

Cabinet meeting 4 December, 2013

**Response to the Proposed Advice and Information Strategy Document
regarding the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**

This strategy document makes a convincing case for continuing the current level of funding for CAB. As such, *if* this document is the focus of the consultation, I am sorry to say it ~~is~~ ^{to} ~~would be~~ misleading the public ~~by~~ ^{to} not clarifying ~~ing~~ plans for a 55% cut.

Instead, Section 3 praises the massive contribution of CAB to debt advice. But is this contradicted where the last page proposes to “Procure a financial wellbeing advice service for Bath & North East Somerset?” ^{Could this lead to} ~~Would this be~~ wasteful duplication?

Section 4 acknowledges that “Information...crosses public sector boundaries” listing the types of problems that can be brought. It should be glaringly obvious that many need help with several of these problems, and CAB excels in working with complex difficulties.

The aim to “communicate more clearly where people need to go for specific types of advice,” describes exactly a function of CAB as a general and gateway service ideally placed to signpost and refer, especially under the APEX consortium model recently funded by the Lottery.

Sections 5, 6 and 7 list aims, outcomes and themes precisely fulfilled by CAB, but only an adequately funded CAB.

I’m concerned that the intention for “greater emphasis on ... monitoring data.” (p.23) should avoid leading to an exaggerated, time-consuming tick-box mentality that has crippled other services.

Even more concerning are the graphs showing diversity and overlaps in current advice provision, (p. 24) meant to prove duplication of services, particularly by non-funded agencies, presumably meant to imply these could be relied upon to pick up CAB functions following a slimmed down CAB. However, I have set up and been involved with various charities for 25 years and warn you that in the current and forecasted economic climate these should not be relied upon in the longer term. Charities wax and wane and very few can claim the record and resilience of the CAB. ***A strategy based on a snapshot view of provision will prove short sighted and disastrous if used as justification for reducing funding to CAB.*** The truth is, we need all these agencies in a time of increasing demand, particularly CAB, with its remarkable ability to attract serious, long serving volunteers, based on an unrivalled reputation for service.

Lin Patterson