

Somerset West and Taunton

Scrutiny Committee – 8th September 2020

Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Annual Review 2019/20.

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Members Cllr Chris Booth and Cllr Francesca Smith

Report Author: Lisa Redston, Localities Manager

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the findings of the annual review of grants the Council awards to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Not for Profit organisations.
- 1.2 To present recommendations in relation to the Councils financial support of Citizens Advice Taunton and West Somerset Advice.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To continue funding at current levels for 2020/21 while the key points raised during the review detailed in this paper are addressed.
- 2.2 During 20/21 carry out a review of current areas of funding and set new funding objectives in line with the Councils corporate objectives and current needs within the community.
- 2.3 During 20/21 officers should work closely with all grant recipients to ensure targets are met and grants are offering value for money.
- 2.4 To consider the Proposal and Recommendations A-D in Appendix B.

3 Background and Full details of the Report

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) provides financial support to a wide range of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations that help us deliver our corporate priorities consistent to community needs. VCS grants are awarded by the Council via the Economic Development Function, Housing Function, Tenants Forum, Localities Function, Charter Trustees (Unparished Area) and through Section 106 planning gain.
- 3.1.2 All grantees enter into a funding agreement with the Council and grants are monitored to ensure that conditions are adhered to and that the grant funding is maximised to benefit communities across the district.
- 3.1.3 Historically the Council carries out an annual review of the grants provided through the Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) Small Grants Fund, SWT Partnership Fund and presents the findings to Members. This year the review has been extended to grants provided by the Housing Function and services commissioned to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

3.2 Scope of the Review

3.2.1 The following Grant Funds are included in this review:

- SWT VCS Partnership Fund
- SWT Small grants
- SWT administration fees
- Somerset West Lottery Community Fund
- Housing Grants awarded from the Housing Revenue

3.2.2 The following grant funds are not in the scope of the review:

- Tenants Forum
- Housing/Homeless reduction grants
- Charter Trustees Unparished Fund
- Planning Obligations (Section 106) funds
- Economic Development and Arts Grants
- Other services commissioned to the Voluntary Sector.

3.2.3 The review takes into account the amount of funding provided, the service/s provided, performance against the grant proposal and recommendations made by Somerset Community Foundation.

3.2.4 The review also looks forward to 2020/21 and considers applications for funding and the allocation of available budgets.

3.2.5 The review has taken a close look at Citizen Advice Taunton and West Somerset Advice. Last year Somerset County Council made a decision to cut a significant element of core grant funding to all CA services across the county. CA services provide councils will valuable assistance in relation to providing our customers with housing, debt and benefits advice. SWT provided a 'one –off' additional payment of

£45k to help stabilise CA services. This review takes a close look at how this money was invested, and considers the need for additional support.

3.3 **Administration of Grants**

3.3.1 In July 2016 TDBC and SWT entered into an agreement with Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) to provide a professional grant management service enabling the VCS Small Grants Fund. The agreement included the administration of the fund, due diligence checks, making recommendations for grant awards to the Council and monitoring of grants.

3.3.2 As of April 2017 SCF have received £20,000 per year for the VCS Small Grants Fund. The agreement states that SCF may use no more than 10% of the Small Grants Fund for the purpose of managing the fund. In 2017 a decision was made to utilise underspent funds to increase the award to £22,000 allowing SCF to take up to 10% administration fee and award £20,000

3.3.3 In December 2018 the Council varied the agreement with Somerset Community Foundation, to include in addition to the Small Grants Fund the administration of the Somerset West Lottery Local Community Fund and VCS Partnership Fund.

3.3.4 SCF pledge to provide a minimum of 10% match funding. In some individual grants the match fund contribution exceeded the SWTC grant. The match fund percentage achieved for 19/20 is 28.44%.

3.3.5 Total administration costs to the Council 2019/20:

	General Fund Amount Granted £
SCF Administration of Partnership Grants	1560
SCF Administration of VCS Small Grants	2000
SCF Somerset West Lottery Community Fund admin Fees*	2400
Gambling commission Licence Fees	348
Lottery Council Fee	350
Total	7858

*Estimated based on 10% of ticket sales per annum. This is funded via the Lottery ticket sales and not from Council budget.

3.3.6 A summary of all expenditure against each fund within the scope of the review is included at Appendix A.

3.4 **Key findings from the review:**

3.4.1 The agreement with SCF and subsequent variations of the agreement state that £20,000 shall be awarded for the VCS Small grants fund with up to 10% of the fund to be used by SCF for the administration of the grants. The funding proposal submitted

by SCF for 2019/20 requests the amount of £22,000 which was agreed.

3.4.2 It is recommended that grant funding for 20/21 is awarded at £20,000 in line with the agreement.

3.5 **VCS Small Grants**

3.5.1 As described in 3.3 Somerset Community Foundation administers the SWT Small Grant Fund on behalf of the Council.

3.5.2 The Small Grant Fund provides grants of up to £1000 to Voluntary or Community Groups, Social Enterprises and not for profit organisations within Somerset West and Taunton for community activities or projects.

3.5.3 Small Grant applications are assessed to ensure applications:

- Match the funding criteria
- Represent best value for money
- Are deliverable
- That the organisation has robust governance in place and is financially viable.

3.5.4 Somerset Community Foundation also commit to provide match funding and other added value to projects wherever possible.

3.5.5 The criteria for the funds agreed with Somerset Community Foundation are as follows:

- Community activities or project must improve the health and wellbeing of people living in the Somerset West and Taunton area.
- The organisation must have a governing document, a bank account in the name of the group for which there must be a minimum of two signatories and a committee or board of local people.

