

# DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	30 JANUARY 2024	7
<b>CITIZENS' ADVICE FYLDE – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT</b>			

## PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### RELEVANT LEAD MEMBER

This item is within the remit of Councillor Eleanor Gaunt, Finance and Resources Lead Member

### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Fylde Council is the main funder of Citizens' Advice Fylde (CA Fylde) and grant provision is included within the base budget to support its operations. The grant is £102,082 for 2023/24.

This report concerns the granting of a three-year SLA from 1 April 2024, together with the corresponding grant provision during this period.

### RECOVERABILITY

This decision is recoverable under section 5 of part 3 of the constitution.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- To grant a three-year Service Level Agreement to Citizens Advice Fylde from 1 April 2024, in the sum of £102,082 per annum in 2024/25 and 2025/26, with the operating deficits arising being met from accrued unringfenced reserves, with this being kept under regular review at performance monitoring meetings.
- That the grant provision for 2026/27 be brought forward for review at the Leadership Board (Budget Setting) at the appropriate time.

## REPORT

- CA Fylde approached the council to seek an increase in its grant provision. This was because it was projecting increased costs due to inflationary increases for costs relating to utilities, staffing costs, IT, travel and training.
- Fylde Council is the core funder of CA Fylde and has provided it with an annual grant over several years in order that its free of charge service can be provided to the residents of Fylde. The current grant provided to CA Fylde by this council is £102,082 for 2023/24.
- CA Fylde aims to provide the best possible advice to the citizens of Fylde in order that they can deal with the problems they face. They train, encourage and enable local people to volunteer to provide advice to fellow citizens and enable and assist volunteers currently out of work to acquire skills and gain confidence so they can return to the workplace. The volunteer network is supported by a team of core staff and the staffing model of

CA Fylde is attached at appendix A. Advice and support to Fylde residents is offered across a range of services and these are detailed at Appendix B.

4. Volunteer numbers have ranged from 30 advisors pre-Covid, reducing to 19 during 2021-22. A recruitment drive has now brought numbers back to 22 at the time of writing this report.
5. The service is operated from a main office at Moor Street, Kirkham which is leased from the council. An outreach service is also provided at the Fylde Council offices in St Annes on two days per week. A five-day service is offered from the Kirkham Office, and this includes a telephone advice line service which operates between 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day together with face-to-face appointments on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at the Kirkham office. Drop-in sessions are also available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in Kirkham.
6. As a part of its Service Level Agreement with the council CA Fylde has made an annual report to the council outlining client numbers and activity statistics in terms of the major areas of support provided. This report has previously been considered by the former Environment, Health and Housing Committee with the Community Outlook Scrutiny Committee now fulfilling this overview role. Officers and members are positive about the value provided by CA Fylde, and this has been reflected when its annual reports have been considered. Most recent statistics which provide a breakdown of the core service activity for CA Fylde are attached at Appendix C.
7. During the last year, Fylde officers have worked with CA Fylde to understand its operating model, and financial position, in more depth and this work was supported by MIAA, the council's internal audit service, as a bespoke piece of analysis. Income and expenditure streams for CA Fylde from 2020/21 to date, with an estimated closing position for the 2023/24 budget are attached as a result of this work and show a projected closing reserve position of £114,424 for the 2023/24 period.
8. An operating deficit in the sum of £15,631 arose in 2022/23, with a further deficit expected in 2023/24. This illustrates that projected increases and cost pressures identified by CA Fylde are valid. Costs are expected to rise further in future years due to inflationary pressures such as increased staffing, travel, training costs together with rising utility costs.
9. The current reserves policy of CA Fylde is to hold a minimum of 3 months' operating costs plus a contingency for staff redundancy costs. The three months operating reserves are to allow for a managed cessation of CA Fylde activities in the eventuality that the operation is wound up. Operating and redundancy reserves were noted to be an estimated £51,000 by MIAA at the end of the 2022/23 financial year compared with actual reserves of £118,808. These reserves comprise accumulated funding derived over several years from differing sources including the council's grant.
10. MIAA considered it reasonable to assume that the minimum required reserve balance will increase to £60K on 31 March 2024 given staff costs and inflationary pressures. Estimated operating deficits for 2023/24 were noted to reduce the reserve position to £114,424 on 31 March 2024. Given this position, CA Fylde would still have £54k of reserve headroom entering the next SLA period as a result of the analysis undertaken by MIAA. Therefore, it is recommended that a proportion of this headroom be used to meet the costs of the operating deficits in the first two years of the new SLA period, subject to this being kept under regular review, to ensure that sufficient reserves remain in place. Whilst not all of these reserves have accrued as a result of the previous grants awarded by Fylde Council, a proportion will have done so.
11. A revised SLA has been drafted and this is also attached as an appendix (E). It provides for improved governance arrangements going forward with a regular dialogue between the council and CA Fylde, and better-defined metrics to measure delivery across a number of areas.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	✓
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	✓
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	✓

