



Executive
19 September 2011

**Report from the Director
Regeneration and Major Projects and
Director of Adult Social Services**

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Authority to renew grant funding for the Brent Citizens
Advice Bureau and Brent Community Law Centre**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks authority to renew grant funding for a period of six months for Brent Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB) and the Brent Community Law Centre Limited (BCLC).
- 1.2 The renewal of grant funding for a six month period will allow for the convergence of funding streams from the Council to BCAB and the convergence of timelines between the funding bodies.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive agree:-
 - 2.1.1 To renew the grant for the BCAB for a further 6 months from 1st October 2011, to conclude 31st March 2012.
 - 2.1.2 To renew the grant for the BCLC for a further 6 months from 1st October 2011, to conclude 31st March 2012.

3.0 Detail

Brent Citizen's Advice Bureau

- 3.1 The current grant agreement with the BCAB is for 1 year from 1st October 2010 and expires on 30th September 2011.
- 3.2 The BCAB is funded by the Regeneration and Major Projects (R&MP) budget (formerly Housing & Community Care) to provide a generalist legal advice

service across all categories of law with a total annual value of £359k; the existing grant arrangement is due to expire 30th September 2011.

3.3 In addition to the Council's R&MP funding, the BCAB also receives approximately £175k one year funding from the Council's Children and Families (C&F) Department, delivering an outreach advice service across a number of Children's Centres which is due to expire 31st March 2012.

3.4 The total Council funding amounts for the BCAB for 2011/12 is £534k¹, the BCAB has also secured a total of £319k from a range of other external funding sources during 2011/12.

Brent Community Law Centre (BCLC)

3.5 The grant agreement with the BCLC is for 6 months from 31st March 2011 and expires on 30 September 2011.

3.6 The BCLC is funded by R&MP to provide a specialist legal advice service across all categories of law with a total annual value of £183k. The existing grant arrangement is due to expire 30th September 2011.

3.7 The BCLC has also secured a total of £390k from a range of other external funding streams.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The current commissioning budget for advice services for 2011-12 is circa £542k, covering advice services provision by Brent Community Law Centre (BCLC) - £183K and Brent Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB) - £359K. The proposed renewal of the existing arrangement will be contained within the Regeneration and Major Projects budget.

4.2 The cost of the existing BCAB generalist advice service funded by R&MP is circa £179k in 2011/12 because the current grant expires half way through the financial year and this renewal to 31 March 2012 will increase this cost by £180k to £359k. The total annual funding will not change.

4.3 The cost of the existing BCLC specialist advice service by R&MP is circa £92k for 2011/12 because the current grant expires half way through the financial year and this renewal to 31 March 2012 will increase this cost by £91k to £183k. The total annual funding will not change.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 ("LGA") whereby the Council is authorised to do anything that is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well being of its area, the Council has the power to provide financial assistance for the provision of advice services to the public of the sort provided by the BCAB and the BCLC.

¹ Regeneration & Major Projects Funding

- 5.2 Importantly, section 2(3) of the LGA provides that in exercising the power described in paragraph 8.1 above, the Council must have regard to its sustainable community strategy (“the Strategy”). Brent’s Strategy sets out how the Council will meet the needs and aspirations of Brent’s residents and expressly points to partnerships with voluntary organisations. The Strategy addresses issues pertaining to the overall wellbeing of Brent’s residents and in particular the Strategy focuses upon enhancing income and employment levels within the Borough and supporting vulnerable tenants within the Borough regardless of the nature of their tenure.
- 5.3 As noted in this Report, part of the work of the BCAB and the BCLC relates to housing advice and information. Section 180 of the Housing Act 1996 provides that the Council (being the local housing authority) may give assistance by way of grant or loan to voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness or matters relating to homelessness. The BCLC in particular is tasked with giving advice which is considered beneficial to the prevention of homelessness.
- 5.4 The renewal of grants is treated under the Council’s Constitution as the award of new grants. The Executive should be aware that the decision to award a grant is discretionary and the Council’s discretion must not be fettered by previous commitments. The Council should therefore make its decision in the light of present circumstances described in this Report. The Council is bound to act reasonably and must take into account only relevant considerations and its fiduciary duty towards taxpayers in the Borough.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 An impact needs risk assessment (INRA) is attached as Appendix A.

7.0 Background Papers

Previous Executive Reports available regarding the award of grant funding to the BCLC and BCAB

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