3.5.6 The VCS Small Grant fund will not support:

- Individuals
- National charities and appeals
- Sponsorship and fundraising events
- Animal welfare
- Promotion of religion (including repairs to buildings used for worship)
- Activities that are a statutory responsibility or are not charitable
- Activities that have already taken place
- Projects where funds are distributed to a third party
- Projects that take place outside of Somerset West and Taunton

3.5.7 During 2019/20 the following grants were awarded.

Area	Applicant	Project Summary	Beneficiaries	Amount requested	SCF Match	SCF recommendation	SWT decision
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Area	Applicant	Project Summary	Beneficiaries	Amount requested	SCF Match	SCF recommendation	SWT decision
West	Allerford & Selworthy Community Hall	Install a boiling water tap at village hall	2500	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
West	Carhampton Recreation Group	New flooring for the Parish Heritage Room at Carhampton Recreation Centre	2500	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
West	Crowcombe and Stogumber Primary and Pre-schools PTA	Camera equipment for digital skill building in primary schools.	114	£542	£0	£542	£542
	Dandelion Seeds Foundation	Lifestyle medicine for chronic disease sufferers in and around Taunton.	15	£1,000	£0	£0	£0
Both	Engage	Networking and information sharing for voluntary groups in Somerset West and Taunton	200	£2,500	£1,500	£1,000	£1,000
Both	Escape Support Group	Day trip for children with additional needs	100	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
West	Exmoor Stars Festival	Amateur performing arts festival	500	£2,520	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
West	Home-Start West Somerset	Materials to support Home Start West Somerset's Story Start programme	85	£966	£0	£996	£996
Taunton	Huish Taunton Tigers Basketball Club	Equipment and clothing for girls basketball in Somerset	20	£1,000	£0	£500	£500
	In the Mix Youth Project	Development of a local green space	120	£1,050	£0	£1,000	£0

Area	Applicant	Project Summary	Beneficiaries	Amount requested	SCF Match	SCF recommendation	SWT decision
Taunton	Jackdaws Music Education Trust	Operatic performances to increase access to the arts in and around Wellington.	450	£1,000	£0	£500	£500
	Life Education Wessex	Health and wellbeing programme for students in Taunton.	1000	£2,520	£0	£0	£0
West	Little Saints	Core running costs of a toddler group for low income families in Williton and Watchet	70	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
	Magna Housing	Reducing isolation and loneliness through craft activities with older residents of sheltered accommodation .	500	£1,000	£0	£0	£0
Taunton	North Taunton Partnership	Support to hold a Christmas Market in North Taunton.	300	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
Taunton	Parents of Minerva School	After school and holiday activities	75	£970	£0	£970	£560
	Quantock Eco	Support to revamp Quantock Eco's website	15000	£500	£0	£0	£0
West	Roadwater Cricket Club	Updating the power supply to Roadwater Cricket Club.	150	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
Both	Samaritans of Taunton and Somerset	Supporting the delivery of the Samaritans service through funding volunteer costs	40000	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000

Area	Applicant	Project Summary	Beneficiaries	Amount requested	SCF Match	SCF recommendation	SWT decision
Both	Somerset Playing Fields' Association	Core costs of providing advice on the acquisition, layout and use of playing fields	50000	£800	£0	£800	£1,000
Taunton	Stand Against Violence	Violence prevention workshops in Taunton schools	300	£2,150	£1,350	£800	£1,000
	St Petrock's Timberscombe PCC	Contribution towards an accessible toilet and servery	400	£1,000	£0	£0	£0
Taunton	Taunton Street Pastors	Core costs of delivering Street Pastors	150000	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
Taunton	The Friendship Circle of Langford Budville and Runnington and local area.	Events and activities for isolated older people	72	£200	£0	£200	£200
West	The Minehead Hope Centre	Drop in sessions for local homeless people	50	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
Taunton	Ups and Downs South West	Assertiveness training for parents and carers of children with Down's Syndrome	24	£798	£0	£798	£798
Taunton	Wellington Tennis Club	Contribution towards a new tennis court	320	£5,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
	Wembdon Community Association	Community firework display	1500	£1,700	£0	£0	£0
Taunton	West Hatch Scout Group	Camping equipment for a local youth group	85	£1,000	£0	£1,000	£1,000
	West Somerset Railway Association (WSR)	Refurbishment of a saloon carriage.	200000	£1,000	£0	£0	£0

Area	Applicant	Project Summary	Beneficiaries	Amount requested	SCF Match	SCF recommendation	SWT decision
Taunton	WHERE	Community outreach for isolated people near Taunton	10	£1,000	£0	£0	£1,000
	TOTAL			£39,216	£4,850	£20,106	£20,096

3.6 VCS Partnership Grants

3.6.1 The Council undertook a full review of VCS Partnership Grants in 2016. As a result the Council entered into a funding agreement with a range of partner organisations setting the amount of funding to be provided, detailing the proposals of each organisation and agreeing monitoring arrangements.

3.6.2 Each of these funding agreements have been extended year on year to 2019/20.

3.6.3 The following outlines the various VCS Partnership Grants funded by the Council in 2019/20.

Organisation	Amount Awarded	Purpose of Grant	Outputs agreed	Length of contract	Review of performance
Citizens' Advice Taunton	83610	Fund staffing, volunteer training and overheads. Debt advice, employment disputes, family advice, housing advice. Core service benefits 4000 pa.	New debt cases x 480 New benefits cases x 1400 New housing cases x 400 New employment cases x 500	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	Positive report from SCF. No concerns from due diligence. Recommends funding for a further year at current rate.
CLOWNS (WS).	1000	Funding for CLOWNS' resource centre, creating learning opportunities incorporating a toy library and scrap store and craft workshops. 300 individuals supported.	Encourage parents to take part in creative arts & crafts activities with their children Enable access to high-quality toys to families on low incomes who cannot afford to buy them Encourage local recycling (scrapstore)	12 months Letter of Agreement reviewed annually	Healthy surplus last year. No immediate concerns, some risk to their longer-term sustainability.
Community Council for Somerset.	5400	Taunton only. Deliver a community building advice service and a contribution to core staff roles.	Community Buildings (CB's) Produce a minimum of 10 e-communications Provide a minimum of 70 hours support Provide a minimum of one training/ networking event. Encourage enterprise and efficiencies in running CB's to	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	No concerns from due diligence. Well placed to deliver infrastructure support around community buildings.

