

Agenda item 6 – Annex A

Proposed Budget amendment from Cllr Mandy Chilcott to MTFP and 2021/22 Budget to Full Council 17 February 2021

The amendment is to provide a grant of up to £400,000 to the Citizens Advice across Somerset and for this to be financed from Covid funding.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Citizens Advice have moved to a new model of working whereby the freephone AdviceLine has become the primary channel for residents to access advice and guidance, as face to face contact has almost stopped.

The individual Citizens Advice organisations have worked together across the county, with modest funding from the National Lottery and Somerset Community Foundation, to create a pilot project to recruit, train and supervise volunteers. Using new telephony arrangements, callers to the Somerset AdviceLine are routed to available volunteers, reducing the gap between demand and provision.

Citizens Advice Somerset are reporting that they expect demand for their services to rise exponentially over the next year, particularly as furloughing ends and evictions recommence.

This budget amendment is for a grant of up to £400,000 to be made available to support the fantastic work that the Citizens Advice undertake across the county. It will include funding the development of a County-wide service that can be an exemplar for the whole country, to help close the gap between demand and provision, to extend opening hours, and to develop capacity for the inevitable increase in demand.

This grant will enable Citizens Advice to establish fully their transformed business model, bringing together increased numbers of volunteers with skilled and experienced professionals, to provide essential services and support our residents for whatever the near future holds, in terms of health, economy and local government reorganisation.

I am therefore pleased to propose and invite Cllr Liz Leyshon to second the amendment to provide a grant of up to £400,000 to Citizens Advice Somerset.

Recommendation M - Approve a grant of up to £400,000 to Citizens Advice Somerset finance from Covid funding with the allocation decisions delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources based upon suitable business plans.