



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON 13 MARCH 2019

SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION TEAM

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (CORPORATE SERVICES)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To seek authority to transfer responsibility for the Financial Inclusion team and the Council's Citizen Advice Bureau budget from the Head of Development Services (Trading Standards team) to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Customer Services Team) in order to align existing welfare advice and support services.
- 1.2 This report is submitted in terms of Section II (17) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the formulation, review and amendment of the Scheme of Administration and Scheme of Delegation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that, subject to consultation, responsibility for the Financial Inclusion Team and the Council's Citizen Advice Bureau budget transfers from the Head of Development Services to the Head of Legal & Demographic Services with effect from 1 April 2019 and that the Scheme of Delegation be amended accordingly.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's Financial Inclusion team is made up of:
The **Money advice** team who help clients with single and multiple debts.
The **Welfare Benefits** Team who help clients appeal against DWP benefits decisions.
- 3.2 The service was managed, until recently, under the Trading Standards Manager/Head of Development Services. The Trading Standards Manager also managed the Council budget given annually to the Citizens Advice Bureau.

- 3.3 The Trading Standards Manager post was deleted as part of recent budget savings proposals and a new home for the Financial Inclusion Team/Citizens Advice Bureau budget needs to be found.
- 3.4 It is considered that the Financial Inclusion Team and the Citizen's Advice Bureau budget would sit well alongside the Council's Benefit Team.
- 3.5 The Council's **Benefit Team** is managed under Benefits Manager/Customer Services/Head of Legal and Democratic Services. It currently administers 6 statutory services
- Housing Benefits
 - Free School meals
 - Council Tax Reduction
 - Discretionary Housing Payments
 - Scottish Welfare Fund
 - School Clothing Grants

and the EU funded Income Maximisation service.

- 3.6 Having the Financial Inclusion Teams/ Citizen's Advice Bureau budget/Benefits Team under one management structure would bring a wide range of money advice services under one roof, with potential for improved customer service.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 This report seeks a high level decision to identify a suitable home for the Financial Inclusion Team and the Citizen's Advice Bureau budget.
- 4.2 It is considered that they would sit well alongside the Council's Benefits team.
- 4.3 There is potential to further develop and align these services in the longer term.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

When finalised, Moray's poverty strategy aims to deliver overarching priorities key to the LOIP. The Financial Inclusion and Benefit teams contribute directly to the poverty agenda.

(b) Policy and Legal

All Scottish councils and NHS regions now have statutory responsibilities within the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act to address child poverty. The Financial Inclusion and Benefit teams will actively contribute to child poverty outcomes.

(c) Financial implications

No financial implications have been identified as a result of the proposed transfer.

(d) Risk Implications

No significant risks have been identified as a result of the proposed transfer.

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff have been consulted and are supportive of the proposed transfer. The Benefits Manager will be responsible for implementing the transfer and line managing the Financial Inclusion team along with the other existing benefit services. Some minor post grading issues may arise, but it is anticipated that these can be accommodated within existing staffing costs.

(f) Property

There are no property implications. The Benefits Team and Financial Inclusion team are situated in Elgin Annexe and it is proposed to locate the teams closer together to aid joint casework and peer support.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Merging these teams within one management structure has potential to improve outcomes for protected groups.

(h) Consultations

The Head of Financial Services, Head of Development Services, Acting Head of HR and the Customer Services Manager have all been consulted on this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Merging the Financial Inclusion team with the Benefits team should enable a more holistic welfare provision, contributing to the reduction of poverty in Moray.

Author of Report: Norma Matheson, Benefit Manager
Background Papers:
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