

Cross Authority Task and Finish Group - Citizens Advice

Report No:	OAS/WS/19/013	
Report to and date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	14 November 2019
Chair of the Committee:	Councillor David Nettleton Tel: 01284 702212 Email: david.nettleton@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer: Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils West Suffolk Council	Henriette Holloway Senior Governance Officer (Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils) Tel: 01449 724681 Email: henriette.holloway@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Tel: 01638 719729 Email: Christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Decisions Plan:	This item is not included in the Decisions Plan.	
Wards impacted:	All	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 1) Considers whether it wishes to be involved in the Cross Authority Task and Finish Group of Citizens Advice led by Mid-Suffolk and Babergh District Council. 2) If the Committee wishes to be involved, it is asked to nominate the Chair and a member of the majority group from this Committee to sit on the Cross Authority Task and Finish Group, as set out in the Terms of Reference, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.	

1. Background

- 1.1 In August 2019, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from the Sudbury and Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice (CA) services. The Councils currently revenue fund both organisations (with some funding also going to the CA services in Ipswich and Diss). Councillors wished to have a greater understanding of the work undertaken by CA and the current funding position.
- 1.2 Councillors were concerned about the uncertainty faced by Citizens Advice following last year's budget processes. This attracted a lot of public and press comment. Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees decided to examine CAB's from the point of view of their Funding, Value and Impacts (both on the public and on council services).
- 1.3 Attached as **Appendix 2** is their report which summarises the presentation and subsequent debate and resolutions, provides additional contextual information and invites Suffolk local authorities to join with Babergh and Mid Suffolk in a joint scrutiny exercise.
- 1.4 Attached as **Appendix 1** for the Committee's consideration are the Cross Authority Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference, produced by Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.5 The position regarding West Suffolk is different from Mid Suffolk and Babergh. In our area, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) have come together as West Suffolk, aligned to our Council area. Each year, they apply to us for Community Chest funding and their application is considered alongside other funding bids. Any funding is provided subject to the CAB providing satisfactory monitoring reports to Council staff.

As such, officers have no present concerns regarding the operation of the CAB in West Suffolk, and are satisfied that the CAB is delivering support to residents in line with our strategic priorities. The operation of the Council's grant funding scheme has recently been reviewed by the Grant Review Group.

On Monday, 21 October 2019, Councillor David Nettleton, as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was invited to a meeting of the Task and Finish Group to discuss their terms of reference and understand more as to how the Group intended to work.

Whilst officers do not hold concerns about the operation of the CAB locally, there is the opportunity through the review to share learning amongst participating Councils, and understand how the sector can work together with the CAB's to support each other effectively.

- 1.6 The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to be involved in this cross authority scrutiny of CAB's, and if so, it nominates the Chair and a member of the majority group from this Committee to represent West Suffolk.

2. Alternative Options

2.1 Not applicable.

3. Consultation and engagement

3.1 Not applicable.

4. Risks

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Appendices

5.1 **Appendix 1** – Cross Authority Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Scrutiny of Citizens Advice in Suffolk (August 2019)

6. Background documents

6.1 None