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	£102,082 per annum is included in the base budget to support Citizens Advice Fylde activity
Legal	A proposed SLA is attached as an appendix to this report
Community Safety	No issues arising
Human Rights and Equalities	CA Fylde provide advice on issues of this nature as a part of its core offer
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	A three-year SLA offers greater sustainability to a voluntary sector organisation such as CA Fylde thereby providing greater stability and the ability to plan service delivery and recruit/retain volunteers
Health & Safety and Risk Management	No issues arising

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS
Environmental Health and Housing Committee, 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2020, revenue increase request as a part of the budget setting process.

BACKGROUND PAPERS RELEVANT TO THIS ITEM		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Draft Service Level Agreement	Oct 23	Attached as an appendix

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
Tracy Manning	Tracy.manning@fylde.gov.uk 01253 658521	8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024

Appendix A – staffing model Fylde CAB

Appendix B – Range of services Fylde CAB

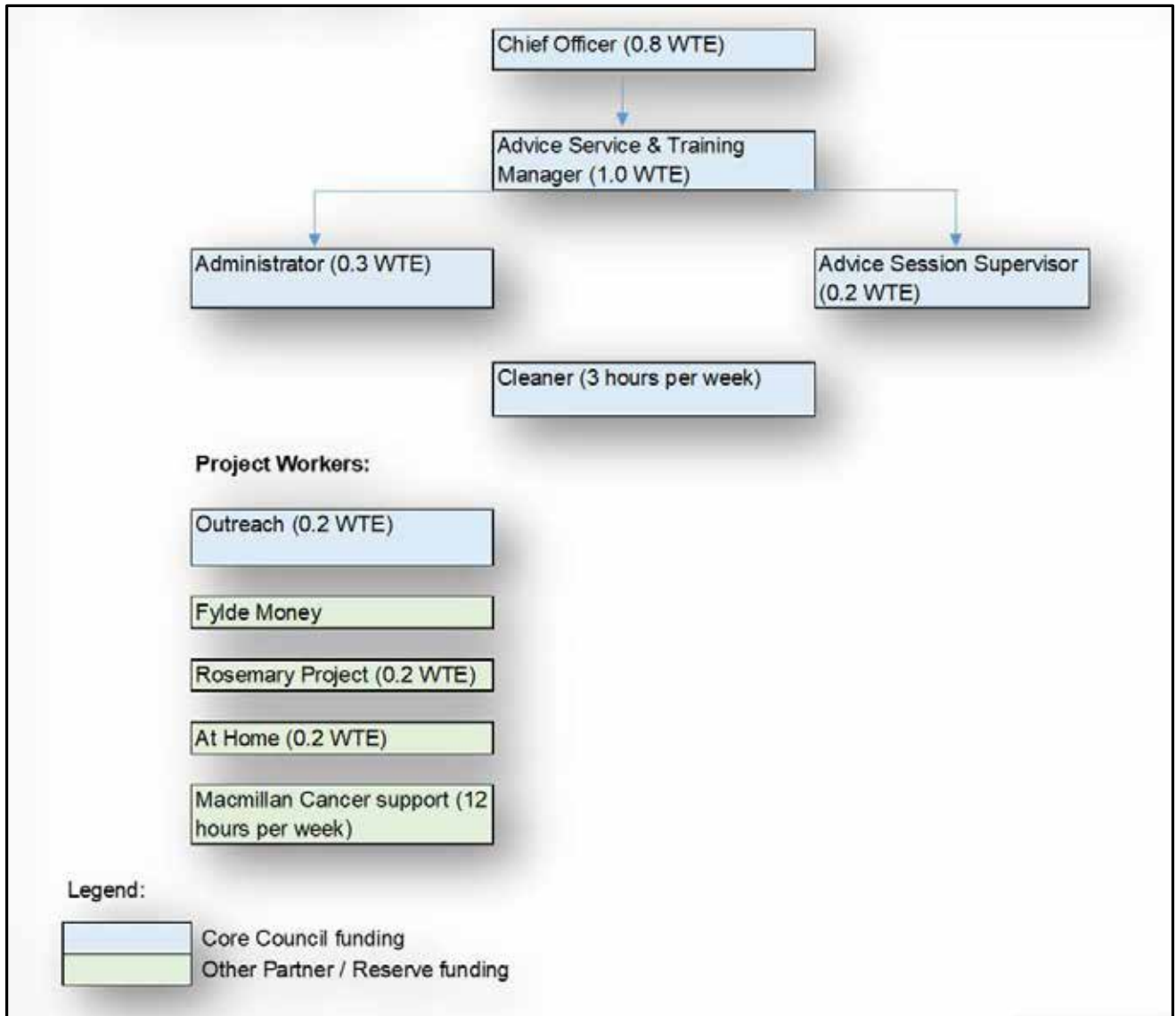
Appendix C – Statistical breakdown of services

