

Report of Chief Housing Officer Housing Management

Report to Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Date: 21st March 2014

Subject: Report on Service Level Agreement between Housing Leeds and Leeds City Credit Union for the provision of a Citywide Money Management and Budgeting Service.

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:A Appendix A to this report has been marked as confidential under Access to Information Procedure Rules 10.4 (3) on the basis that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) which, if disclosed to the public, would, or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of that person or of the Council	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out the proposal to deliver a single City wide Leeds City Credit Union Service to create additional resources to increase accessibility for all council house tenants.
2. There are currently three Leeds City Credit Union (LCCU) posts funded by Housing Leeds delivering a Money Management and Budgeting Service (MABS). Two are in the East area of the city and one in the South at a citywide total cost of £90K.
3. This funding is due to expire on the 31st March 2014.
4. A meeting has taken place between Income Managers from across Leeds to share good practice on the current work being undertaken with LCCU and a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been developed which is attached at appendix 1.

Recommendations

1. The report recommends that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods agrees the contents of this report and approves the new Service Level Agreement with LCCU for the value of £90K for a twelve month period expiring on the 31st March 2015.

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods with background information on the services currently being provided by the LCCU MABS project.
- Detail the new Service Level Agreement with additional enhancements and improved performance management information to be provided by LCCU and delivering a City Wide Service
- Seek approval of the new Service Level Agreement

2 Background information

2.1 Housing Leeds has been working in close partnership with LCCU for a number of years.

2.2 A key aspect of this work has been the funding of Money Management & Budgeting Workers who have worked directly in housing offices in close partnership with Housing and Financial Inclusion Officers.

2.3 This project has seen a number of successes in relation to assisting customers in financial difficulty in paying their rent and obtaining affordable credit.

3 Main issues

3.1 There are currently three Money Management & Budgeting workers that were previously funded by two of the former ALMO's. Two LCCU workers in the East area of the city work in the housing offices and one worker in the South is based within the Independent Living Team.

3.2 The funding for these posts expires on the 31st March 2014. LCCU have stated they are unable to fund these posts directly and therefore this service would come to an end at the end of March 2014.

3.3 LCCU is seen as a key partner of Leeds City Council in dealing with the problems associated with high cost and illegal money lending. Due to the Welfare Reform changes and current financial climate increasing numbers of our tenants are facing financial hardship.

3.4 It is felt that the Money Management & Budgeting Service project should continue for a further twelve months to continue the valuable work undertaken and that the service should be reviewed and provided City Wide.

3.5 The project will support other key initiatives for Housing Leeds this year including action against illegal money lending and the Discretionary Housing Payment Multi Storey Flats project.

3.6 The project will focus on delivering an number of outcomes including:

- Increasing the number of face to face interviews and budgeting sessions through local surgeries for customers.
- Open Budget Accounts where customers can pay their rent and priority bills
- Offer an outreach and home visit service to customers unable to access our offices.
- Assist customers in accessing affordable loans and thereby avoiding high cost and illegal lenders.
- Provide support and training to front line housing staff, and local tenant organisations.
- Participate in a number of high profile campaigns to promote the services of the Credit Union
- Recruit and train additional volunteers to work in the Credit Union and expand the service.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Officers in Housing Leeds have been in contact with LCCU and details of the proposed SLA have been sent to their Chief Executive. A meeting has taken place where the proposals were discussed and finalised.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 LCCU is an inclusive organisation that provides a service to all customers irrespective of their age, race, gender or other protected characteristic.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The Money Management & Budgeting Service project will assist with key council priorities such as dealing with the issues of tackling debt, poverty and deprivation in the city.

The project supports Housing Priorities Plans; Priority 3 – Increase Rent Collection/Income and Priority 4 to maximise support to tenants affected by Welfare Reform.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 The funding of £90,000 to LCCU for the provision of the MABS for 2014/15 will enable many of Housing Leeds tenants to access this service. This will assist them in being able to better manage

their finances, seek affordable credit and increase their ability to maintain their rent payments. This will result in Housing Leeds having to take fewer customers to court for rent arrears which will make savings in staff and associated resources.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

4.5.2 This report is not eligible for call in.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The MABS service and SLA will be regularly reviewed and monitored. If the service does not meet the requirements as set out in the SLA the agreement will be terminated.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Housing Leeds and LCCU have been working successfully in partnership for a number of years. The MABS project has been running in Leeds for almost three years assisting council tenants with budgeting and money management.

5.2 Both Housing Leeds and LCCU are keen to continue with this project and roll it out across all areas of the city. This project assists Housing Leeds deliver one of its key priorities and supports our residents in financial difficulty.

5.3 It is intended to build on existing practices and enhance the service through a revised SLA.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The report recommends that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods agrees the contents of this report and approves the new City Wide Service Level Agreement with LCCU for the value of £90K for a twelve month period expiring on the 31st March 2015.

7 Background documents

7.1 App A -The new SLA between Housing Leeds and Leeds City Credit Union.