

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	4 December 2013	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2607
TITLE:	Advice & Information Strategy 2014-2017	
WARD:	All [or list specific wards]	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: Draft Advice & Information Strategy 2014-16 Appendix 2: Council Resolution		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 Following a debate of full Council on 14 November 2013 in relation to the contract the Council holds with BaNES Citizens Advice Bureau (the CAB) and in light of the subsequent Resolution (attached as Appendix 2) the Cabinet confirmed its intention to produce and publish an Advice & Information Strategy for Bath and North East Somerset. The Advice & Information Strategy 2014-17 ('the Strategy') attached at Appendix 1 is in draft form and it is proposed that this Strategy be further developed and informed by a period of public consultation and engagement before adoption in early 2014.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Cabinet agree to consult for a period of 6 weeks from 9th December to 24th January on the draft Advice & Information Strategy 2014-16 attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet receive a report on the outcome of the consultation at its February 2014 meeting, with a view to agreeing and publishing an Advice & Information Strategy 2014-17 in fulfilment of the commitment made at Council on 14 November 2013.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The draft Strategy will support the delivery of the approved savings identified in the Medium Term Service and Resource Plan. The delivery and development of the Strategy will be met from within existing budget resources.
- 3.2 The Council has a number of statutory power and duties, the discharge of which are assisted by the provision of services as outlined in the report and draft Strategy.
- 3.3 In deciding how to shape and prioritise commissioning under the strategy the Council will need to have particular regard to the public sector equality duty and ensure the use of available funds represents the optimal arrangement in compliance with its responsibilities.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Strategy has been informed by the review of current advice and information provision undertaken over the past 12 months and by listening to people's feedback about current and future provision.
- 4.2 The Council is committed to promoting and enhancing the quality of local people's lives through the commitments set out in the joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, under the themes: i) helping people to stay healthy; ii) improving the quality of people's lives; and iii) creating fairer life changes. The principles set out by Think Local Act Personal have been used in the development of the Strategy.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The CAB is currently contracted to deliver a universal advice and information service and income maximiser service for people with mental health problems with an annual contract value of £436,722 funded from the Supporting People & Communities commissioning budget. In addition, the CAB is commissioned to deliver advice from Children's Centres and this contract is valued at £36,000 in 2013/14. . The funding the CAB currently receives from the Council is to provide a specific contracted service on behalf of the local taxpayer for universal, available to all advice. The contract was awarded to the CAB in 2008, has been extended twice, and expires at the end of May 2014.
- 5.2 Further extension of the CAB's contract would leave the Council vulnerable to challenge. European Union public procurement directives (commonly referred to as OJEU) mean that the contract must be tendered in an open market process.
- 5.3 In the first half of 2013 commissioners conducted a series of sector reviews, themed according to four categories, including "Advice, Advocacy & Information", to find out more about the effectiveness of services both individually and across sectors. In particular the reviews aimed to assess what contribution the services make to delivery of the aims set out in the joint Health and Well Being Strategy. The findings of the Advice, Advocacy & Information review, which included service user feedback, have informed the aims, objectives and priority themes of the Strategy.

5.4 As articulated in the Strategy, at the heart of all Supporting People & Communities commissioned services must be an approach (or way of working) that is:

- Person Centred – services should be centred on the needs of the individual
- Outcomes focused – services should contribute to the key outcomes of prevention, maximise independence and focus on recovery.
- Preventative and Enabling – services should aim to prevent service users falling into higher level services and enable independence at most basic level
- ‘Just Enough Support’ – services should be recovery focused and strengths based.
- Accessible – services should ensure fair access across tenures, delivered across the Authority in communities where people live.
- Partnerships – services should share good practice, resources, premises etc. They should link into community events and activities as well as mainstream provision.
- Quality and choice

5.5 The Strategy is seeking to achieve the following outcomes:

- People know how and where to get the information and advice that they need
- People tell us that they get the same quality of information and advice wherever they choose to access it and it is tailored to their specific needs
- People are able to use the advice and information we provide to maximise their independence and delay their need for higher intensity support
- People get the right information and advice the first time they seek it
- People can choose how and where they get advice and information and have options which suit how and where they live their lives
- People who don't usually seek advice and information are more likely to do so

5.6 The Strategy identifies six key priority themes designed to achieve the aims and outcomes of the strategy and help commission and deliver better information and advice:

Theme 1: Improving our infrastructure and delivery models

We want to make sure that no door is the wrong door. We want to offer a range of information and advice support to suit the needs and preferences of the range of people that may need it.

Theme 2: Improving our co-ordination

We want to make sure that the co-ordination, signposting and referral between information providers and across professional / organisational boundaries are improved and unhelpful barriers to information provision are removed.

Theme 3: Improving our message

We want all information and advice to be given in everyday language that does not institutionalise or professionalise social care. Our information and advice will be given a way that stresses the importance of people staying connected and part of local community, emphasises a person's ability to have choice and control, avoids negative connotations around burden and gives out a positive message about feeling respected for what you can do, rather than being labelled for what you can't.

Theme 4: Increasing general awareness of information and advice

We want all people that need information and advice to know that there is information and advice available and to know how to get this.

Theme 5: Improving things for 'unengaged' and socially excluded groups

We want to make information and advice attractive to everyone, including those that will fund their own care. We want our information and advice to be accessible to, and useful for all groups, and for information and advice giving / finding to be a positive, non-stigmatising experience. If people need support to use the information and advice that is provided, we want to offer support for them to be able to do so.

Theme 6: Improving the quality and consistency of information and advice

We want people to find that they get the right information, first time. We want our information and advice to be up to date and relevant and we want it to be adapted as we learn more about what people are interested in.

- 5.7 In the context set out in this report and the attached draft Strategy, it is proposed that the new contract, to be procured through the required open tendering process, reflects both the amount of money that is considered to be appropriate and the need, in particular, to ensure help to those in danger of becoming homeless, people at greatest risk of being unable to live independently and elderly residents who may need advice on how to remain in their own home, through access to specific 'financial wellbeing' advice services.

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 The draft Strategy at Appendix 1 will be developed and enhanced by the views and experience of those consulted.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 No other options were considered in light of the Council Resolution and Cabinet commitment to produce and publish an Advice & Information Strategy.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 It is proposed that the Cabinet agree a six-week consultation and engagement on the draft Strategy, to include: on-line public consultation; facilitated service user engagement events; engagement with current advice and information providers; and specific consultation with Wellbeing PDS Panel at its 17th January 2014 meeting.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report because they are already in the public domain, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
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