

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting11th March 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review of Advice and Information Services

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on the findings of the EIT review of Advice and Information. This review was a “reporting-in” review to the Executive Scrutiny Committee and a summary of the findings presented to the Executive Scrutiny Committee and the Committee’s response was attached to the report.

The review included advice and information services that were provided directly by Council officers and by external advice agencies. The objectives of the review were to ensure that those who needed advice and information had access to suitable services and that available resources were targeted so that these services were delivered in a way that was of value to customers and best met their needs and expectations.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The five separate contracts described in paragraph (66) of the report at Appendix 1 and their associated budgets be pooled, and the Council develop a new specification for advice and information services that meet residents’ needs and the Council’s strategic priorities, particularly around financial inclusion and takes account of the current economic climate, and the Council embark on a tendering exercise for a three-year contract, with option to extend for a further two years, with a contract start date of 1st April 2011.

2. The availability of free, independent legal advice and information via the Community Legal Advice telephone helpline and website for people who are entitled to Legal Aid be promoted more widely across the Council by displaying posters and leaflets and raising staff awareness of the service so that more signposting takes place.

3. The temporary post of ILFO (Independent Living Fund Officer) transfer from the in-house Welfare Rights team to the temporary Personalisation Support Team, followed by a further review to consider the optimum place within the organisation for this role, when the work of the Personalisation Support Team concludes.

4. Subject to consultation with staff and unions, an organisation restructure be undertaken within CESC to merge the rest of the in-house Welfare Rights team with the CESC Client Financial Services team and that the focus of the Welfare Rights team within this new structure be on (but not exclusively):-

- i. supporting social care clients to maximise their income and access other services that might enhance their wellbeing (thereby bringing in additional income for the Council)
- ii. undertaking specific projects linked to other Council services and key Council agendas, particularly how to make use of internal information and customer insight to target campaign work
- iii acting as a reference point for advice and referrals from Social Care staff
- iv co-ordinating Advice and Information provision across the borough
- v developing referral protocols with the external provider selected to deliver the contract for advice and information services described in Recommendation (1) above in an attempt to cut down some of the task duplication and enable a more specialist approach to certain tasks (such as representation at Tribunals)

5. The Welfare Rights service enter into discussions with the PCT to seek to draw in funding by delivering advice sessions at GP practices, similar to models adopted by other local authorities.

6. The Web Development Team, part of the new Communications Team, develop a specification and work with Xentrall ICT to create a directory of Advice and Information providers across the borough.

7. Customer Services and the Library Service promote the availability of

the new directory and become points of contact for customers seeking sources of advice and information in face-to-face situations and over the telephone.

8. An advice providers' network be created, with responsibility for setting up and leading this network sitting within the restructured Welfare Rights team recommended at (4) above.

9. The newly formed advice providers' network explore options of bidding for Big Lottery grant to support the activities of the network.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that those who need advice and information, both now and in the future, have access to suitable services and that available resources are targeted so that these services are delivered in a way that is of value to customers and best meets their needs and expectations.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillors Mrs McCoy and Nelson each declared a personal, prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled EIT Review of Advice and Information Services as a result of their membership of Stockton District Advice & Information Service but both made representations/gave evidence/answered questions under paragraph 12(2) of the Code of Conduct, and then left the meeting room.

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than Midnight on Friday, 19th March 2010

Proper Officer
15 March 2010