Organisation	Amount Awarded	Purpose of Grant	Outputs agreed	Length of contract	Review of performance
			<p>ensure future sustainability</p> <p>Core costs</p> <p>CEO (or senior manager) availability for meetings</p> <p>Produce a minimum of 4 e-communications to inform Parish and Town Councils</p> <p>Provide a minimum of 60 hours support for VCS groups</p>		<p>Good financial position. Consider funding for WS.</p>
Compass Disability Services.	2700	Self-advocacy group for adults with disabilities. The group has grown to 41 members	<p>To enable disabled people to have equal access to facilities. Providing a mechanism for SWT Council to carry out public duty under the Equality Act.</p> <p>Provision of opportunities for local disabled people and carers to obtain information.</p>	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	The charity's 2018 accounts showed a large drop in income. 2019 accounts not available. No immediate concerns from due diligence.
Engage (TD).	22500	Contribution to core funding, volunteer centre, third sector infrastructure support. Increase standards and draw additional funds. Events, training, information and volunteer brokerage. 120 groups. 150 individuals across both areas.	<p>Civil Society groups in the Taunton Deane area: will be more stable and have greater sustainability:</p> <p>will be able to source suitable volunteers:</p> <p>People in the Taunton area will be able to access appropriate volunteering opportunities</p>	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	No concerns from Due diligence
Engage (WS).	1000	Contribution to core funding towards volunteer brokerage. 120 groups. 150 individuals across both areas.	<p>Civil Society groups in West Somerset: will be able to source suitable volunteers:</p> <p>will be able to access appropriate volunteering opportunities with local group.</p>	12 months Letter of Agreement reviewed annually	No concerns from due diligence
Fuse Performance.	6000	<p>Skills development programme in Halcon. Streetlinkz creative youth club.</p> <p>Young people in Halcon 25</p> <p>Young people in Halcon Drop In 120</p> <p>Volunteers 15</p> <p>Parents 6</p> <p>Local community organisations 4</p> <p>Workshop participants Priorswood and Halcon 280</p>	<p>Engage with local young people</p> <p>Young people learn new skills, including life skills such as communication skills, conflict resolution, and organisational skills</p> <p>Increase cultural education and understanding</p> <p>Young people progress to either education, training, apprenticeship or employment</p> <p>Develop skills and experience of volunteers working with the groups</p> <p>Increase awareness of the</p>	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	Does not meet due diligence criteria.

Organisation	Amount Awarded	Purpose of Grant	Outputs agreed	Length of contract	Review of performance
			Halcon and Priorswood young people as positive, creative and talented individuals		
Homestart (WS).	1000	Funding for Home-Start's volunteer-led family support service Offering support, friendship and practical assistance Visiting families in their own homes	Home visits parent-lead support group volunteer-led support for young families living in disadvantaged rural communities through and after pregnancy Outreach preventative support for families in rural areas with children under 2.	12 months Letter of Agreement reviewed annually	70 families with 132 children were supported last year. No concerns from due diligence.
North Taunton Partnership.	14500	funding towards the core costs of the Priorswood Community Centre, operates as an 'anchor' charity that a wide range of other groups and services revolve around.	Provide a community hub offering support, guidance, advice and signposting. Provide a local service to help reduce social and digital isolation. Provide volunteering opportunities Obtaining further funding to provide diversionary activities to help reduce ASB in the local area.	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	Footfall of 11866 people last year. No concerns from due diligence.
Taunton East Development Trust.	14500	Funding towards the group's community activities and Link Power enterprise in Halcon. 850 Homes 2500 People.	Kids Activity Days – 90 children per 6 days Brunch Club – 15 per session 20 events Coffee Mornings – 15 per morning 12 events Link Kitchen – 20 per day 250 days (M-F) Bingo – 40 per week 50 events Halloween event – 450 drop-in attendees Community Christmas part – 85 Christmas tree light switch on - 60 Centre visitors of over 6,000 drop-ins with specific help levels consistent with the monitoring data for 2018/19. Produce Newsletter for each household 4 per year to promote events and wellbeing in Halcon, Lambrook and Lane estates.	Agreement for 22K in 2017 1 year + 4. Extension 19/20 for 14500.	No concerns from due diligence. Ability to report outputs has improved Considerably detailed breakdown of the numbers using the different services provided to SCF. Management strengthened.
West Somerset Advice Bureau	30600	Core service benefits 4000 pa. Drop ins, appointments and home visits. Support Council in preventing homelessness and assist those in crisis	3 x 4 hour volunteer adviser advice sessions per week with 1 supervisor to support a team of up to 4 volunteers offering appointments & telephone advice, plus Attendance for 3hrs at outreach sessions	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	Positive report from SCF. No concerns from due diligence. Recommends funding for a further year at current rate.

Organisation	Amount Awarded	Purpose of Grant	Outputs agreed	Length of contract	Review of performance
			<p>Employment Hub Watchet, Williton (Dulverton or Stogursey)</p> <p>Sessions would deal with 1500 cases pa</p> <p>Weekly targets</p> <p>12 x 1 hr generic advice appointments</p> <p>12 Telephone/email advice cases</p> <p>6 outreach drop in cases</p>		
Wiveliscombe Area Partnership	29710	Funding for the Wivey Link community transport scheme and the Community Office offering a range of information and advice and enabling delivery of outreach support services (SWT, ASP, legal advice, Village Agents). Providing support and space for local groups. 10 Parishes work base. provision of TDBC public access kiosk for advice on universal credit and other district council information and services	<p>Provision of a comprehensive community transport service</p> <p>Provision of the centrally located advice and information hub</p> <p>Provide volunteering opportunities</p>	2017 One year funding agreement contract + 4.	Over 4,500 passenger journeys recorded during the first six months of this year, a footfall of around 1,100 to the office, and over 4,000 volunteer hours logged. The charity is in a strong financial position surpluses (£200k). 6461 supported in previous year.
VCS Small Grants Fund (SCF)	20000	Total Grant fund £18000, administration £2000 as per contract.	<p>Majority of funding would support local VCS groups to alleviate disadvantage in the most deprived communities</p> <p>Minority of funding will build the capacity of the VCS groups</p>	Part of funding contract with SCF – See below	Monitoring arrangements unclear
Village Agents	20000	No funding agreement on file			
Citizens' Advice Taunton. One off	45000	Review of agreement carried out see Appendix B			

3.7 **Key findings from the review:**

3.7.1 There is inconsistency across annual grant proposals received in terms of clarity of outputs, outcomes and performance measures submitted by the partner organisations. The proposal document should be reviewed to capture this information.

3.7.2 The grant proposal document does not request sufficient information in relation to the longer term sustainability of projects, match funding and added value. This information would support decision making and ensure that grant funding provided by the Council is maximised for the benefit of the community. The grant proposal document should be reviewed during 20/21 to ensure this information is captured.

3.7.3 The annual monitoring reports and recommendations received by SCF require review. The reports received by the Council during 2019/20 do not contain sufficient information to understand and track performance against VCS Partnership Grant proposals and agreements. Information relating to the outputs of funded projects or organisations is essential to carrying out a benefit/value assessment of grants. Improved information will assist prioritisation and decision making.

3.7.4 There are concerns regarding one grant recipients governance and organisational structure. Members should consider the council's position in relation to awarding any further funding to this organisation while concerns remain.

