

Committee: Full Town Council

Date: 23 January 2024

Title: Grant Application from Citizens Advice Somerset

Purpose of Report

Members to consider a grant application which was deferred from 7 November 2023 meeting from Citizens Advice Bureau.

Recommendation:

- A** Members to resolve to suspend Financial Regulation 5.8 that limits the maximum amount of a grant that can be awarded for this grant application only.

- B** Members resolve to award a grant of **£1,200** to Citizens Advice Somerset to support the cost of providing advice, support and specialist casework enabling the people of Ilminster to plan and manage life events and change.

Background:

1. For Members to re-visit the grant application received from Citizens Advice Somerset which was considered at Resources Committee held on 7th November 2023. At that meeting councillors asked to defer the grant application until January 2024 Full Council meeting, when more information would be available.

Resources Committee – held on 7 November 2023

R23-030 Citizens Advice Somerset

Members discussed the grant application.

Discussions included the current financial situation within Somerset Council (SC), concerns around possible funding cuts from SC, Members are aware that Citizens Advice is a vital resource that residents of Ilminster use, considered deferring item until January Town Council meeting when more information regarding SC may be known.

Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to defer this Agenda item to the January 2024 Town Council meeting.

Proposer Cllr Jenner-Hurford **Seconded** Cllr James

2. Citizens Advice Somerset have requested a grant that will go towards the cost of providing advice, support and specialist casework that enables the people of Ilminster to plan for and manage through key life events and change.

3. They are looking for a contribution towards the running costs of their general advice service which is available by phone, email or community appointment 5 days a week.

4. They have been contacted in order to establish whether they intend to provide a face-to-face service on a regular basis in Ilminster. No response has yet been received.

Report

5. **Citizens Advice Somerset** has now merged into a single unitary service. Creating a stronger and more sustainable foundation to stand their services on.
 6. Documents (**Appendix 15A**) have been provided, that give more detail and indicate that the Citizens Advice Somerset are applying to all other councils for a contribution as well as funding from Ilminster Town Council. They are looking for a **£1,200** grant.
 7. In addition to the attached appendix the following information has been provided.
 - a. *The Councillors may be aware that four of the five Citizens Advice across Somerset have merged into one service. This merger is partly in response to the unification of the four Somerset District Councils into a single unitary authority, with the ever changing social and economic environment we wanted to ensure that collectively we can be more agile in our responses to local needs, while ensuring that we create a stronger and more sustainable foundation to stand our services on.*
 - b. *We will ensure that there is a local presence in each of our areas, enhance our access service. The merger has taken 2 years to explore in full, identifying both the opportunities and potential risks. It was not a decision taken quickly or lightly, we needed to be absolutely certain it was the best decision for all: our clients, our staff and volunteers and our funders.*
 - c. *In the last year we supported over 25,000 people across the county with over 100,000 different issues and that number keeps rising. We do not envisage any change to the services we offer to you, we believe that by joining together we will be in an improved position to attract funding and deliver projects across a wider front.*
- How can you help?**
- d. *We are asking that if you are able to support us financially you do so, we have not changed our services and priorities just joined together. We are anticipating a reduction in funding from Somerset County Council and so need to secure funding from other sources.*
 - e. *We would like to apply to the Town Council for a grant towards the cost of providing advice, support and specialist casework that enables the people of Ilminster to plan for and manage through key life events and change. We would welcome a contribution towards the running costs of our general advice service which is available by phone, email or community appointment 5 days a week.*

8. The Town Council grant budget for 2023-24 is **£10,000** and we have given out two grants this year, totalling **£2,010** thus leaving **£7,990** in the budget, for awarding to organisations should the council so wish to do so in response to an application. This figure does not take into account any grants that have been awarded at this meeting.
9. Full reports, including the accounts from Citizens Advice Somerset are available in the office for Councillors to view prior to the meeting.
10. Members to resolve to **SUSPEND** grant maximum limit of **£500** for this application.
11. Members **resolve** to award a grant of **£1,200** to Citizens Advice Somerset to support the cost of providing advice, support and specialist casework enabling the people of Ilminster to plan and manage life events and change.

Allison Brown
Administration Officer
January 2024