Appendix D – Citizens Advice Fylde income and expenditure financial analysis

Appendix E – Proposed three-year SLA

# Appendix A

## CA Fylde Staff Structure



## Appendix B

### Description of CA Fylde 'Core Service'

**General** –. Recognised need for catch all section in SLA covering 'full range of advice that people require' e.g., power of attorney, wills, blue badges etc.

Specific services referenced in SLA are:

1. **Housing** – advice to tenants & landlords (not on evictions); tenancy issues; Housing Associate liaison; Fylde Housing team links; repairs / anti-mold/ maintenance issues; mortgages.
2. **Welfare** – benefit applications/appeals/ entitlement checks; all client age groups; disability benefit and claim forms; how to secure 'best chance of entitlement' legacy benefits and universal credit.
3. **Health & Social Care** – care packages & costs; Continuing Health Care eligibility v self-funding; care & nursing homes.
4. **Education** – student finance, special education needs [*relatively low demand*]
5. **Consumer advice** – issues taken to Ombudsman level as required; energy costs are current priority / demand area.
6. **Debt advice** – budget management; income maximisation; debt solutions and options; debt management plans; relief orders. Information to help clients make good financial decisions. To note that volunteers deal with more straightforward issues; a paid adviser manages more relatively complex issues.  
  
*[To note Fylde Money Debt & Budgeting project which is outside core service – see Appendix E]*
7. **Employment** – unfair dismissal, discrimination; from initial consultation up to pre tribunal as required; ACAS liaison.
8. **Family & Personal** – demand increasing as legal aid resource decreases.
9. **Taxes** – mainly council tax queries, HMRC queries are minimal, advice to self-employed.
10. **Immigration & Nationality** – strict limits on advice that can be given here; reference to 'IOC level 1' as minimal information that can be provided.

