

ITEM 7d

Time began 6.01pm

Time ended 7.11pm

COUNCIL CABINET 16 MARCH 2010

Present: Councillor Allen (Chair)

Councillors Care, Carr, Naitta, Skelton and Troup

In attendance: Councillors Bayliss, Ingall and Jennings

This record of decisions was published on 18 March 2010. The key decisions set out in this record will come into force and may be implemented on the expiry of five clear days unless a key decision is called in.

202/09 Derby Community Legal Advice Centre Review and Funding 2010/11

The Council Cabinet considered a report on Derby Community Legal Advice Centre Review and Funding 2010/11. The report gave an update on the current demand and pressures being experienced by the Derby Community Legal Advice Centre CLAC who provided generalist and specialist community legal advice services within the city. It also set out an evidenced case from the Derby CLAC with a view to Council Cabinet considering an increase in the Community Grants Budget investment into the Derby CLAC during 2010/11.

Options Considered

If Derbyshire Access2Law's Board decided Derby CLAC should only work to the targets set out in the contract, we would effectively see a large number of people seeking generalist advice and in some cases specialist advice, whose needs would not be met.

Decision

1. To note the actual and projected increase in demand for advice services in Derby and particularly the impact on the Derby CLAC.
2. To increase by £25,000 the grant to Derby CLAC in 2010/11 only for the provision of additional advice capacity through the appointments of an additional part-time Triage worker and a part-time Advice Session Supervisor.
3. To recommended that the additional new staff employed by Derby CLAC in 2010/11 are placed on a fixed term contract of one year.
4. To authorise officers to amend the existing contract targets and outcomes for 2010/11 as appropriate, to reflect the increased investment into the Derby CLAC during 2010/11.

Reasons

1. On the 15 December 2009 Council Cabinet considered a report on the Demand for Community Legal Advice Services in the City. Council Cabinet requested that the situation at the CLAC be closely monitored and kept under review by officers, with a view to a further report being considered when appropriate. Derby CLAC had now provided officers with evidence of continued demands and pressures on the service. The report allowed for decisions to be made to address this situation in a timely manner as recommended by Council Cabinet. A decision to further invest into the Derby CLAC would also alleviate any adverse effects on people seeking advice in 2010/11.
2. If agreed the appointment of two additional part-time staff would enable Derby CLAC to manage the forecast high demand into 2010/11. The current economic downturn had resulted in a greater demand for the service in most categories of legal advice at specialist level, and had seen a large unprecedented increase in demand at the generalist level. The Council was the sole funder of the generalist service but we also contributed to funding in three specialist categories of law, namely Employment, Debt and Housing, all of which were demonstrating increases in demand in 2009/10 and forecasting further increases in demand in 2010/11.
3. The CLAC had a contract target of securing appointments for clients within 10 working days, which in all categories of law they had and continued to achieve. However, in recent weeks waiting times in a number of categories were now on the 10 day maximum limit. Derby CLAC continued to provide appointments on the same day for emergency cases.
4. The Derby CLAC had a number of management measures in place to deal with peaks and troughs in demand, main peaks in demand being usually in July, October and March. However with this unprecedented and continued rise in demand for advice services year on year, these were all but exhausted. The predicted increase in demand for generalist services over the contract target for 2009/10 was almost 30%. The organisation was stating that it could not be expected to continue operating at this level of demand without an increase in resource. In accordance with Procedure Rule A126, the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Commission had been advised that this item would be considered although not included in the Forward Plan.