3.8 **Citizens Advice Bureau**

3.8.1 The preceding table identifies the core grant funding that we provide to both CAT and WSA. In addition to this, during the current financial year, there was a need to provide an additional 'one-off' grant of £45k, split along the lines of £27k (approx.) going to CAT and £18k (approx.) going to WSA. This was prompted by the unexpected decision of SCC to cut the majority of their core grant funding to all CA services across the county. The SWT decision to allocate £45k was prompted by a need to help stabilise CA services, and to help them move towards a more sustainable financial future.

3.8.2 The report at Appendix B provides the detailed background to this decision, it looks at how CAT and WSA have responded to these financial pressures during the past 12 months, and looks to the future with a recommendation for some further financial assistance.

3.9 **Housing Revenue Account Funded Grants and Commissioned Services**

3.9.1 The Council funds several organisations to provide support services directly to tenants with the aim to support sustainable tenancies and improve the health and wellbeing of the Council's tenants, particularly in the Districts most deprived areas.

3.9.2 The Council has commissioned two services directly from Voluntary and Community Sector organisations. MIND provide the Bridging the Gap service and Yarlinton Housing Association provides the Inspired to Achieve Service.

3.9.3 The initiatives funded via the Housing Revenue Account during 2019/20 are as follows:

Organisation	Amount Awarded	Purpose of Project	Outputs agreed	Length of contract	Review of performance
Grant: Taunton CAB	42000	To provide Money Matters Advisers in Taunton East, Taunton North and Wellington, to the value of 15 hours per locality per week with a contribution to core running costs.	Work with the "One Teams" Key outcomes: Value of debts written off Value of 'managed' debt Prevention of eviction Prevention of possession proceedings Maximising client income	1 year agreement	Carried out twice pa. Figures provided to SCF as part of current monitoring arrangements.

			Accessing charitable assistance Benefits advice		
Grant: Taunton East Development Trust	3000	Support to the Core Running Costs	Increased financially security Increased financial independence Increased provision of social, educational, health & wellbeing and recreational activities	No agreement on file at time of review.	None carried out.
Commissioned : MIND	41000	Bridging the Gap - support and advocacy for tenants suffering with mental health issues. Approximately 145 individuals per annum. 2400 hours per year including administration and management of no more than 70%	Deliver support and advocacy in relation to a range of issues (e.g. housing, benefits, accessing services, supporting independence) for tenants or members of a tenants household with mental health challenges	1 st Jan 2018 for 3 years + 2	During the first 2 years of the contract 183 service users were supported. This is short of the 290 target. Further monitoring information to be provided to assess support hours delivered.
Commissioned : Inspire to Achieve	46000	To work with Council Tenants living in the three One Team areas of East Taunton, North Taunton and Wellington to help them to move into sustained employment and off of work-related benefits. 500 engaged over 3 years average 175 per annum	Accept tenant referrals from SWT staff, One Teams, partners and self-referrals. To provide bespoke support and guidance to individuals. To support individuals during their first 6 months of employment.	Commissioned contract January 2016 for 3 years. Contract extended January 2019 for a further 3 years.	Feb 16 to Feb 16 209 referrals 131 engaged Feb 17 to Feb 18 183 referrals 109 engaged Feb 18 to Aug 19 51 referrals 32 engaged. Feb 19 to Aug 19 48 referrals 38 engaged Average 60% engagement rate. Awaiting figures for contract start to Aug 19 to confirm numbers supported into employment.

3.10 **Key findings from the review:**

3.10.1 The Council is working closely with both MIND and Yarlington to review the achievement of contracted targets and agree joint actions where required to ensure the funding is maximised.

3.10.2 Monitoring of some HRA funded initiatives should be strengthened to include regular review meetings with each grant recipient or contract service.

3.11 **Total funding provided to VCS organisations 19/20**

3.11.1 The total funding provided to the VCS during 19/20 is detailed in Appendix A and summarised below:

	Total Awarded £
VCS Partnership Grants	297520
VCS Small Grants	20000
HRA Housing Grants and Commissioned services	132000
Administrations of Small Grants, Partnership Grants and Somerset West Lottery Community Fund.	4965

3.12 **Review of current priorities for VCS grant awards.**

3.12.1 The Council currently finds a wide range of activities through the Voluntary and Community Sector.

3.12.2 These are summarised below:

- Money and Debt advice for tenants
- General Information Advice and Guidance
- Locality information and advice hubs (NT and Halcon)
- Housing advice and tenancy sustainment
- Domestic Violence
- Support for VCS organisations – training, funding searches, charitable status, project advice, forums, award events etc.
- Support for young families in rural areas
- Self-advocacy and engagement with disabled people.
- Supporting art projects
- Supporting community organisations/community hubs in deprived areas
- Supporting community organisations with seed funding for projects
- Contribution towards village agents
- Mental Health support and advocacy
- Employment, skills and training support for those farthest from the job market in deprived area
- Prenatal and perinatal support for young families in rural areas.

- Art projects and skills development for young people in deprived wards
- Social Enterprise support in Halcon
- Community transport in rural areas
- Somerset West Lottery
- Advice regarding Community Buildings and Village Halls

4 **Other review findings**

- 4.1 A review workshop was held in December 2019 including members and officers the following are key findings from the review:
- 4.2 Several of the grants provided require more Scrutiny, there is the potential that some projects in some areas are duplicating or over providing. For example there are three Arts projects being delivered in Halcon funded via the General Fund, Housing Fund and One Teams.
- 4.3 Grant recipients should be encouraged through guidance and improved application processes to achieve match funding for projects sourced from external funding providers.
- 4.4 Due diligence checks carried out by SCF conflict with the understanding the Council has of the financial sustainability of some of the organisations the Council funds.
- 4.5 The need to support tenants with debt and money advice is increasing due to the changes introduced through Universal Credit and to support sustainable tenancies and a reduction in rent arrears.
- 4.6 The Council offers a range of support to the Citizens Advice Bureaus across general fund, HRA and homelessness reduction budgets. These arrangements and agreements should be consolidated to provide clarity and improve and simplify monitoring arrangements.
- 4.7 When prioritising future funding the geographical spread of funds, needs of the community and type of activity funded should to be fully considered to ensure funding is being utilised appropriately and effectively across the district.
- 4.8 Grant organisations should be encouraged to work more closely to avoid competition for funding and to reduce duplication or gaps in provision.

5 **Future prioritisation of funds**

- 5.1 During a workshop officers assessed the current activities provided through grant funding, the group set out the activities in order of priority. The aim of this list is to act as a guide for decision making regarding 20/21 funding of the VCS and will help inform further review.

