

Delegated Decision report



30 May 2023

GRANT AWARD TO CITIZEN'S ADVICE MILTON KEYNES (CAMK)

Name of Cabinet Member **Councillor Emily Darlington**
Adults, Housing and Healthy Communities

Report sponsor **Hannah Soetendal**
Head of Commissioning

Report author **Tracey Chapman**
Lead Commissioner, Housing
tracey.chapman@milton-keynes.gov.uk
01908 253329
07919 564536

Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	Milton Keynes Council Plan 2022-26 – p11
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

Citizens Advice Milton Keynes (CAMK) has been providing impartial and confidential advice on a wide range of practical and civil legal issues free to the citizens of Milton Keynes for more than 50 years.

MKCC has supported this work through various grants which we wish to consolidate into a single grant of £0.277m for 2023/24 to recognise the key role CAMK has been taking in providing advice and support on a wide range of issues which have been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

1. Proposed Decision

- 1.1 That a grant of £0.277m be awarded to Citizens Advice Milton Keynes for one year for the provision of advice, information and support to citizens of Milton Keynes.

2. Why is the Decision Needed?

- 2.1 CAMK operates with a combination of paid staff and volunteers and without the ongoing support of MKCC would not be able to provide the current level of service to the people of Milton Keynes.
- 2.2 The cost-of-living crisis has increased the number of people accessing the service. Between April 2022 and March 2023 CAMK advised 7,428 people, most of who have multiple issues leading to 20,835 separate issues being resolved.
- 2.3 CAMK advises people in a number of different ways and had 20,286 separate contacts with people during the year comprising 9,314 phone calls, 5941 e-mails, 807 video calls and 1,447 face-to-face appointments.
- 2.4 Main issues include energy costs, homelessness, debt and crisis support. Nearly a thousand people were supported with housing / homelessness issues and 63% of all clients helped in 2022-23 were affected by cost-of-living issues. CAMK reported that March 2023 was its busiest month ever for being contacted by people in need of crisis support.
- 2.5 Awarding a grant of £0.277m for 2023/24 will enable CAMK to continue to support the people of Milton Keynes with a wide range of issues many of which are a direct result of the cost-of-living crisis.

3. Implications of the Decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	y
Communication		Procurement	
Energy Efficiency		Workforce	

(a) Financial Implications

Proposed grant funding is from existing budgets that have previously funded three separate grants made to CAMK.

Homelessness Prevention	£0.118m
Customer Services	£0.100m
Adult Social Care	£0.49m
Proposed Grant	£0.277m

The homelessness and customer services grants have been one-year agreements that have been renewed annually. During 2022-23 longer term, more sustainable funding will be sought.

(b) Legal Implications

The Council has general powers of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to be able to determine whether to support the services provided by the CAMK.

In order to provide any financial assistance, the Council has to consider the provisions of the subsidy control legislation (Subsidy Control Act 2022). Legal services has reviewed the relevant provisions and consider that a grant to CAMK is unlikely to constitute subsidy as it is unlikely to affect competition, trade or investment, given the unique nature of services provided by Citizens Advice Bureaux. Additionally, the purposes of the services provided by CAMK, or its activities are not for a purpose that is economic.

The Council's financial regulations require that any grant to external bodies with a value of £100k or above are approved by the relevant Cabinet Member (delegated decision). This report therefore aligns with the constitutional requirements of the Council.

In order to ensure that the grant funding is used for the purposes for which they are provided, the Council will need to enter into a grant funding agreement with CAMK if approval is given for the award of grant.

(c) Other Implications

The Council's work in partnership with CAMK supports the vision and values of the Milton Keynes Council Plan 2022-26 as its advice and support can for example:

- (i) tackle social inequalities through helping mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis; and
- (ii) help prevent more serious problems such as homelessness.

4. Alternatives

4.1 Do Nothing

This is not recommended as the number of people receiving advice and support from CAMK demonstrates that there is a need for the service. Without grant funding CAMK would have to provide a lower level of service in the context of continued increasing demand.

4.2 Provide an In-house Service

CAMK has operated in Milton Keynes for more than 50 years and is recognised as an impartial, independent service with any financial/ debt advice regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. CAMK attracts a number of volunteers as well as grants and funding from other sources. MKCC would not be able to provide a comparable service.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 Should the decision be taken to award a grant to CAMK then a grant agreement will be issued for 2023/24.

List of Annexes

None

List of Background Papers

None