

## Anti-poverty Commissioned Contracts and Budget Allocation 2024/25

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 21 March 2024

From: Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2024/057

Executive Summary: This report sets out proposals to fund support to Cambridgeshire residents experiencing financial hardship, requesting the committee to approve plans to allocate funding from the £2.2m committed in the Council's budget for 2024/2025.

Recommendation: The committee is recommended to:

- a) Approve proposals to provide an additional £150,000 to Cambridge Housing Society for the delivery of the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme for the period April 2024 to March 2025; and
- b) Note the decision to issue a grant of £400,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver income maximisation across Cambridgeshire for the period April 2024 to March 2025.

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# 1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

1.1 This report relates specifically to ambition five of the council's Strategic Framework:

Ambition five: People are helped out of poverty and income inequality.

1.2 In February 2024, Full Council approved £2.2m to fund anti-poverty work across the county from April 2024 onwards, supporting the Council to achieve ambition five.

1.3 This report sets out proposals for an initial spend from the £2.2m allocated for anti-poverty work across the county.

## 2. Background

2.1 On 13 February 2024, Full Council approved budget proposals for the financial year 2024/2025. A link to the minutes recording this decision can be found in Section 7 of this report.

2.2 The proposals approved by Full Council included £2.2m for activity and support to address poverty and support people out of income inequality.

2.3 Since October 2021, the Council has been in receipt of money from the national Household Support Fund (HSF). The current round of HSF runs until 31 March 2024; in the spring budget on 6 March 2024, a six-month extension of the HSF was announced to run from April to September 2024. Receipt of the funding extension results in a change to the budget across more than one committee and will therefore be considered at a future meeting of the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee.

2.4 The HSF direct award scheme has been complemented by work delivered by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in the form of income maximisation and the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS), delivered by Cambridge Housing Society.

2.5 Income maximisation is step one of any CAB intervention and addresses the immediate and presenting needs of someone seeking support. The offer includes:

- Tailored income maximisation advice, including support with budgeting.
- Practical income maximisation, including benefit checks and advising on other opportunities for increasing income and/or reducing expenditure, either by making an application on clients' behalf or providing resources for the client to do it themselves.

2.6 At the end of quarter three (2023/2024), the CAB had supported 2251 people, against an annual target of 2400. This resulted in an additional total income gain of £1,500,212.

2.7 The CAB received Public Health funding of £300,000 in 2023/2024 to deliver income maximisation work, as agreed by the Adults and Health Committee in July 2022.

- 2.8 Cambridge Housing Society delivers the CLAS service across Cambridgeshire and holds a contract which runs from April 2022 until March 2025, with the option to extend for an additional two years.
- 2.9 The annual funding for the CLAS contract is £295,000 in year 1 and £300,000 each year thereafter. To help manage the increased demand created by the cost-of-living crisis, additional top up funding of £122,000 was provided from the HSF in 2023/2024.
- 2.10 The CLAS works with Cambridge and District Citizens Advice Bureau, Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire, Cambridge Re-use, The Ferry Project and Cambridgeshire Community Reuse and Recycling Network (CCORRN) to deliver this contract.
- 2.11 The CLAS is designed to identify and reach people and families in crisis, not wait for them to turn up. To do this CLAS has a network of champions, hosted by charities, housing associations, and public services. These champions are often the people making first contact with some of our county's most in need residents.
- 2.12 Universal access to the CLAS is delivered through local Citizen Advice services, money support advisors and the CLAS [making money count website](#). CLAS also established and coordinates four charity networks. These are comprised of over 300 locally based organisations, and support the sharing of intelligence, problem solving, and coordination of their support for families and people in hardship.
- 2.13 In the first half of 2023/2024, 448 households received a CLAS award, 75% of which were for white goods.

### 3. Main Issues

- 3.1 This report outlines the initial allocation of funding from the agreed £2.2m to address poverty across the county. Additional funding proposals will follow linked to findings from the Council's wider anti-poverty work.
- 3.2 This report reflects the Council's ambition to address poverty and income inequality.
- 3.3 Proposal – Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS):
- To allocate £150,000 of the £2.2m in financial year 2024/2025 to the CLAS to support them in continuing to meet need.
- 3.4 Advice was sought from Procurement Services on the proposed additional funding to CLAS. This modification to the contract is less than 10% of the overall contract value and under Public Contract Regulations a further waiver is not required. As a result, additional funding can be managed through existing contract management arrangements.
- 3.5 Citizens Advice Bureau:
- To provide continuity of the offer from the CAB to Cambridgeshire residents, a grant totalling £400,000 has been issued, covering the period April 2024 to March 2025 and will be drawn down from the £2.2m anti-poverty budget.

- The grant funds a holistic package of support which enables an in-depth review of the root causes of financial vulnerability and the full CAB offer.
- It is expected that an estimated 2500-3000 people can be supported throughout the year.
- Each CAB will work with partners to design the application of the project locally.

3.6 The CAB grant for 2024/2025 is an extension of existing arrangements, established in January 2023.

3.7 Prior to issuing the grant, advice was sought from Pathfinder Legal Services (PLS). PLS considered the grant against the Subsidy Control Act 2022, which came into force on 4 January 2023, applying a four-limb test to ensure that the grant is not a subsidy.

3.8 PLS concluded that the proposed grant is not a subsidy and that there is no subsidy control issue. Therefore, it should continue as a grant.

3.9 This paper requests approval from the committee to provide an additional £150,000 funding to the CLAS in 2024/2025 and asks the committee to note the committed spend of £400,000 to the CAB. This results in a total commitment of £550,000 from the £2.2m allocated for work to tackle poverty.

3.10 £1,650,000 remains uncommitted at this stage from the £2.2m anti-poverty fund.

## 4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 Proposals in this report provide a continuation of current services and support. Alternative proposals will be considered and developed as part of the Council's wider work to address poverty.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The committee is recommended to approve proposals to provide additional funding to the CLAS work as detailed in this report.

5.2 The committee is also asked to note the issuing of the grant to the CAB for 2024/2025.

## 6. Significant Implications

### 6.1 Finance Implications

Commitments in this paper will result in £550,000 of spend from the £2.2m anti-poverty budget that was approved by Full Council on 13 February 2024.

## 6.2 Legal Implications

Please see section 3.7 and 3.8 for advice received from Pathfinder Legal regarding the issuing of the grant to the CAB.

## 6.3 Risk Implications

None

## 6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The EQIA completed as part of the ending of the current round of HSF highlights the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on communities in Cambridgeshire – notably the adverse effect on residents with socio-economic inequalities. Therefore, additional funding to both CAB and the CLAS will ensure that support remains in place for residents.

## 6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications

None

## 7. Source Documents

### 7.1 [Agenda Item 7 \(Proposed Business Plan for 2024-29\) – 13 February 2024](#)