

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Update on Generalist Advice Provision</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>The Leisure and Development Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>16th June 2020</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For Information</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Community Development Manager

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	N/A

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

**The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with information about additional monies received from the Department for Communities (DfC) for Welfare Reform Advice Provision, and to provide an update on the current position in relation to the contract for Advice Provision.**

## **2.0 Background**

The Department for Communities (DfC) provides funding for Generalist Advice Provision through the DfC District Councils Community Support Programme (CSP) which contains a ringfenced amount for frontline advice provision which is then matched by Council.

The current contract for provision of Generalist Advice Services in the Borough was awarded, following an open procurement exercise, to Community Advice Causeway (CAC) (Lead Partner for Causeway and Glens Advice Services Consortium consisting of Community Advice Causeway and Limavady Community Development Initiative (LCDI)) for the period **1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, with an extension clause for a 2 further years, subject to Department for Communities funding. Council approved the awarding of this contract at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018.**

In January 2016 the Welfare Reform Mitigations Working Group, under Professor Eileen Evason, recommended that additional advice services be provided to help people to negotiate the changes in the social security system.

In response DfC set up the Welfare Reform Support Project (WRSP) to provide additional monies to the advice sector.

In the first three years of the WRSP DfC provided the WRSP monies to frontline advice organisations through Councils using existing funding arrangements. They did this by providing an additional amount of funding through the DfC District Councils Community Support Programme (CSP) which Council was not required to match.

From April 2019 DfC then moved to provide the WRSP monies to the frontline advice organisations via the regional Advice NI rather than through Councils.

## **3.0 Current Provision**

The core contract for Generalist Advice provision in Causeway Coast and Glens for 2020-21 is to the value of £213,387. Of this £99,481 is secured from DfC through the Community Support Programme and the remainder provided by Council. Annually an additional £18,140 is provided by DfC through the Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) Programme for additional advice provision in NR areas in Limavady.

Annual Monitoring Returns for 2019-20 indicate that the number of advice enquiries dealt with through the contract was 41,553, which exceeded the target of 30,000 by 38%. In addition, in excess of £18.6 million was generated in additional benefits income in the Borough. (Annex A)

## **4.0 Welfare Reform Support Programme (WRSP)**

In 2019 the Department for Communities (DfC) commissioned the Strategic Investment Board to undertake an independent review of the additional, independent advice provision that had been made available under the Welfare Reform Support Project from 2016 and which was due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

The review recommended that there was a clear need for these additional advice services to continue and endorsed the option to return to investing the extra funding via the existing Council's Community Support Programme funding delivery model.

The Department has therefore returned to providing the WRSP funding to advice providers through their District Councils Community Support Programme for 2020-21.

In addition to this, in recognition of the increases in appeals workloads across the advice sector, the Minister has also decided to release an additional funding package for Tribunal representation.

As a result, DfC has made an additional provision alongside the Generalist Advice grant in Councils CSP contract for the 20/21 year, as follows:

- Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension: Face to Face advice: £59,113.16.
- Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension: Tribunal representation: £25,600.

This funding is provided specifically to support the continuation of the existing Welfare Reform advice provision as well as additional monies for Tribunal Representation.

The funding is ring-fenced for this provision and must be spent by the 31st March 2021. Councils are not required to match this additional funding. The Department will take full responsibility with the administrative work involved in the vouching of this spend with Councils appointed provider.

A breakdown of the full funding package for Advice provision in Causeway Coast and Glens in 2020-21 is provided in Table 1 below.

<b>Advice Contract Element</b>	<b>Total Contract Amount (£)</b>	<b>Council Contribution (£)</b>	<b>DfC Contribution (£)</b>
Core Generalist Advice Contract	213,386.85	113,906	99,480.85
NR Limavady Advice	18,139.98		18,139.98
Additional monies for face to face WR advice	59,113.16		59,113.16
Additional monies for Tribunal representation	25,600.00		25,600
<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>316,239.99</b>		<b>202,333.99</b>

*Table 1: Breakdown of funding for Advice Provision in Causeway Coast and Glens 2020-21*

A breakdown of the advisors provided through the DfC/ Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Advice contract is detailed in Table 2 below.

<b>Advice contract element</b>	<b>Funded by</b>	<b>Number of advisors</b>	<b>Details</b>
Core Generalist Advice Contract	DfC CSP & Council	min 6 advisors	Delivering core generalist advice services across CCGBC (CAC & LCDI)
Limavady Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) Advice	DfC NR	1 x f/t advisor	Delivering advice service to Limavady NR area (LCDI)
Welfare Reform Support Project – face to face advice	DfC	1 x f/t advisor	Delivering Welfare Reform advice to Coleraine, Ballymoney, former Moyle areas (CAC)
		1 x f/t advisor	Delivering Welfare Reform advice to Limavady (LCDI)

Welfare Reform – Tribunal representation	DfC	1 x 0.3 equivalent advisor  1 x 0.3 equivalent advisor	Delivering benefit tribunal advice and representation to Coleraine, Ballymoney and former Moyle areas (CAC)  Delivering benefit tribunal advice and representation to Limavady (LCDI)
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*Table 2: Advisors funded by DfC/ Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council contract 2020-21*

### **5.0 Impact of Covid-19**

During the current pandemic advice organisations contracted by Council have adapted their services to respond to the demand. Telephone helplines remain operational full time, with outreach staff re-deployed to this function to increase capacity. Appointments to compete new benefit claims are now carried out over the telephone. The centres are seeing the usual high number of calls on benefits, along with increased employment queries (preparing to return to the workplace, furlough information, employers' health and safety responsibilities etc.) as well as a rise in the number of clients also needing signposted to other services such as addiction support / PSNI domestic abuse support / housing association applications/ mental health teams / over 55s befriending.

### **6.0 Contract for Generalist Advice Provision 2021-24**

The current contract for Generalist Advice Provision is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. A review of the specification for the contract will be undertaken by August 2020, the recommendations of which will be taken to Council in September in order to seek approval to proceed with an open procurement exercise. The value of the contract exceeds the EU Procurement Threshold level for Public Service Contracts and the necessary time will be allowed in order to ensure that the requirements set out in The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 are followed, including publishing of the tender in the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union).

**Annex A Generalist Advice Contract 19-20**  
**Key Monitoring Information**

Enquiry Type	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	TOTALS
Welfare Benefits	8,605	12,727	7,193	8,955	37,480
Debt	78	128	70	125	401
Housing	97	167	70	104	438
Immigration / Asylum	8	59	289	189	545
Legal	32	38	24	33	127
Family	29	45	30	37	141
Employment	159	174	124	336	793
Signposting	13	9	5	6	33
Consumer/General	38	38	39	54	169
Education	23	32	3	11	69
Health	44	57	17	4	122
Miscellaneous	63	81	76	107	327
Tax	25	29	1	0	55
Travel	86	100	1	2	189
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0
Other Matters	134	104	161	265	664
	<b>9,434</b>	<b>13,788</b>	<b>8,103</b>	<b>10,228</b>	<b>41,553</b>

Method of Advice Delivery	
Not Specified	2,078
Telephone (inc. SMS)	19,347
Face-to-Face (Appointment)	4,561
Face-to-Face (Drop In)	4,704
Face-to-Face Outreach	8,714
Email (inc. web)	1,280
Home Visit	52
Fax	0
TypeTalk	0
Letter / Post	0
Other	817
	<b>41,553</b>

Income Generated	
Quarter 1	£4,546,845.90
Quarter 2	£9,110,838.77
Quarter 3	£2,549,639.46
Quarter 4	£2,425,007.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>£18,632,331.43</b>