## Appendix C

### CA Fylde Core Service Activity Summary

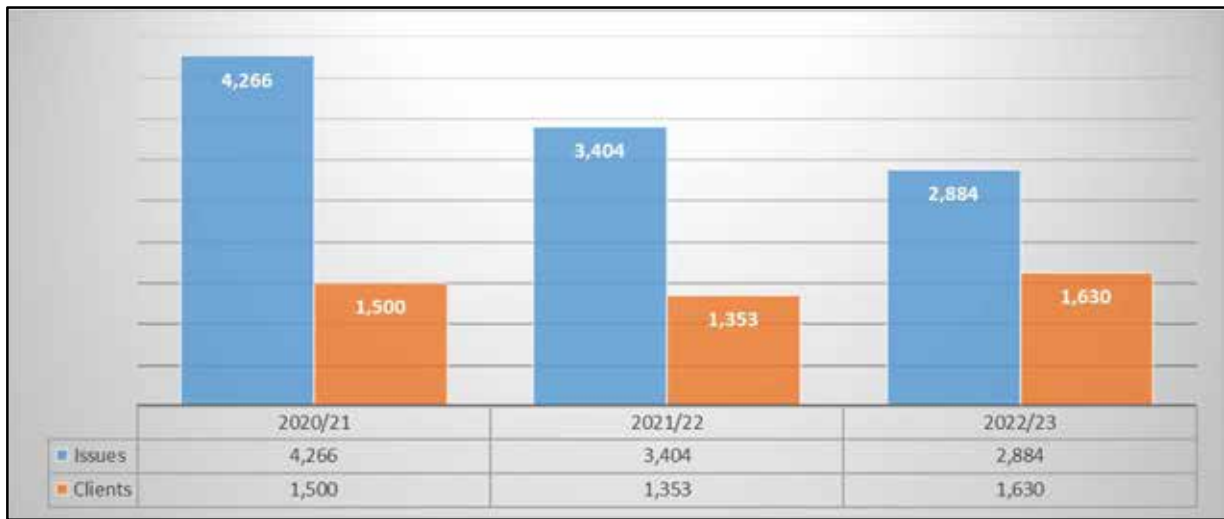
Area of support	2020-2021		2021-22		2022-2023	
	Issues	Clients	Issues	Clients	Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	910	324	922	294	788	388
Benefits Universal Credit	1164	342	704	255	158	93
Charitable Support and Foodbank					218	155
Consumer goods & services	147	43	102	31	106	54
Debt	445	144	269	118	351	153
Education	15	8	16	6	15	9
Employment	439	173	144	46	110	65
Financial services & capability	67	37	39	25	52	44
GVA & Hate Crime	31	21	18	8	31	13
Health & community care	99	31	112	38	88	53
Housing	302	103	252	97	333	201
Immigration & asylum	33	15	42	15	59	34
Legal	127	49	112	36	124	85
Other	123	63	293	222	38	21
Relationships & family	218	81	144	55	176	114
Tax	27	16	12	10	13	13
Travel & transport	41	19	38	22	67	52
Utilities & communications	78	31	185	75	157	83
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4,266</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>3,404</b>	<b>1,353</b>	<b>2,884</b>	<b>1,630</b>
Grand Total Excl. Charitable Support	4,266	1,500	3,404	1,353	2,666	1,475
<b>Number of individual clients supported</b>		998		1,019		1,194

Summary	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-20223	Trend
Clients	998	1,019	1,194	
Quick Client Contacts	673	464	216	
Issues	4,266	3,404	2,884	
Activities	3,094	3,658	4,667	
Cases	982	1,033	1,179	
<b>Outcomes</b>				
Income Gain	£203,258	£280,095	£149,325	
Re-imbursments, Services, Loans	£2,340	£1	£7,010	
Debts Written Off	£51,088	£83,806	£33,558	
Repayments Rescheduled	£336			
Other - Quantified Client Financial Gains	£10,108	£16,861	£3,960	

Source: CA Fylde Activity Management System

## Appendix C

### CA Fylde Core Service Activity Summary



<b>Top Benefit Issues</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>
Initial Claim	710	307	32
Personal Independent Payment	270	342	210
Calculation of Income	127	85	
Employment Support Allowance	124	114	54
Housing Benefit	81	52	38
Council Tax Reduction	75	78	50
Other Benefits Issues	74	54	62
Limited Capability for Work Elements	70	77	45
Attendance Allowance	53	48	92
Carers Allowance	51		
Pension Credit		46	32
Generic Benefit Entitlement			118
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,635</b>	<b>1,203</b>	<b>733</b>

<b>Top Debt Issues</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>
Other Debt	120	43	45
Bankruptcy	45	12	10
Fuel Debts	39	39	45
Debt Relief Order	28	18	12
Credit, Store & Charge Debts	28	16	28
Council Tax Arrears	26	26	29
Rent Arrears - Private Landlords	15	6	
Unsecured Personal Loan Debts	11		15
3rd Party Debt Collection excl Bailiffs	10		11
Water Supply & Sewage Debts	8	8	9
Mortgage & Secured Loan Arrears	8	6	
Debt Assessment		31	63
Bank & Building Society Overdrafts		11	
Rent Arrears - Housing Associations			9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>276</b>