- Money and Debt advice for tenants
- Housing Advice and tenancy sustainment
- Support for young families in rural areas
- Self-advocacy and engagement with disabled people
- Mental Health support and advocacy
- Domestic Violence
- General information, advice and guidance

- Prenatal and perinatal support for families in rural areas
- Supporting community organisations/community hubs in deprived areas
- Support for Village Agents
- Advice for Community Buildings and Village Halls
- Social enterprise, skills and training support in deprived areas
- Supporting community organisations with seed funding for projects
- Employment skills and training support for those farthest from the job market
- Community transport in rural areas
- Somerset West Lottery
- Arts projects and skills development in deprived areas

6 **Budget available for Voluntary and Community Sector Grants 20/21**

6.1 The below budgets are proposed for 2020/21 and subject to approval during annual budget setting in February 2020.

	£
VCS Partnership Grants, Small Grants, Somerset West Lottery Community Fund administration	195870
Village Agents (final year) - £20,000	20000
HRA Housing Grants	132000
CAB additional funding	33000

6.2 **2020/21 Requests for Funding**

6.2.1 During November partners in receipt of VCS Grant Funds submit proposals for funding for the following financial year. The following requests for funding were submitted during November 2019.

VCS Partnership and Small Grants

Organisation	Amount Awarded 19/20	Amount requested 20/21
Citizens' Advice Taunton	83610	119120
CLOWNS (WS).	1000	1000
Community Council for Somerset.	5400	5400
Compass Disability Services.	2700	2700
Engage (TD).	22500	Combined bid for 23500
Engage (WS).	1000	
Fuse Performance.	6000	6700
Homestart (WS).	1000	1000
North Taunton Partnership.	14500	14500
Taunton East Development Trust.	14500	20000
West Somerset Advice Bureau	30600	30600
Wiveliscombe Area Partnership	29710	35000
VCS Small Grants Fund (SCF)	20000	22000
Village Agents	20000	20000
Total	252520	301520

Housing Funded Grants and Commissioned Services

Organisation	Amount Awarded 19/20	Amount requested 20/21
Citizens Advice Taunton – Money Matters Debt Advice for Tenants and core running costs	42000	42000
Taunton East Development Trust – Core running costs	3000	3000
MIND – Bridging the Gap for Tenants	41000	41000
Yarlington - Inspired to Achieve - Employment/Skills support	46000	46000

Citizens Advice Bureau one off support grant – see Appendix B

Organisation	Amount Awarded 1920	Amount requested 20/21
Citizens Advice Taunton and West Somerset Advice	45000	33000

6.3 Allocation of budgets 2020/21

	Total Proposed Award £	General Fund £	HRA contribution £	HRA funded £	General Fund Request £
Total Budget Available		215870	38978	132000	0
Citizens' Advice Taunton including additional support requested	120610	75432	8178		33000*
CLOWNS (WS).	1000	1000			
Community Council for Somerset.	5400	5400			
Compass Disability Services.	2700	2700			
Engage (TD).	22500	22500			
Engage (WS).	1000	1000			
Fuse Performance.	6000	1200	4800		
Homestart (WS).	1000	1000			
North Taunton Partnership.	14500	2000	12500		
Taunton East Development Trust.	17500	2000	12500	3000	
West Somerset Advice Bureau	30600	30600			*joint award
Wiveliscombe Area Partnership	29710	28710	1000		
Village Agents	20000	20000			
VCS Small Grants Fund (SCF)	22000	20000			
Administration of VCS Partnership Fund	1770	1770			
MIND Bridging the Gap	41000			41000	
Yarlington Inspired to Achieve	46000			46000	
Citizens Advice Taunton – Money Matters	42000			42000	
Somerset West Lottery Fees/Gambling and Lottery commission	700				
Total Awarded	425990	215312	38978	132000	33000
Balance Remaining		558	0	0	-33000

7 Key findings from the review:

- 7.1 Prior to 2019/20 the grant administration costs were funded via a different budget. Due to budget demands the administration costs are now taken from the overall VCS Grant budget from the General Fund.
- 7.2 The Council is obliged to give 3 months written notice of any change to levels or frequency of funding.

8 Links to Corporate Strategy

- 8.1 The grant and commissioning support offered to the Voluntary and Community Sector support the achievement of the Councils Corporate Priorities Our Environment and Economy and Homes and Communities.
- 8.2 If it is recommended that the Council carries out a review of priorities for the funding available these should focus on the achievement of the specific objectives within the Councils Corporate Strategy.

9 Finance / Resource Implications

- 9.1 The recommendation for a further one off grant of £33k to the Citizens Advice Service has been included within the Draft 2020/21 Budget Progress and Initial Budget Options report (also being considered on this agenda) as an MTFP bid for 20/21 only. Officer time has not been costed and it is assumed that the other recommendations regarding the review of SWT financial support for CA services and working with CAT and WSA to explore suitable accommodation options/support will be achieved within existing budgeted resources
- 9.2 There have been no further proposed increases in the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants budget for 2020/21 and therefore the grants allocated will need to remain within the budget set out in the table in 6.1.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Council enters into a legally binding agreement with each recipient of a partnership or housing grant and with Somerset Community Foundation to administer the Partnership Grant. Legal advice is sought from the Shape Partnership annually to produce legal agreements, extensions to agreements or agreement variations.
- 10.2 The Council is obliged to give 3 months' notice in writing to terminate any funding agreement or to notify of a change to levels of funding provided.

11 Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 11.1 If it is recommended that further review of the priorities for future grant funding is carried out during 20/21 the review must take into consideration the Councils declaration of a Climate Emergency and aim to ensure the services delivered through grant funding support the delivery of our Carbon Reduction targets, including consideration of travel, infrastructure, waste and preservation of the environment.

12 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 12.1 Several of the grants already provided by the Council have an impact on reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, in particular within our highest demand wards.
- 12.2 Applicants for funding are required to provide safeguarding policies with their application and funding agreements place obligations on the grant recipients to ensure sufficient safeguarding practises and DBS checks are in place.

13 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 13.1 When considering applications and funding proposals officers assess impacts and methods of delivery of the services provided to ensure that they eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity for disadvantaged groups and individuals and support cohesive communities.

14 Social Value Implications

- 14.1 By the nature of the services delivered and organisations delivering the services the grants have positive implications for the community in terms of social value, for example supporting volunteering, apprenticeships, skills and training of local people.

