

**Decision Maker:** Care Services Policy Development and Scrunity Committee

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent                      Non-Executive                      Non-Key

**Title:** Bromley Citizens Advice Bureau

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**Chief Officer:** Terry Parkin, Director of Education and Care Services

**Ward:** Boroughwide

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1. Reason for report

This report outlines the current arrangements for the provision of general advice and information services provided by Bromley Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The report provides Members with an update on the service following a reduction in funding and changes from traditional 'open door' services to a model of service based on outreach provision, telephone and web access. Members requested this information at a previous Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**Members are asked to note the current level of service provided by Bromley Citizens Advice Bureau following the implementation of changes to the service model agreed at the Executive meeting held on 14 December 2011.**

### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy. Building a Better Bromley
  2. BBB Priority: Supporting Independence.
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost £220,00 (2012/13)
  2. Ongoing costs: Recurring cost. £160,000 (2013/14) and £145,000 (2014/15)
  3. Budget head/performance centre: ECS Commissioning Division, Third Party Payments Budget
  4. Total current budget for this head: £245,520
  5. Source of funding: Existing Revenue Budget - 813 900 3426
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-statutory - Government guidance.
  2. Call-in: Call-in is applicable
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): approximately 6490 people per annum across the borough
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

### **3. COMMENTARY**

#### Background

- 3.1 This is an update following the re-structure of Bromley CAB and the reconfiguration of their service. A new contract between the Council and Bromley CAB was implemented in April 2012 in accordance with decision of the Executive on 14 December 2011.
- 3.2 Until June 2012 Bromley CAB had provided services from three bureaux, Orpington, Bromley Town (based in Community House) and Penge. The Orpington bureau closed in June 2012. In its place Bromley CAB established three outreach centres in the Orpington area: Cotmandene Centre, Hope Church and The Priory School. These are in addition to an existing outreach venue in Biggin Hill.
- 3.3 From monitoring information received from Bromley CAB, the number of people accessing the outreach provision in Orpington over the first two quarters has shown continued growth. As a comparison, during the first quarter (April-June 2012) a total of 635 contacts were made to the CAB in Orpington, including 582 contacts made direct to the Orpington bureau and 53 contacting the outreach services. During quarter two (July-September 2012), a total of 462 people contacted CAB in Orpington of which 55 were made direct to the Orpington bureau prior to its closure and 407 contacting the outreach services.
- 3.4 Bromley CAB has demonstrated its commitment to using technology by centralising the bureaux telephone system which has allowed the public greater access to advice and information services over the telephone. The latest monitoring data supplied by Bromley CAB showed an increase in telephone contacts from 1989 in quarter one (April-June 2012) to 2448 contracts in quarter two (July-September 2012).
- 3.5 Information Kiosks have now been installed in both the Bromley Town and Penge bureaux. This has given members of the public easy and instant access to assisted information. The use of the kiosks has shown growth over the first two quarters of this financial year and will continue to be monitored as part of the service. As part of the reconfiguration of its Bromley Town bureau, Bromley CAB has re-organised its client processing. The emphasis is now on streamlining the assisted information service including signposting to more appropriate organisations, and directing members of the public to using the Information Kiosks. This has allowed the advisors to focus on the more complex cases.
- 3.6 Using quarter two (2012/13) figures as an example, the type of enquiries dealt with continue to be:
- Benefits: a total of 937 enquiries were received of which there were 47 successful appeals and £156,614 was re-couped for individuals;
  - Debt: a total of 526 enquiries with 2 agreements entered into and £106,155 of debt written off;
  - Employment: a total of 252 enquiries were received;
  - Immigration: a total of 70 enquiries were received.

Overall the changes identified above have not resulted in a reduction of service.

#### **Future services**

- 3.7 The Penge bureau is due to close in March 2013. Bromley CAB are actively negotiating for outreach venues within the Penge area as they have in Orpington which will enable easy access for members of the public. The success of outreach services in Penge will be closely monitored by Education and Care Services.

#### 4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The provision of advice and information services meets the Council's objectives to enable people to maximise their independence, particularly for vulnerable people.

#### 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Over the next 3 years the level of local authority funding provided to Bromley CAB will reduce by over 40%. The reduction coincides with changes in the model of service provided and the closure of the Orpington bureau during 2012 and the planned closure of the Penge bureau in March 2013 – please refer to section 3 for details.

The agreed cost of the Bromley CAB Contract is set out in the table below:

2011/12 Contract Price £	2012/13 Contract Price £	2013/14 Contract Price £	2014/15 Contract Price £
249,750	220,000	160,000	145,000

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Personnel Implications; Legal Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	ACS09123: Gateway review: Information Advice and Guidance Services