Source: CA Fylde Activity Management System

## C A Fylde Income and expenditure financial analysis

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (Budget Position)
<b>Council Funding:</b>				
Core	£98,826	£100,438	£102,082	£102,082
Household Support (Admin Top Slice)		£10,000	£30,478	£32,900
Household Support - Funded posts				£53,000
Debt Project	£2,500			
<b>Total Council Funding</b>	<b>£101,326</b>	<b>£110,438</b>	<b>£132,560</b>	<b>£187,982</b>
Non Council income total (see Appendix E)	£76,803	£77,400	£12,262	£41,455
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£178,129</b>	<b>£187,838</b>	<b>£144,822</b>	<b>£229,437</b>
<b>CA Expenditure:</b>				
Salaries - Core	£109,619	£110,763	£67,758	£125,784
Salaries - Project			£39,745	
Salaries - Household support				£53,000
Repairs & Maintenance	£796	£16,066	£3,076	£4,000
Rent	£12,250	£12,250	£12,250	£12,250
Telephone	£3,369	£7,510	£6,442	£6,000
Subscription	£4,810	£5,025	£4,312	£4,564
Utilities	£3,931	£4,599	£6,991	£4,200
Travel & Training	£4,070	£3,027	£7,406	£11,612
Printing, stationery, IT	£1,071	£2,868	£7,302	£6,100
Governance & support	£2,332	£2,831	£1,545	£1,740
Sundry Expenses	£673	£4,970	£3,248	£3,971
Other	£1,964	£700	£378	£600
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£144,885</b>	<b>£170,609</b>	<b>£160,453</b>	<b>£233,821</b>
<b>Operating Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>£33,244</b>	<b>£17,229</b>	<b>-£15,631</b>	<b>-£4,384</b>
<b>Reserves Analysis:</b>				
Opening Reserves	£83,966	£117,210	£134,439	£118,808
Movement	£33,244	£17,229	-£15,631	-£4,384
Closing Reserves	£117,210	£134,439	£118,808	£114,424

Source: MIAA from CA Fylde Annual Accounts 2021-22 & Budget Statements for 2022-23 and 2023-2024



**SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT****FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

For grant funded services

**CORE FUNDING GRANT*****Parties***

Fylde Borough Council ("the Council")

Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau, ("the Provider")

***Interpretation***

In this agreement the following words have the following meanings:

Default Notice	A notice fulfilling the requirements of clause 15 and a Default Notice is "unresolved" at any time that the concerns raised in it have not been addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council
Grant	£102,082 for 2024/25 and 2025/26 with grant for 2026/27 subject to review
Period	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027

**Purpose of core funding**

Citizens Advice is a network of independent charities offering confidential advice online, over the phone and in person, for free. Citizens Advice Fylde offers advice and support to residents for a range of core services helping to resolve their money, legal and other problems. The provision of this free advice to residents is supported by Fylde Council through the provision of an annual core grant.

**Agreement**

1. This agreement sets out what the Provider is to do, how its performance will be measured and what happens if the Services are not provided as required by this agreement.

***The grant and the grant period***

2. The Council will pay the Fund to the Provider to enable the Provider to deliver the Services during the Fund Period.
3. The Fund will be paid in quarterly instalments in each year during the following months: April, June, September and January.

***The services***

4. The Provider will deliver the following core services in return for the grant provided by the council:
  - Housing – advice to tenants and landlords; tenancy issues; housing association liaison; Fylde Housing team links; repairs/anti-mould and maintenance issues and mortgages
  - Welfare – benefit applications/appeals/entitlement checks; disability benefit and claim forms; how to secure the best chance of entitlement; benefits and universal credit.

- Health and Social Care – care packages; continuing health care eligibility, self-funding, care and nursing homes
- Education – student finance and special education needs.
- Consumer advice – issues taken to the Ombudsman as required, energy costs and consumer advice support.
- Debt advice – budget management; income maximisation; debt solutions and options; debt management plans; relief orders and information to help clients make good financial decisions.
- Employment – unfair dismissal; discrimination; pre-tribunal advice; ACAS liaison
- Family and Personal – parental responsibilities; separation; divorce and dissolution of civil partnerships
- Taxes – council tax queries; HMRC queries; advice to self-employed
- Immigration and Nationality – advice on pre-settlement status; applying for settled status and problems with settled status decisions.
- Other client support including but not limited to power of attorney, wills, blue badges, travel, transport and holiday, etc.

### ***Lead officers***

5. Each party has nominated an individual to be the primary point of contact and an address for service on all matters concerning the Funding, this agreement or the Services. The nominated persons are:

Council: Edyta Paxton, Health and Well-Being Officer, Fylde Council, telephone (01253) 658447

Provider: Natalie Traynor, Chief Executive Officer, Fylde CAB, telephone (01772) 673014

### ***Ancillary requirements***

6. The Provider will keep accurate financial records in accordance with good management practice and will make them available to the Council on request. The records will in particular provide a clear audit trail of how any Funding has been used.

