

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

To: Leisure & Development Committee

Advice Services

13th October 2015

For Decision

Report to Committee

Linkage to Interim Corporate Plan	
Strategic Themes	Health & Wellbeing Cohesive Community
Lead Officer	Julie Welsh – Head of Community and Culture Louise Scullion – Community Services Manager
Cost: (If applicable)	N/A

The purpose of this report is to obtain a preferred option by way of contract duration for Generalist Voluntary Advice Services.

Background

The Department for Social Development (DSD) currently carries policy and primary funding responsibility for generalist voluntary advice services in Northern Ireland. The commissioning of generalist voluntary advice services has been earmarked for transfer to Council within the transfer of regeneration and community development powers from DSD through the Regeneration and Housing Bill.

Councils have recently been informed by DSD that ‘the proposed transfer of powers (*including responsibility for generalist voluntary advice services*) to local government in April 2016 is dependent upon the successful passage of the Regeneration Bill through the Assembly. The Bill completed its formal ‘clause by clause’ consideration by the Social Development Committee on 28th May 2014 and the Committee has proposed three amendments in its report. The options for going forward are currently being considered in light of the current political situation. At this stage the Voluntary Community Unit (VCU) in DSD do not hold any information on proposed budgets for 2016/17.’

The preferred option moving forward and as detailed in the Williamson Report “Commissioning of Voluntary Generalist Advice – Review for North East Councils(2012)” was discussed and agreed in each of the four participating Council Chambers as: -

- In the long term, the four Councils will work together under RPA boundaries to implement a single public tender with a lead partner.

Council endorsed this approach in the approval of the Community Development Strategy for the period 2015-2018 in March of this year.

The delays and circumstances arising have presented significant challenges in relation to the original intention of a smooth transition of the delivery of advice services in April 2016, namely:-

- uncertainty around the transfer of power to Council from DSD pending the Regeneration Bill

- uncertainty around the DSD funding / budgets for 2016 onwards
- time constraints regarding public procurement (EU Journal and TUPE considerations)

Options moving forward are:-

- 1) Option One:
Publicly tender through the EU Journal for service provision for the period of one year from April 2016 to March 2017 with the assumption that DSD finance towards generalist voluntary advice services will come across. The current approved annual budget figure for these services is £202,276.00. The service would be tendered subject to funding being in place for the contracting period.
- 2) Option Two -Preferred option:

Publicly tender through the EU Journal for service provision for a two year period from April 2016 to March 2018 as originally expressed within Council's approved Community Development Strategy 2015-18 with the assumption that DSD finance towards generalist voluntary advice services will come across to Council. This option reduces the resources/costs associated with procurement in terms of advertising, EU tendering etc., in addition to benefits associated with security of provision of services up until March 2018. The service would be tendered subject to funding being in place for the contracting period.

Recommendation

To approve Option Two, i.e. publicly tender for the provision of generalist voluntary advice services for a two year period, subject to funding from the Department for Social Development and satisfactory budget from Council.