15 Partnership Implications

- 15.1 Officers work closely and in partnership with grant recipients to ensure the funding is maximised for the community and the services delivered link closely and are delivered in line with Councils services.

16 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 16.1 The services provided via the Council grants support positive impacts on the Health and Wellbeing of communities across the district, especially those that are disadvantaged and living in deprived areas or areas with restricted access to services.
- 16.2 During further review of priorities for the Councils VCS grant support the criteria for grants could be reviewed to include funding services that support:
 - People, families and communities taking responsibility for their own health and wellbeing
 - Families and communities are thriving and resilient
 - People are able to live independently.

17 Asset Management Implications

- 17.1 No asset management implications. Protection and best use of our assets should be a consideration during any further review of the priorities for grant funding.

15 Data Protection Implications

15.1 Many of the services the Council currently funds hold and maintain sensitive information regarding customers and clients. Grant recipients are obliged to following regulations and guidance in relation to GDPR.

16 Consultation Implications

16.1 If a further review is recommended consultation should be carried out with key organisations, groups and individuals within the community to understand community need and help shape the priorities for any future funding.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes**
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

Reporting Frequency: **Once only** **Ad-hoc** **Quarterly**
 Twice-yearly **Annually**

List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Appendix A	Voluntary and Community Sector Grants summary 2019/20
Appendix B	
Appendix C	

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APPENDIX A

Voluntary and Community Sector Grants 2019/20

	Total Awarded	General Fund	HRA
Citizens' Advice Taunton.	83610	75432	8178
CLOWNS (WS).	1000	1000	
Community Council for Somerset.	5400	5400	
Compass Disability Services.	2700	2700	
Engage (TD).	22500	22500	
Engage (WS).	1000	1000	
Fuse Performance.	6000	1200	4800
Homestart (WS).	1000	1000	
North Taunton Partnership.	14500	2000	12500
Taunton East Development Trust.	14500	2000	12500
West Somerset Advice Bureau	30600	30600	
Wiveliscombe Area Partnership	29710	28710	1000
Village Agents	20000	20000	
VCS Small Grants Fund (SCF)	20000	20000	
Citizens' Advice Taunton. One off	45000	45000	
Totals	297520	258542	38978

Administration and Monitoring Costs

*Does not impact on Council budgets as taken from Lottery ticket sales

	Total Amount Granted	General Fund	HRA
SCF Administration of SLAs	1560	1560	-
SCF Administration of Small Grants	2000	2000	-
Somerset West Lottery admin Fees*	2400	2400	-
Licensing Fees-Gambling Commission	350	350	-
Total	7510	7510	-

HRA Commissioned Projects

	Total Awarded £	General Fund £	HRA £
Taunton CAB – Debt Advice for Tenants	42000	-	42000
Taunton East Development Trust	3000	-	3000
MIND - mental health advocacy	41000	-	41000
Inspire to Achieve - Employment/Skills support	46000	-	46000
Total	132000	-	132000

APPENDIX B

Report to Shadow Scrutiny – Jan 8th

(note: this to be included as part of a report looking at a review of VCS funding)

Citizens Advice Services – impact of Somerset County Council cut to core grant, progress being made by Citizen Advice services, and options for further SWT financial assistance

CA related Recommendations

- A. Jointly commission (with other districts/Somerset County Council) a consultant to work alongside Citizen Advice (CA) services to explore different ways of delivering service outcomes, including looking at transformation, technology and interventions to reduce demand and to deal earlier with some of the issues that are creating demand. Work to start in early 2020 and be completed by July 2020
- B. Provide another 'one off' grant of a minimum of £33k in order to: fund consultant; help maintain Local Assistance Scheme; and to provide capacity to enable CA managers to engage with consultant and transformation related work
- C. Undertake a comprehensive review of SWT financial support for CA services during Summer/Autumn 2020, once we are in receipt of the consultant's report
- D. SWT to work proactively with Citizens Advice Taunton (CAT) and West Somerset Advice (WSA) to explore suitable accommodation options / support.

Background

There are two Citizen's Advice Bureaus operating within the SWT geographical area.

- Citizens Advice Taunton (CAT) – based at Hammet Street, Taunton
- West Somerset Advice (WSA), based at Market House Lane, Minehead

During Autumn 2018, Somerset County Council (Adult Social Care) decided to cut their core grant funding to all Citizen Advice (CA) services operating across the county (note: Somerset County Council [SCC] still provide some core grant funding to CAs via Public Health). Core grant funding is used to pay for costs such as rentals, utilities and salaries (for managers and supervisors). SCC also cut a significant element of funding to the Local Assistance Scheme (LAS). The LAS is used to provide white goods, clothing and travel expenses (etc.) to the most vulnerable.

Subsequent to the SCC cut, meetings were held between the CAs and the District Councils to explore what could be done in both the short and long term to mitigate the effects of the cut and to protect the services going forward.

Consequently, and in the short term, additional one-off funding (for 2019/2020) was provided to the CA's by the District Councils to mitigate the worst effects of the cut. The levels of funding provided were as follows:-

- South Somerset District Council – CA South Somerset £32,000
- SWT - CAT: £25,027
- SWT - WSA: £17,702
- Mendip District Council – Mendip CA £11,447
- Sedgemoor District Council – Sedgemoor CA £35,000

The background to the SWT consideration of these SCC financial cuts, together with a detailed breakdown of our funding offer, can be found within the report to Shadow Scrutiny during January 2019

<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=48&Ver=4>

There were stated expectations around the release of the SWT additional funding. These related to cost savings to be explored via

- CAT and WSA working more closely together
- All CAs across the county exploring efficiencies through closer working arrangements

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on progress, together with suggestions for additional SWT financial support during 2020/21

1. Discussion

Impact of SCC cuts

During the past year, CAT and WSA have had to make the following cuts to service delivery:

CAT

- Office closure 1day per week (dpw)
- Staff cuts totalling £30k
- Deficit budget projections

WSA

- One Outreach worker cut and hours reduced £6,134
- Deficit budget projections

SWT Financial Support to CA Services

Current SWT funding arrangements for CA services are detailed in the table below:

SWT financial support to CA services (2019/20)		
Advice Service	Core Grant	Other Funding
CAT	£83,610 (75,432 General Fund, 8,178 Housing Revenue Account)	£42k pa Money Matters advice for the three One Team areas (Housing Revenue Account) £12k pa Housing Options for prevention (debt) advice £27k – one off funding (see below)
WSA	£30,600	£51k – over 2 years via Hinkley Point C mitigation funding – money and debt advice for those in the private rented housing sector £18k – one off funding (see below)