### ***Monitoring and review***

7. The provider will meet with the council half yearly with the lead officer and lead elected member to monitor performance and keep the arrangements under review including consideration of emerging core funding matters; to consider any requests to use any accrued reserves to fund non-core activities; to provide the council with the opportunity to update on any new services that CA Fylde clients may be interested in and to discuss scope for any collaborative working and joint ventures. These operational meetings are distinct to the CA Management Committee meetings and are aimed to build up a better understanding of each party's respective services to clients and provide the opportunity for wider service collaboration and cross client referrals.

Performance will be considered against the metrics set out in Appendix A. Fylde CAB will provide a written report for consideration at the quarterly monitoring meeting five working days prior to the review meeting.

8. The Provider will, both in providing the Services set out in this agreement and generally, comply with all relevant statutory requirements, including those related to health and safety and equalities. The Provider acknowledges that such compliance is the sole responsibility of the Provider and that the Council does not, either by the payment of any Funding, by entering into this agreement or otherwise take any responsibility for any non-compliance by the Provider.
9. The Provider will ensure that there are appropriate internal procedures in place to manage risks.

10. The Provider provides the Services and not as agent of the Council. The Council will not indemnify the Provider for negligence or any other breach of duty other than for death or personal injury caused by the negligence of the Council or its servants or agents.
11. The Provider will maintain adequate insurance to cover any liabilities arising from the performance of the services set out in this agreement. It will allow the Council to inspect its policies on request.
12. Any approaches to the press with respect to any matter relating to this agreement should be jointly agreed through consultation between the CAB and the council.

***Default in performance***

13. The Provider will repay to the Council such proportionate part of the Funding as the Council, acting in accordance with clause 15, considers appropriate within 28 days of the Council serving a written demand to do so at the Provider's address for service in any of the following circumstances:
  - The Provider ceases to provide the Service; or
  - The Council, having regard to the Performance Measures, and having previously provided adequate notification of its concerns, considers that the performance of the Services falls so far below the required standard that they ought to cease to be provided by the Provider; or
  - The Provider ceases to be accredited by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux as a Citizens Advice Bureau
14. For the purposes of clause 13, the Council will only be deemed to have provided adequate notification of its concerns if the notification was:
  - given at least one calendar month before the Council's written demand for repayment.
  - made in writing to the Provider's representative; and
  - contained sufficient detail about the Council's concerns to have given a reasonable organisation in the place of the Provider an adequate opportunity to address them to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council.
15. In deciding what proportionate part of the Fund, it considers appropriate to require the Provider to repay under clause 13, the Council will have regard to the following principles:
  - If the Provider informs the Council, that it will cease to operate (but not if the Provider has already ceased to provide the Services), the need for the Provider to be able to bring about an orderly closure of the Services including but not limited to the termination of staff contracts and statutory redundancy payments.
  - The Council will only require the Provider to repay sums in respect of Funding that was either:
    - Paid by in respect of the current financial year, or
    - Paid in respect of the period following the service of an unresolved Default Notice.

*Signatures*

.....  
Tracy Manning, on behalf of the Council

Date.....

On behalf of CAB please sign, date and provide the charity registration number.

.....  
Natalie Traynor on behalf of Fylde CAB

Date .....

Charity Registration Number

.....

## Appendix A

## Performance Metrics

Performance Area	Performance metric	Frequency
Access and Inclusivity	Client numbers and the number of issues raised by enquiry area Breakdown of method of contact either through telephone, face-to-face or e-mail Percentage of clients responded to within 3 working days from point of contact	Six monthly monitoring meeting
Client profile	Profile of CAB customers (gender, age, ethnicity, long-term health issues and where clients reside within the Borough)	Six monthly monitoring meeting
Activity	Overall staff hours Overall volunteer hours	Six monthly monitoring meeting
Value Added	Known savings and financial gain outcomes achieved for clients	Six monthly monitoring meeting
	Customer satisfaction  Number of successful collaborations with other organisations and agencies  Number of outreach sessions conducted	Six monthly monitoring meeting
Un-met demand	Rate of answered calls. Adviser waiting list for face-to-face appointments (by support area)	Six monthly monitoring meeting
Financial	Use / proposed use of core funding reserves (with the council's core grant and associated spend against it to be identifiable separately within CAB accounts) Proposals for any increases in the staffing which would have an impact on the core grant sought in the future to be subject of dialogue prior to implementation at monitoring meetings	Six monthly monitoring meeting