



## **SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 6 APRIL 2016**

### **SIGNPOSTING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICE PROPOSALS FOR CRISIS AND EMERGENCY SUPPORT**

#### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

##### **Purpose of Report**

1. To seek members' views on proposals for the continuation of the Signposting and Community Support Service. The views of the Commission will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 19 April 2016.

##### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Implementation of the Signposting and Community Support Service (SCSS) pilot was approved by the Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015. In October 2015 it was agreed to continue the pilot programme, whilst awaiting the results of a Partnership Lottery bid which would provide complementary advice services.
3. The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2019/20, approved by the County Council on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016, includes funding allocations for the SCSS as set out in paragraph 9 below.

##### **The Signposting and Community Support Service**

4. The SCSS provides emergency support to people in crisis and replaced the Leicestershire Welfare Provision (LWP) service in April 2015. LWP was set up when the Department for Work and Pensions decided that the scheme was better dealt with at local authority level. Following a procurement process the scheme was run by a third party for a fee. This proved inflexible in terms of delivering local solutions and it was decided to find an internal solution. This resulted in the SCSS pilot.
5. The results of the SCSS during 2015/16 (taking account of information available to date) are summarised below:
  - Between April 2015 and March 2016, 343 Leicestershire residents have been signposted by First Contact to practical and material support and advice across the county. First Contact is an internal scheme where if one partner visits a person's home they check a range of issues and if necessary pass these on to partner organisations in order to safeguard vulnerable people.

- 88 residents have been supported through financial advice from Citizen's Advice Services, helping them to manage in excess of £981,889 worth of debts through the Leicestershire Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB). Charnwood CAB is run separately and has supported 28 people to manage £318,257 worth of debt.
  - In the 11 months to the end of February, Charity Link helped 1,324 people with grants to the total value of £133,952.
  - Between April 2015 and January 2016, district councils and the Bridge (a registered charity which helps the most vulnerable people with housing issues) have helped individuals and families receive emergency food on 388 occasions and helped individuals and families receive emergency fuel on 454 occasions.
  - Via the referral and direct payment arrangements between local authorities and the consortium of furniture re-use charities, individuals and families have been helped with the provision of white goods and furniture on 334 occasions - for example enabling a move into permanent accommodation and out of crisis.
6. The SCSS is both working with a greater number of people and delivering support at significantly less cost than the previous, eligibility criteria, call centre based LWP model. From April 2015 to January 2016, approximately 1176 individuals or families have received support compared to 832 successful applications under the previous model (1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015). It is worth noting that the 1176 figure referred to above might not represent separate individuals or families.
  7. The SCSS has also supported people, via frontline social care, family support or housing workers, in a more immediate and targeted manner in people's homes and has provided residents with previously unavailable housing and debt advice to provide longer-term support.
  8. A voluntary sector consortium Big Lottery bid was submitted in autumn 2015 to the Help Through Crisis Fund for £750,000 to provide advice and support services relating to debt, benefits, employment, housing and homelessness that would complement the SCSS. The bid was not successful but the partnership of support organisations (The Bridge and CAB) will pursue other funding opportunities that might arise in the future.

### **Resource implications**

9. The SCSS is funded from an underspend from the implementation of the LWP service in 2013/14 and 2014/15. Around three quarters of this funding has been allocated to provide immediate and material support for food, fuel, white goods and furniture and one quarter has been allocated to support preventative advice and signposting services through First Contact Plus, Bridge Housing, Citizens' Advice Leicestershire and Citizens' Advice Charnwood. The projected funding

profile for the new service, approved by Cabinet in February 2015, was as follows;

<b>Budget (£)</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>Total</b>
LCC (DWP grant)	300,000	250,000	225,000	£100,000	£25,000	<b>£900,000</b>
LCC (MTFS)	-	-	-	£100,000	£100,000	<b>£200,000</b>

10. The 2015-16 (Year 1) cost of the SCSS is c£320,000 which is more than was programmed but significantly (c30%) cheaper than the previous (LWP) model of support. Savings have been generated by no longer using an external provider (as explained in paragraph 5 above) to administer and manage the public interface – this is now carried out by District Councils and by providing people with reused furniture and white goods.
11. Taking account of experience of implementing the pilot scheme, the proposed funding profile for future years is as follows;

<b>Income (£)</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>Total</b>
LCC (DWP grant)	320,000	290,000	290,000	0	0	<b>900,000</b>
LCC (MTFS)	-	-	-	100,000	100,000	<b>200,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>290,000</b>	<b>290,000</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>1,100,000</b>

12. It is anticipated that the above profile will enable service provision at broadly existing levels for the next two financial years. This is proposed to be achieved by delivery of savings and efficiencies currently in place or being piloted such as increased use of funding from Charity Link partners and increased use of reused goods. From April 2018 onwards a baseline service could be provided within the budget available and service reduction and redesign will be implemented in consultation with delivery partners.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

13. The views of the Scrutiny Commission will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 19 April.

### **Conclusion**

14. The views of Scrutiny Commission are sought on the above proposals to provide an ongoing Signposting and Community Support Service.

### **Background Papers**

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment -  
[http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/your\\_council/equality\\_and\\_diversity/ehria/dept\\_ehria/cex\\_ehira.htm](http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/your_council/equality_and_diversity/ehria/dept_ehria/cex_ehira.htm)

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None.

**Officers to contact:**

Jackie Mould, Head of Policy, Economy and Communities, Chief Executive's Department Tel: 0116 305 8015 Email: [Jackie.mould@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.mould@leics.gov.uk)

Helen Harris, Economic Growth Manager/Communities Business Partner, Chief Executive's Department Tel: 0116 305 7025 Email: [helen.harris@leics.gov.uk](mailto:helen.harris@leics.gov.uk)

Mike Thomson, Communities Business Partner, Chief Executive's Department Tel: 0116 305 7090 Email: [mike.thomson@leics.gov.uk](mailto:mike.thomson@leics.gov.uk)

**Equality and Human Rights Implications**

15. It has been difficult to assess the impact on people assisted with protected characteristics, as each District has different reporting mechanisms. The Council is currently addressing this issue through standardisation of reporting templates.
16. If the scheme was discontinued it would have a significant impact on vulnerable people and could result in increased demand for services rather than the current scheme which works on preventing vulnerable people accessing services.