Progress made by CAT and WSA in relation to the one-off funding (£45k total)

CAT and WSA have used this money as follows (the figures below are approximates):

CAT	
Fund raising consultant, to independently generate more income	£5k
1/2 day extra Chief Executive Officer (CEO) time- to pursue grant objectives re partnership working	£4k
Human Resources system to further align ourselves with CA South Somerset	£3k
LAS contribution	£6k
Salaries, to help maintain service and provide capacity for manager to pursue grant objective re partnership working	£10k

WSA	
LAS contribution	£6k
Backfill manager with deputy 1 dpw	£5.3k
Change of affiliation – associated costs	£4k
Training – new systems	£3k

Perhaps more importantly, the money has provided valuable capacity to explore a number of initiatives and proposals. The text below has been provided by CAT and WSA

Citizens Advice Taunton and West Somerset working together

- West Somerset Advice to move into the Citizens Advice network to provide a joined up advice and local assistance service to all residents within the Somerset West and Taunton Area. Bringing the offices closer together by virtue of that similarity.
- Established a joint liaison panel with the local authority, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) & Citizens Advice Taunton and West Somerset. Vulnerable client process now extended to West Somerset residents.
- Supporting joint pieces of work i.e. housing debt and council tax debt functions, workers have met to support each other.
- Campaign and research work co-ordination
- Two organisations to explore and identify costs savings through working more closely together. The boards are in communication and are exploring contracting to offer services to each other to save costs. The work of the consultant (see section x below) would be particularly helpful to explore this area of joint working.
- We now use the same reporting framework to easily show delivery of services across the whole council area.
- Hold single monitoring meetings with council officers - these meetings have been valuable to raise emerging issues and discuss how the partnership between the authority and Citizens Advice can be progressed.
- West Somerset Office works to assist people to make homelessness applications as access to the service in Williton is restricted to two afternoons. The Local Assistance Scheme provides funding for travel to Taunton or Williton where this cannot be avoided.
- Identifying other, manageable, progressive steps to ensure effective liaison between the offices.

Countywide initiatives

- Joint provision of services i.e. telephone advice and web chat or development of other specialist services. West Somerset has recruited an adviser who will work in a joint hub when this has been developed and funding has been identified to support supervision of the service. Meeting scheduled was postponed by National Citizens Advice and we are awaiting a new date
- Working as a county wide group of CA offices to pursue funding from county wide commissioners, for example the potential NHS Transformation Fund that Somerset might secure. The chief officers have taken responsibility for various commissioning and funding opportunities, Leave to remain immigration funding to financial inclusion policy work with County Council. Lobbying county Councillors with impact reports and working with Public Health on future funding.
- Funding bid in progress to work with Community Mental Health Teams offering welfare benefit/money advice decision in January 2019. This will require recruitment and will not cover core costs.

Citizens Advice Taunton

Fundraising strategy

- We're taking the responsibility to create new income for ourselves, to relieve expectations on our existing funders, the largest of which is SWT. As such we have invested in a fundraising consultant, with an excellent track record (and with whom we previously improved the charity's finances by £30k pa, which for us is a large number), to help us establish a sound, ongoing, strategy for this. This will have two strands; trusts and corporates. Trusts are somewhat saturated, as is the norm at times of economic downturn, so we're working on the quality of our evidence base to show our positive impact on the current support needs of our community, and the negative gap in service provision that we would leave if we reduced our service. Corporates are a new prospect for us, and requires a brand new strategy. An analysis of local prospects will lead to a targeted approach to particular sectors / companies. We've had some early success which is encouraging.

Increased CEO time (re partnership working with other CA offices)

- In addition to WSA comments re West Somerset and Taunton offices, and our county wide work; this time has been spent progressing our partnership prospects with South Somerset office. We are now at a point where Trustees will decide whether to formally pursue a merger. The results we are aiming for from the increase in scale are these; a better designated management team, with more contingency for absence / vacancy, which is more capable of maintaining stable service delivery during turbulence; an organisation which can credibly bid for larger and therefore more lucrative contracts ; better retention of talent, given that more opportunities / vacancies will exist; removing governance duplication (audit, trustees annual report, policy approval, regulatory reporting), some cost savings.

HR system

- A fundamental part of our progress towards merger with South Somerset is infrastructure, and one of the most expensive changes required was an HR system. Between us we have ~150 staff, and the management time involved in overseeing them is considerable (training, quality assurance, legal compliance etc.). Having an electronic system saved time, and having the same one is a definite pre-cursor to harmonising how we do that, and to merger.

West Somerset Advice

The additional stop gap funding gave a breathing space to enable the charity to put together a forward plan. In addition to the work undertaken with our Citizens Advice partners we have used the money in the following ways.

Internal changes

- West Somerset has completely restructured the service reducing staff hours for non-project funded posts. One staff member applied for voluntary redundancy.
- The application to join Citizens Advice was accepted and in April 2019 the organisation started to work as part of the national network. This is a provisional membership in the first year with a review and acceptance to permanent membership expected in 2020. This application has involved changing case management system to enable CA Taunton and the whole network to view case records and visa-versa. This is enabling better working between West Somerset and Taunton as we no longer duplicate work and can work effectively together for local residents who may contact both centres.
- We will use the same reporting system as CA Taunton which will enable reports to be provided based on the same data. The production of reports will be a great time saving for management as they are pre-formatted.
- As a result of the change of affiliation during 2019 the organisation has incurred double costs. **Costs £4,000**
 - Dual membership of Advice UK and Citizens Advice.
 - Double professional indemnity insurance costs
 - Double case management system costs, we were unable to migrate records to the new system. (we will need to retain this system for the next 6 years until all cases are archived – cost of £600 pa)
 - We will save this amount in the 2020-2021 budget as a result of this change.
- **Training cost £3,000** March & April was spent retraining staff to use the new system. The volunteers currently need much more support to reassure them that they are working within the correct procedures and able to use CA tools. Advisers need to retake all core advice modules to become accredited advisers for CA. This will take most of this year to complete.
- Moving to a new system has been too great a challenge for some of our volunteers and 4 have left as a direct result of the need to work electronically.

Back fill manager with deputy 1 day per week £5,304

Citizens Advice membership application

- Leadership self-assessment for permanent membership of Citizens Advice is on February 26th 2020. The paperwork systems will be checked for compliance with CA processes. We need to achieve an Amber rating and are on course to deliver this.
- AGM 28.11.19 the Citizens Advice model constitution was adopted and the local community is now invited into membership.

Office move to Alcombe

- WSA are looking to move from their existing premises in the centre of Minehead. SWT and WSA came to terms regarding rental payments for the building at Alcombe that was previously used as a Children's centre. However, progress has been delayed due to:
 - Fire risk assessment – issues with fire exit (ownership of ramp)

- The building needs remedial work to put it into a good state of repair before we can take responsibility for service charge for any external repairs.

Emerging threats to the CA Services

Whilst the full impact of the cuts is unlikely to be known until at least one year in, there are already a number of emerging concerns which potentially threaten the future stability / viability of our Citizens Advice services. The CA perspective is as follows:

- **Core service is becoming the poor relation**

The core 'front door' service of the CA's is chronically underfunded. The emphasis from a funders' perspective is moving increasingly to project, not core funding. Meanwhile the CA's are facing increasing demand.

As the local authorities have been the principal source of this core funding, the loss of the County Council grant is proving a significant detriment to the availability and stability of the core service.

Despite the reduction in core funding the service continues to deliver positive outcomes for the district and its residents.

The CA managers are experiencing increasing pressure as they seek to fulfil their roles, putting in unsustainable levels of unpaid time. The CAs cannot run purely with volunteers and paid professionals are required to manage the volunteers and quality of advice given. Any further cuts to the number of paid advice supervisors will create a serious detriment to the service with a deep retraction of service availability.

Taking into account the savings measures already taken by the CA's (see Appendix A) to ensure the service can continue, if alternative sources of long-term key funding cannot be found, then the future of the CA is looking increasingly unstable.

- **Case Complexity**

The 'systems' (e.g. Universal Credit) that the CA's have to deal with on behalf of clients are now becoming so 'tight' that there is very little room for agencies to exercise discretion and take into account the individual circumstances of clients. This results in CAs' having to intervene on behalf of clients at a much earlier stage of an issue, due system inflexibility. This in turn creates more complex and time consuming caseloads that are resource heavy.

- **Pressure from changes to welfare policy**

The many and major changes in the welfare system are putting undue stress on the CA's but with no funding forthcoming. Somerset CA's are becoming increasingly concerned at the projected impact (demand / caseload complexity) of the full migration of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) recipients on to Universal Credit.

- **Too much signposting and insufficient destination services**

There has been a recent trend in Somerset of creating posts where a significant part of the role is to signpost their clients to other services. This is creating unsustainable demand, as there are insufficient destination services to signpost clients to, thereby putting a disproportionate amount of pressure on the CA's as one of the few destination services available to vulnerable clients.

- **Volunteer capacity and capability**

As case work becomes more complex and time consuming, recruitment of volunteers with the required skills and mental agility is becoming more difficult. Whilst this is the experience across the county, it is a particular problem in West Somerset.

- **LAS Funding**

As part of the County cut, the Local Assistance Scheme funding was also reduced; both the total available pot of discretionary grants awarded to beneficiaries and the grant to the CA's to manage the scheme. This resulted in the Districts matching the County's contribution to the management grant for 2019/20 and formed part of the one-

off additional funding provided by the District Councils. There is no guarantee that this funding will be available beyond 2020/21.

- **District and Public Health Core Funding**

CAs have concerns over the level of core funding provided by the district council and Public Health (the two remaining sources of such funding), as budget pressures continue across the public sector.

Way Forward

Clearly CAs across the county are operating in a very challenging environment, both financially and with regard to systems that are placing ever-increasing demands on its services.

CAs (CAT, WSA and others across the county) have made good progress with pursuing a number of initiatives that will lead to integrated working and efficiencies. But more needs to be done, and at pace. It is acknowledged that this is difficult given that CAs are operating on very tight logistical and financial margins

District councils fully understand the importance of CA services – CAs support our customers with advice relating to housing, benefits, debt, employment and other matters. However, it also has to be acknowledged that district councils, including SWT, are operating themselves within an extremely challenging financial environment.

Strategically, as part of considering a way forward, it is acknowledged that whilst the District Councils have already stepped in with additional one-off funding, it cannot be expected that they would continue to pick up the costs / impacts of the SCC cut (which across the county, amounted to £419,286 including LAS)

Options that could be considered, whether individually or in combination, but which are not an exhaustive list, include:-

- a) That the District Councils consider, on an individual basis, increased core funding arrangements with their respective CA, commencing 2020/21, and that this is considered within individual MTFPs
- b) That the council's jointly consider commissioning a single CA service
- c) That SWT considers commissioning a single CA service for the SWT area
- d) That the District Councils match the County's management contribution for the LAS element - £6,480 per CA - for 2020/21 (subject to a satisfactory number of LAS grants having come into the Districts)
- e) That the councils jointly commission some support for the CAs to explore different ways of delivering the service outcomes, including looking at transformation, technology and interventions to reduce demand/deal earlier with some of the issues that are creating demand.

Proposal

Of the options given above, the current preference is for option e) (note: this is a consistent view across Somerset – i.e. all districts and also involving the County Council). Option e) will bring in independent expertise to work with all CAs (and funding partners) with a view to informing a way forward. This will also include debate and consideration of options a) to d). It is anticipated that each partner will need to contribute between £5k and £8k to commission a consultant. This work will commence in early 2020 and be completed by July 2020, to inform the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and a review of our core grant funding for CA services. The brief for this work will be developed in Jan 2020, to be co-designed with CA services

However, in order to support this, the following will also be required:

- Option d) i.e. continued match funding (with SCC) of the administrative support to the LAS. The cost of this is £6.5k (approx.) x 2 i.e. £13k
- A sum of money to provide capacity for CA managers to engage with the work of the consultant (option e). It is recommended that a sum of £6k x 2 (£12k) be released to facilitate this additional capacity.

In summary and in total, it is proposed that an additional £33k be provided to support CAT and WSA during 2020/21. This money will be released within a Letter of Agreement between SWT and CAT/WSA.

In addition, SWT can also add value by assisting both CAT and WSA with conversations relating to their accommodation requirements. It has been mentioned earlier that WSA are looking to move to Alcombe (Minehead), subject to resolving issues around fire risk and remedial works to the building. Alcombe is within SWT ownership. CAT are currently based at offices on Hammet Street. It may be that the public sector could assist CAT with accommodation options, should they wish to move in the future. Certainly, we should remain alert to opportunities (across the public sector estate) and proactive in such conversations.