning timetable to align with the wider partnership.
9. Officers intend to bring revised proposals forward later in 2023 that will detail the commissioning approach it wishes to adopt, including a value for money appraisal as well as revised service specification, following the findings of the ESBDAIRSG.

Conclusion

10. The provision of welfare benefits, debt and money advice is a key aspect of the network of services that support vulnerable people facing poverty and homelessness within the district. The proposal to extend the existing CA1066 contract by 12-months to March 2024 will allow the current service to be delivered effectively, while enabling officers to conduct a comprehensive review of future commissioning in order to ensure effective outcomes and value for money in the future.

Finance Implications

11. The Citizen's Advice contract represents an investment to the Council of £85,000 a year and is allocated within the Budget 2023/24. Officers will continue to monitor the performance of CA 1066 during 2023/24. A tender exercise for a new money, debt and welfare benefits advice service contract will be completed during 2023/24, the value of which will be reviewed as part of wider budget setting processes.

Legal Implications

12. We are in consultation with Legal services as well as the Procurement Hub in order to extend the existing contract by 12 months as well as timetable a new tender exercise for services beyond 2023/24.

HR Implications

13. None.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive	Malcolm Johnston
Report Contact Officer:	Joe Powell
e-mail address:	joe.powell@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A – Performance and Demand
Relevant Previous Minutes:	CB21/97 CB22/18
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

Performance and Demand

Outcomes

Financial Outcome Category	Outcome	Clients	Number of outcomes	Total Value
Debts written off	Debt write off - other	2	2	£7,244
	DRO - debt relief order	1	1	£7,695
	Total	3	3	£14,938
Income gain	£400 Energy Support payment	10	11	£4,716
	Application made to govt scheme for financial help/energy efficie..	1	1	£150
	Benefit / tax credit gain - a new award or increase	9	16	£98,167
	Benefit / tax credit gain - award or increase following revision or ..	2	3	£7,026
	Budgeting change	5	5	£760
	Charitable payment	42	46	£3,684
	Compensation - awarded	1	1	£250
	Financial gain	16	17	£2,033
	Financial gain (please specify)	1	2	£370
	Fuel Voucher	57	63	£4,996
	Other savings achieved	17	18	£2,670
	Total	114	183	£124,822
	Other	Affordable Warmth scheme referral	1	1
Application made to energy trust fund		1	1	£700
Appropriate service/ support obtained for client - successful		1	1	£0
Client added to PSR		2	2	£0
Client familiarised with how UC works and what it means for them		4	8	£0
client obtained appropriate help with court forms		1	1	£0
Complaint resolved		1	1	£286
Creditor action stopped/suspended/prevented		2	2	£0
Debts repaid		1	1	£55
Enforcement action avoided/suspended		1	1	£514
Improved energy-related behaviour		1	1	£0
Improved health / capacity to manage		15	62	£150
Income Maximisation		1	1	£0
Not liable for debt		1	1	£0
Other (non-financial)		3	3	£0
Priority Service Register (Energy)		1	1	£0
Request to be added to Priority Services Reg / Special Ass Reg		3	3	£0
Total	27	91	£1,705	
Re-imburements, services, loans	Court fees waived or refunded	1	1	£275
	Financial assistance - associated costs, FSM, uniform, trips, boo..	1	1	£150
	Food provision / referral	75	88	£11,714
	Free or reduced charges/costs	1	1	£39
	Goods or services provided	1	1	£126
	Total	77	92	£12,304
Repayments rescheduled	DMP - debt management plan	2	2	£37,381
	Repayment negotiated	1	1	£18,512
	Token payments	2	4	£10,174
	Total	5	7	£66,067

Key Statistics

Rother

03/10/2022 23/12/2022



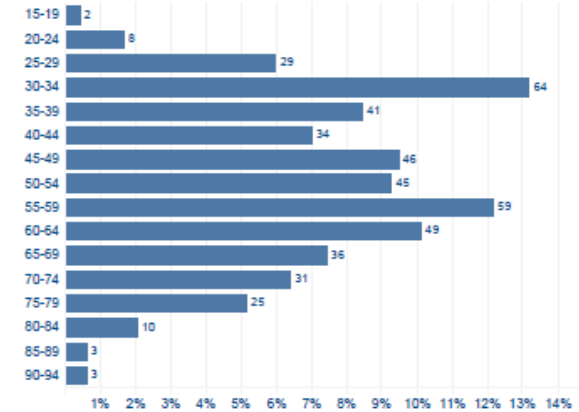
Summary

Clients	498
Quick client contacts	
Issues	1,472
Activities	1,192
Cases	613
Outcomes	
Income gain	£124,822
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£12,304
Debts written off	£14,938
Repayments rescheduled	£66,067
Other	£1,705

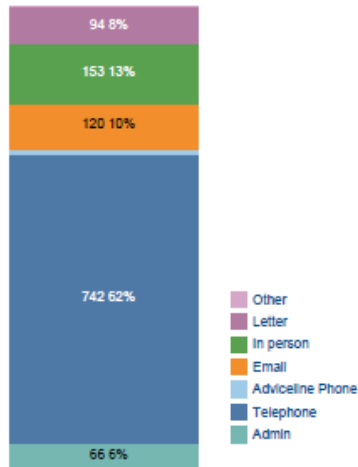
Issues

Issue	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	231
Benefits Universal Credit	88
Charitable Support & Food Ban..	306
Consumer goods & services	64
Debt	164
Education	2
Employment	22
Financial services & capability	70
GVA & Hate Crime	2
Health & community care	7
Housing	91
Immigration & asylum	7
Legal	34
Other	3
Relationships & family	37
Tax	12
Travel & transport	14
Utilities & communications	318
Grand Total	1,472

Age



Channel



Top benefit issues



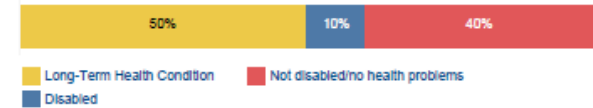
Top debt issues



Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity

