

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 16 July 2024

Subject: Update on Advice Services in the City

Report of: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

This report provides Members with an overview of Manchester's advice services, including the ongoing pressures experienced by services. It details the range of provision across the city and outlines the outcomes achieved through the advice contracts that the Council commissions. It also provides an update on the recommissioning of the City-Wide Advice Service contract and how the new model will help to tackle inequality in the city. The report explains the offer that other advice providers deliver, including the Council's retained advice service and Registered Providers provision.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- Consider and comment on the information in the report.
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Wards Affected: (All Wards)

<p>Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city</p>	<p>The City-wide Advice Service (CWAS) providers play their part in limiting the impact of climate change. They are committed to reducing waste, limiting energy consumption, and procuring materials from sustainable sources where possible. They are looking to include this commitment within their supply chain. Their work includes addressing tenancies affected by damp and disrepair. The resulting property improvements increase their energy efficiency. On back of CWAS funding one of the providers Citizens Advice Manchester (CAM) obtained additional funding for an energy champion. They deliver efficiency advice and training programs empowering citizens to make informed choices.</p>
<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments</p>	<p>The inequalities suffered by some individuals or groups were comprehensively evidenced in the Marmot Report 'Build Back Fairer in Greater Manchester: Heath Equity and Dignified Lives'. It has been acknowledged in Manchester that the need for advice services is directly related to the disadvantages suffered by some individuals or groups because of their characteristics. The Making Manchester Fairer Anti-Poverty Strategy details how advice can support preventing, mitigating and pathways out of poverty.</p> <p>The work of Advice services in supporting residents helps the city council to meet our public sector equality duty and broader equality commitments.</p> <p>People accessing advice services are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in the city.</p> <p>The equalities impact assessment for advice has been amended in the light of a new contract. The new contract approach will improve equality, diversity and inclusion for advice services in the city.</p>

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Advice services, including the City-Wide Advice Service (CWAS) contract provides a range of employment opportunities to Manchester residents. The city-wide advice contract also brings in additional funding and job opportunities, including for people with lived experience.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The CWAS partners have made a commitment to pay the Manchester real living wage and invest in staff, volunteer and resident training programs Assisted digital services empowers residents through information, advice, and education. They are investing into local communities, building resilience, and providing sustainable solutions. Two of the CWAS providers Cheetham Hill Advice Centre (CHAC) and Citizen Advice Manchester's (CAM) decision-making boards are all volunteers from their local communities. CWAS design involved people with lived experience in both the co-production and co-evaluation.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Advice provision aims to remove or reduce inequalities enabling all residents to have a fair and equal chance to contribute no matter where they live enhancing community resilience and vibrancy.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Advice provision strengthens citizens' ability tackle issues around fuel poverty and take steps to improve energy efficiency making Manchester a destination of choice for people to live.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	CWAS providers are an advocate for digital inclusion, and offer advice through a range of digital channels such as video, whatsapp and facebook messaging. Their office and outreach locations are accessible by public transport encouraging sustainable travel choices.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

Making Manchester Fairer Anti-poverty strategy

[Making Manchester Fairer: Anti-Poverty Strategy 2023-2027 | Manchester City Council](#)

Citizens Advice Cost of Living Dashboard

[CA cost of living data dashboard | Flourish](#)

Advice Services Update; Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee; 10th January 2023 [Agenda for Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 10th January, 2023, 10.00 am \(manchester.gov.uk\)](#)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on the Manchester advice sector, including the City-Wide Advice Service (CWAS) contract and other non-commissioned services, as well as setting out the challenges faced by the sector.
- 1.2 The delivery and commissioning of advice services in Manchester is informed by several key strategies. The Our Manchester Strategy 2025 articulates a vision of our city where residents from all backgrounds feel safe, can aspire, succeed, and live well. An important element of this is having a robust advice offer that supports those who can, to access advice independently, with more targeted support in place for those people who need a little more help to access, understand and act on the information given to them.
- 1.3 Making Manchester Fairer is the city's new action plan to tackle health inequalities - the preventable gaps between people with the worst health and people with the best health. Linked to it is Manchester's Anti-Poverty Strategy, which draws upon evidence from residents, organisations, and national research to make evidenced based recommendations to tackle poverty, its causes, and consequences. This work has underpinned the development of the new City-Wide Advice Contract, and the tackling inequalities approach that is embedded in the new delivery model.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Manchester City Council has commissioned a City-Wide Advice contract since 2014, which provides debt, welfare, benefits, and housing advice. The contract value is £960,000 per annum.
- 2.2 The City-Wide Advice Partnership consists of three organisations:
 - Citizens Advice Manchester (CAM)
 - Shelter and
 - Cheetham Hill Advice Centre (CHAC)

The City-Wide Advice was most recently recommissioned in 2019, with a contract being awarded for an initial three years, with an option to extend for a further two years. This extension was granted in 2022 following a review of the service. The contract is now due to expire at the end of October 2024.

- 2.3 The current City-Wide Advice Service model was developed in 2018, and since then there have been significant changes both locally and nationally. The global outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020, and the subsequent UK-wide restrictions, changed the way that advice was delivered in the city, including a shift towards virtual/digital provision. At the same time, the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on certain communities, particularly ethnic minority communities, has led to significant health inequities across the city. The cost-of-living crisis, beginning in Spring 2022, has dramatically increased the need for advice provision and brought new cohorts into contact with advice services, as well as highlighting the inequalities present within the city. Recommissioning of the city-wide advice contract has taken place within this context and in response to the new and growing pressures in the city.

3.0 Advice Services in Manchester - The Current City-Wide Advice Service (CWAS) Contract

3.1 The current city-wide advice contract is delivered by a City-wide Advice Partnership consisting of three organisations:

- Citizens Advice Manchester (CAM)
- Shelter
- Cheetham Hill Advice Centre (CHAC)

3.2 The contract covers the provision of welfare benefit advice, debt management, and housing/homelessness advice, and has three elements:

- General access - multiple channels providing access for the widest range of clients, including online and face to face delivery.
- Priority Access – Proactive advice offer targeted at key partners such as the Early Help Hubs; hospital outreach; joint working with partners such as social work teams, DWP, registered providers, mental health & drug and alcohol services etc.
- Private Rented Sector Advice – Early intervention and prevention for vulnerable tenants, including work with landlords and managing agents.

3.3 Using a blended access approach, advice services are delivered across six main channels:

- A Gateway website offering a suite of self-help resources covering welfare benefits, debt and housing topics, in easily understood formats.
- Enhancing Digital access: via website, e-mail, Skype, Facebook messenger and WhatsApp
- Telephone Gateway: for early and brief interventions and referral to specialist advice when required
- Face-to-face drop-in at Digital Assisted Hubs – one in each of the city's 12 neighbourhoods
- Face-to-face appointments at Citizens Advice, Shelter or CHAC's office where more in-depth advice is required
- Referrals from partner agencies

4.0 City-Wide Advice Service (CWAS) Advice Delivery

4.1 As part of the general access element of the contract, assisted digital advice is currently delivered at Longsight Library, Wythenshawe Forum, and Newton Heath Library at weekly or bi-monthly drop-ins. Virtual access is also provided at various venues via community access kiosks. The sessions are listed in Appendix 2.

4.2 In September 2022 CAM launched their Advice Van (Mobile Advice Unit – MAU). The van is out in communities across the city throughout the week providing people with immediate access to the information and advice they

need. CAM works with partners to target the sessions at groups / communities where there is most need and works with residents to understand where they would be most likely to access the service. Residents and Members can make suggestions of locations for the van to visit on the following link: [Mobile Advice Van — Citizens Advice Manchester](#) The van also enables CAM to take their service to people who are impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and have not reached out to an advice service before / do not know what help is available. The van includes several digital kiosks through which residents are assisted to make online transactions with energy companies, local and national government, supporting their digital inclusion.

- 4.3 The Mobile Advice Unit visits a range of locations across the city including schools, hospitals, community centres and supermarkets. Locations of the MAU are highlighted in Appendix 2 and can also be found on the following link: [Community Advice — Citizens Advice Manchester](#). From October 2024, as part of the new advice model, the MAU will be targeted around the city's priority wards.
- 4.4 Alongside the work delivered by CAM, partners in the CWAS also contribute towards the achievement of successful advice outcomes for Manchester residents. Cheetham Hill Advice Centre (CHAC) provide a dedicated and comprehensive advice offer from their offices in Cheetham Hill. CHAC offer face to face appointments Monday to Friday alongside sessions to make appointments or drop off documents on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10am and 1pm. They can give advice in ten languages and arrange interpreters when needed.
- 4.5 The targeted and private rented sector elements of the contract are delivered directly by Shelter. The service provides several face-to-face advice sessions, either via appointment or drop-in at a range of venues across the city. This includes partner organisations such as The Booth Centre, Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH), Rainbow Haven and Women's Aid as well as Children's Centres, and the Civil Justice Centre. The sessions are listed in Appendix 2.
- 4.6 In addition, Shelter has been working closely with the Manchester Communication Academy to deliver @Home. The @HOME model is a school-based early intervention and prevention initiative led by schools. Shelter input housing and homelessness knowledge, and there is a multidisciplinary team, which includes a number of Council Services including both homelessness and enforcement. The model adopts a groundbreaking approach that addresses housing challenges and related issues faced by pupils and their families. The @HOME model stemmed from Manchester Communication Academy's commitment to ensuring children have the best possible opportunities to succeed and achieve. Key Features of the model are:
 - Utilising the unique relationship between schools and families to ensure support is accessed at the earliest opportunity.
 - Upskilling and building the capacity of pastoral staff and teachers to identify housing issues that are affecting children's educational attainment

and wider life chances, through the bespoke training offer provided by Shelter GM's Housing Rights Workers.

- Utilising community links and multidisciplinary partnerships to create a network of services and organisations working together to support families through the creation of steering groups and panel meetings.
- Enabling an evidence-based approach to influence local services to drive systems change. The model aims to identify and act on wider systemic issues to ensure families no longer experience poor living conditions and housing insecurities.

4.7 @Home supported 95 families facing housing difficulties between 2022-23. Of these, 20 families were moved into new properties, while 35 experienced improvements in their living conditions, such as repairs being arranged, or agreements made with landlords. The @Home approach has taken place in North Manchester and is currently expanding to schools in South Manchester.

4.8 CWAS partners provide a range of volunteering opportunities across their services, which aim to upskill local people, former clients and students, increase social participation, and improve employment prospects. Roles include:

- Telephone / Digital advisers
- Community Ambassadors / Advice First Aiders
- Finance
- Promotions
- Administration.

Between 2022-24 68 volunteers transitioned into paid roles. Shelter and CHAC Volunteer Training Programmes provide advice work training to around 50 people annually with lived experience of poverty and discrimination.

5.0 City-Wide Advice Contract – Demand, Trends, Pressure

5.1 The table below details advice given through the general access element of the contract, which is delivered by Citizens Advice Manchester, since 2019.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Face to Face Drop In	5,174	259	804	2,232	3,061
Telephone	33,819	52,460	63,762	36,683	38,982
Digital					
Webchat/Facebook Messenger/WhatsApp	2,100	5,224	3,412	6,005	7,271
Website	99,000	59,520	69,051	110,878	105,953
Video	0	70	512	1056	894
TOTAL (incl. website)	140,093	117,533	137,541	156,854	156,161
TOTAL (excl. website)	41,093	58,013	68,490	45,976	50,208

- 5.2 All advice services report an increase in demand for advice services, and increased complexity of the issues that people are presenting with. The impact of Brexit and cost-of living increases has played a key part in driving demand.
- 5.3 Debt is a particular issue and concern in Manchester and the table below provides details of the top debt categories in the city and the average debt per case. Rent arrears are an area that has grown significantly in 2023/24, rising by 33%.

	Debt Categories	Average Amount per case 2023/24
1	Credit Card	£4,225
2	Energy / Utilities	£1,222
3	Council Tax	£1,391
4	Rent Arrears	£1,595
5	Unsecured loan / bank loan	£6,027

- 5.4 Despite the challenges, CAM has been successful in achieving significant cash gains for residents in terms of welfare benefits. In 2023/24 they achieved £15m of income gains for Manchester residents, wrote off/rescheduled £30.7m of client debts, and distributed £50,000 in food/fuel vouchers. The table below shows the five wards in Manchester with the highest amount of debt cases, and the total amount of debt written off/rescheduled by CAM.

	Ward with most debt cases.	Amount of debt
1	Harpurhey	£833,554
2	Clayton & Openshaw	£1,071,335
3	Gorton & Abbey Hey	£1,860,615
3	Miles Platting & Newton Health	£953,301
4	Longsight	£1,323,454

- 5.5 The CWAS also works with some of the city's most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents and communities. Client data shows that:
- 47% of clients are drawn from Manchester's Ethnic communities
 - 35% are Private Rented Sector Tenants
 - 45.8% are limited because of a health problem or disability
 - 30.2% have a long-term mental health condition
 - 27% are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

6.0 Bringing Investment into the City

- 6.1 In 2023/24 CAM secured £7m of funding from sources including:

- Cadent Gas
- Electricity North West

- Money Advice and Pensions Service
- Dept of Energy, Security and Net Zero
- Trussell Trust
- Manchester Foundation Hospital Trust

Funding from Cadent Gas, Electricity Northwest and the Dept of Energy, Security and Net Zero enables CAM to provide a dedicated energy service for Manchester residents and includes an Energy Champion to work with residents and front-line workers to raise awareness of energy issues and referral pathways into the service. In addition, CAM deliver advice in Trussell trust food banks across the city with this work being funded by Trussell Trust.

6.2 CAM also holds a contract to deliver face-to-face and telephone debt advice (locally and nationally) funded by Money Advice and Pension Service.

7.0 New City-Wide Advice Service Contract: Consultation

7.1 Consultation work around the recommissioning of the City-Wide Advice contract began in September 2023. Informed by the development of the city's Anti-Poverty Strategy, and with the aim of embedding a tackling inequalities approach within the commissioned advice offer, Commissioners created an 'emerging' advice model to support the consultation process. Alongside self-referral and general access services, this model also proposed both place-based advice delivery and increasing capacity building and training, two areas outlined as areas of need in the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

7.2 As part of consultation work, Commissioners met with a range of stakeholders, attended various boards and undertook online resident and organisation surveys. Commissioners also met with community groups, attended drop-in sessions and consulted with Elected Members. In addition, they held two workshops in October 2023 that looked at the advice journey in-depth. The focus of this work was to understand how different residents experience accessing advice, namely:

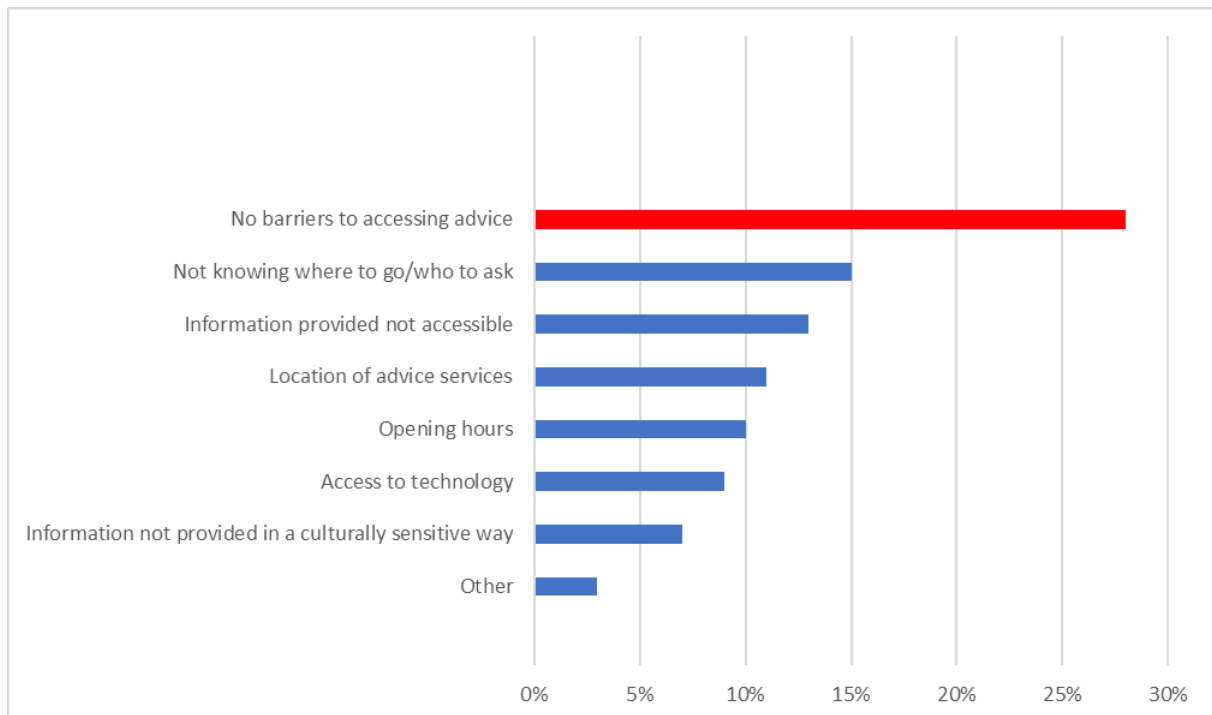
- routes into/access to advice, including barriers
- the experience of receiving specialist advice itself, and;
- the journey away from advice and acting on advice received.

7.3 Consultation demonstrated the importance of general access and self-referral advice services, including the need to deliver advice across a range of channels, including both digital and face to face provision. It showed the importance of increasing innovation in advice delivery to meet increasing demand. These elements are embedded in the new model in the form of the Manchester Advice Gateway, which will offer a multi-channel self-referral advice service.

7.4 Several other key themes emerged through the consultation work, namely the need for:

- Improved accessibility and inclusivity of services
- More targeted support for the most vulnerable residents and communities impacted most by the cost-of-living crisis in order to tackle inequalities
- Additional capacity to meet increasing demand
- Increased support for partners and VCFSE organisations

7.5 Accessibility and Inclusivity: The online resident survey used in the consultation identified that 72% of respondents experienced barriers to accessing advice.



7.6 Common access barriers include the location and opening hours of advice organisations, inaccessibility of the advice provided, and not knowing where to go for advice. Overall, 64% of respondents were from ethnic minority communities, demonstrating that access barriers are particularly prevalent for these groups. Cultural and language barriers also pose challenges for under-represented communities in accessing prevention and ‘self-help’ tools – 7% and 13% of residents respectively identified these areas as barriers in the Resident Survey.

7.7 There was also a strong agreement across partners about the need to meet people where they are at. This is supported by monitoring collected on the delivery of Citizens Advice Manchester’s Mobile Advice Unit (MAU), which showed that moving to a peripatetic and targeted outreach advice model working in communities increased inclusion from under-represented groups by 10%. Linked to this is the idea of safe spaces, which was a key theme throughout the consultation. People often go to local community/cultural organisation as these services make them feel comfortable and safe. The need to build relationships of trust in order to facilitate providing advice and help was identified as being important.

- 7.8 **Targeted Support and Tackling Inequalities:** Access to specialist advice remains a challenge for under-represented communities and vulnerable individuals / families. The current commissioned model takes a tackling inequalities approach, but consultation showed the need to focus activity more intensively around this, and in particular linking services to the Council's 15 priority wards.
- 7.9 **Additional Capacity:** Demand for advice has risen significantly in the city in recent years. In 2020/21 the contract dealt with 126,943 enquiries, whilst in the first three quarters of 2023/24 it had already managed 130,845 enquiries. These figures do not take account all unmet demand in the city and currently 2,000 calls to the Citizens Advice Manchester advice line are going unanswered a month.
- 7.10 Consultation identified and recognised the challenges faced by a City-Wide Service offer within this context and highlighted the need to explore opportunities for adding value and generating additional capacity. It also highlighted the need for preserving the delivery of quality advice that is accredited and regulated.
- 7.11 **Increased Support for Partners and the VCSE:** Partners and practitioners working in statutory and VCFSE organisations provide a rich and highly valuable support offer that complements the current city-wide advice offer. However, there is a lack of coordination and information sharing across the city, with links to commissioned advice services, and knowledge about what is available also varying. Feedback from organisations working in this space is that they struggled to access information about changes to things such as benefit entitlements, as well as understanding what else was available in the city, both in terms of services and financial support such as small grants. There was a feeling that relationships and knowledge sharing had failed to fully recover from Covid-19 and that organisations were either working in silo or unaware of who to link in with. This is mirrored in feedback from residents where 15% of respondents to the resident survey identified not knowing where to go for advice as a key barrier to accessing advice.
- 7.12 The recommissioning consultation highlighted an increased need for support for some communities to engage with the advice 'system' and other systems such as benefits and housing. This may be because of barriers to access, health conditions such as mental ill health or other vulnerabilities. Navigating systems and processes around advice such as engaging with digital systems for Universal Credit, collecting evidence for benefits forms, enacting debt management plans, and challenging areas such as property disrepair, pose challenges for vulnerable residents. Barriers such as literacy and digital capability, language barriers and understanding complex benefit claim systems, can mean that even when residents receive advice they may struggle to engage with the next steps. For example, filling in complex benefit forms such as DLA or PIP require a nuanced understanding of both benefit systems and English language proficiency. Support around these areas puts extra strain on advice services and would be better provided on a community basis. It can also be extremely challenging to collect and collate evidence and

translate conditions into the appropriate format on claim forms. In addition, cultural differences around aspects such as personal care, which can have an impact on benefit awards and amounts are sometimes better captured by organisations working closely with under-served communities where people feel more comfortable in discussing their care needs.

8.0 New City-Wide Advice Service Contract: Model

8.1 The new City-Wide Advice Model is underpinned by four key pillars, which provide the ethos and values of the service, the framework for service delivery, and the basis for contract monitoring.



8.2 **Tackling Inequalities:** Drawing on the work undertaken through the development of Making Manchester Fairer and the city's Anti-Poverty Strategy, the service will take an inclusive approach to helping to reduce inequality within the city. This includes delivering services that are culturally sensitive and accessible to different groups throughout Manchester. Key to this will be focusing place-based advice delivery in the city's 15 priority wards and under-served communities.

8.3 **Community Connections:** This is a way of working that looks to better embed core advice services in communities and locally based provision. This includes:

- A Move from 'static' drop-ins to advice delivered 'in place' - 50% of advice delivered through, and with, partner organisations - a Hub and Spoke model
- Close working with Neighbourhood Officers and other partners in place

- Development of community-based knowledge and links with partner organisations

8.4 **High Quality Advice:** Advice delivered to Manchester residents should be of a high quality, regulated and accredited. Key to this will be delivering advice that delivers positive outcomes around debt reduction, tenancy sustainment and income maximisation.

8.5 **Extra Help and Support (EHS):** Recognising the need to develop stronger links with the VCFSE and deliver additional resource and support ‘around’ the central city-wide advice contract, Commissioners are developing some smaller contracts to deliver Advice Extra Help and Support (EHS). These services will closely work with the main advice provider(s) to develop a network of wider support that would help improve accessibility as part of a tackling inequalities approach. The purpose of these contracts will be to deliver services that support the commissioned advice service(s) through providing the wider, holistic support that the commissioned advice service cannot/is not best placed to provide. In addition, these contracts will contribute to supporting the Council’s agenda around homelessness prevention through supporting residents with general housing enquiries, including disrepair and rehousing enquiries, as well as liaising with landlords.

8.6 The Advice EHS small contracts programme will be co-produced with VCFSE partners in autumn 2024, with the commissioning process taking place in early 2025. Funding for the programme will come from a number of current grants and pots of money that are being brought together into a new pot. It is anticipated that these contracts will be in place for October 2025.

9.0 New City-Wide Advice Service Contract: Commissioning Update

9.1 The contract for the new CWAS went out to tender in April 2024 with a provider appointed to deliver on 1 July 2024. The successful provider was CAM, working in collaboration with Shelter and CHAC as they do in the current contract. The contract will start in October 2024 and run for a period of three years, with the option to extend for a further two. Mobilisation of the new contract has begun.

9.2 The new service contains a City-Wide Advice Gateway, details of which are shared below.

	Channel	Delivery Times
City-Wide Advice Gateway (Resourced to support)	Telephone - a local rate helpline (with immediate callback)	9:00 - 21:00 Mon-Fri
	Digital channels , including WhatsApp live chat, Facebook Messenger, automated chatbot triage and email	Triage and information available 24/7, Live chat and email 9am - 5.30pm Mon - Fri

40,000 clients per annum)	Website (https://www.citizensadvicemanchester.org.uk/) self-help resources and video appointment booking service.	Available 24/7
	Place-based face-to-face help within 15 Priority Wards	Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm and occasional Saturday events eg Pride, Health events, Wythenshawe Games
	45 digital kiosks in community settings	Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm
	New Channels	Utilising new technologies as they emerge to develop new access channels where appropriate

9.3 The contract also contains a Place-Based Advice Service. This service will use community assets to deliver a 'hub and spoke' advice model, including the following:

9.4 Principal Hubs

These will be located in 15 fixed locations (see Appendix 1), one in each priority ward. They will provide digital self-serve services and assisted digital advice Monday – Friday alongside face-to-face appointments via drop-in services across community settings. Alongside advice delivery, the hubs will also deliver:

- Energy awareness advice carbon monoxide and gas safety advice; access to energy efficiency grants
- Early intervention / prevention workshops to vulnerable tenants including:
 - Applying to trust funds / charities for financial support, such as paying arrears to avoid eviction
 - Tenancy affordability health checks
 - The introduction of AI (Chatbot) providing clients with 24-hour advice support linked to out of hours webchat for emergency cases

9.5 Satellite Hubs

45 Satellite Hubs will be located in community venues across the priority and non-priority wards (including job centres, libraries, local Registered Provider venues). These will include self-service digital kiosks, video links to advice with casework and specialist caseworker appointments. These will be targeted at under-served groups and hard-to-reach communities across Manchester.

9.6 Peripatetic Hubs (Mobile Advice Van)

Peripatetic Hubs will provide a flexible, responsive advice to 59 locations across the City. Through assisted digital information and resources, CAM's team will coach individuals to access digital information, resolving up to 55% of problems and building resilience and digital skills so that clients can solve/prevent future issues. The hubs will provide full access to advice with casework in benefits, debt, housing. They aim to reach 4,500 vulnerable people in the most excluded communities annually and will also attend community events such as Hate Crime Awareness Week. Through their approach they aim to increase access to advice for people of colour by 2% and people in the private rented sector by 2.5%

- 9.7 The third element of the new contract is a volunteering programme. Through the new contract, CAM will build on and develop their existing Volunteer Strategy and CHAC and Shelter's Volunteer Programmes to consolidate their approach to volunteering and develop a new Volunteer model and programme.
- 9.8 CAM will train 15 Volunteer Advice First Aiders from Priority Wards in Year One of the contract and increase this number every year by attending community events to raise awareness of CWAS. Advice first aiders will consist of front-line service staff who see high volumes of vulnerable clients and will be trained to spot advice issues, including knowing when and how to refer, as well as having a line/ chat/email route into CAM to get additional guidance.
- 9.9 CAM will also create a new role, that of a Community Coordinator, who will lead their place-based offer across CAM, coordinating their work with partners, community coordinators, referrals partners and Neighbourhood Officers. The Community Coordinator will:
- Recruit, manage and ensure the highest quality of training is in place for volunteers, working with colleges, universities and charities that support people seeking work across Manchester.
 - Recruit and train Advice first aiders ensuring they have high quality training and attend regular information sharing sessions and ongoing training to ensure the quality of the provision.
 - Engage community referral partners / share information and resources
 - Lead the advice forum coordinating quarterly meetings.
 - Facilitate regular quality assurance sessions with Advice first aiders
 - Maintain relationships with neighbourhood officers and at a neighbourhood level "grass roots".
 - Deliver training and awareness sessions to partners.
 - Track inequalities in data through data reports.
 - Maintain partnership knowledge.
- 9.10 In addition, CHAC will deliver 20-30 volunteers through the contract from under-represented communities. The training will be free and voluntary sector organisations from across the city can refer their volunteers to access the training. Simple referral criteria will be in place so that volunteers are provided with expenses and are ensured a safe working environment.

9.11 Shelter will deliver 15 volunteer opportunities through the contract with tailored role profiles and inclusive recruitment. As part of this offer they will provide comprehensive induction, training, and ongoing support through a dedicated Project Coordinator.

10.0 Other Advice Providers in the City

10.1 Alongside the City Wide Advice Service, there are other organisations across the city providing specialist advice.

10.2 Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU)

10.3 The Manchester City Council contract for specialist immigration advice is currently held by Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU). They are a voluntary organisation with an established track record of supporting people subject to immigration control from their office in Crumpsall, alongside through community venues such as The Booth Centre. GMIAU provides immigration legal advice and representation to residents of Manchester City Council. With a team of specialist immigration solicitors, caseworkers, and support workers, they aim to ensure Manchester residents who are most at risk because of their immigration status, get the support they need to secure 'leave to remain'. GMIAU focuses particularly, but not exclusively, on situations of risk, including people at risk of homelessness and destitution, domestic abuse and exploitation, people claiming protection/asylum, trafficking, people and families with no recourse to public funds, people with significant health needs, and children and young people.

10.4 GMIAU operates a telephone advice line three times a week, to respond to the crisis situations that people face or to answer questions that, with guidance, some people can use to resolve their own situation. The line is covered on a rota by their legal team and the service includes assistance in making urgent applications or representations to prevent risk of homelessness, or to prevent someone from losing their entitlement to work, benefits, settlement in the UK.

10.5 GMIAU's Destitution Team supports people who are at risk of destitution or who have been made destitute to secure ongoing accommodation and support. GMIAU also provides advice sessions in local community settings to prevent homelessness and to encourage people to engage with the Home Office, where appropriate, to resolve immigration barriers to settlement.

10.6 GMIAU also work in partnership with a wide range of agencies – statutory and voluntary. Recent examples of this include:

- Collaboration with Boaz Trust to research and report on the 'slow violence of destitution' in the asylum system;
- Collaboration with 10 Greater Manchester refugee community organisations to create more effective referral and signposting systems of support across Greater Manchester;

- GMIAU'S partnership - the Restricted Eligibility Support Service (RESS) funded through GMCA – with the Booth Centre and Boaz Trust to reduce and prevent homelessness in Manchester and Greater Manchester;
- Justice Together – a project lead by GMIAU to increase the availability of immigration legal advice in the northwest.

10.7 In 2023 GMIAU supported a total of 949 individuals from Manchester. This involved answering 783 enquiries and supporting 166 cases. 29% of people who contacted GMIAU received advice; 17% received case work support; and 3% had their application for leave to remain granted. These outcomes provide considerable financial savings for the council.

10.8 Manchester City Council In-house Advice Provision

10.9 The city Council's in-house advice offer is comprised of 3 distinct teams.

10.10 The Appeals Team provides free court representation to any Manchester resident whose appeal against a DWP decision (typically Universal Credit or Personal Independence Payment (PIP)) is assessed to have merit, thus ensuring access to justice. Their current cash gains for 2023 stands at £1.7m.

10.11 Mental Health Advisers work in partnership with Health colleagues to advocate for users of secondary level mental health services on key social welfare law issues including benefits, debt & housing, from form-filling to appeal work. In 2023 they generated cash gains for residents of £4m.

10.12 A similar condition-specific service is afforded to anyone with a cancer diagnosis (and their carers/dependants) who are receiving treatment in Manchester. The Macmillan advisers are hospital-based and work closely with clinical staff from North Manchester General Hospital, Manchester Royal Infirmary and Wythenshawe Hospital. Approximately 50% of the clients seen are from within the Manchester City Council boundary and this service has secured a current 2023 cash gain of £8.4m.

10.13 Gateway M40 Debt Advice and Money Education Centre

10.14 Gateway M40 serve tenants from Jigsaw Miles Platting and Housing Services (formally Northwards Housing) plus referrals from partner organisations, self-referrals and walk ins. They are a team of 8 employees with an FTE 4.6 and around 20 volunteers. Their main office and interview suite is based at Wilson Park, plus 4 outreach centres located at Church of the Saviour Collyhurst, No.93 Harpurhey, Blackley Hub and Newton Heath Surgery who offer sessions on a weekly / fortnightly basis. Their qualified caseworkers provide free and independent face to face debt advice (to full resolution), welfare rights advocacy services including supported applications, mandatory reconsideration, and preparation for tribunal cases. They specialise in providing services to vulnerable clients with complex needs. The team are Adverse Childhood Experience trained and have a mental health first aider on site. Their holistic wrap around services includes food pantry provision in

partnership with The Bread and Butter Thing, Glasspool funding for individual grants up to £750 per household, Xmas toy scheme, partnership services with Moodswings Network Charity, Gambling Harms, Wood St Mission, Reboot, Substance Misuse services and ACTS 435 (grants). Since inception they have resolved £10 million of debt and increased incomes by £6.3 million, issued over 150k of fuel vouchers and £150k in grants/trusts.

10.15 Greater Manchester Law Centre

10.16 Greater Manchester (GM) Law Centre are a campaigning organisation that includes an offer free legal advocacy to residents across the Greater Manchester region. They are a founder member of the Housing Justice Network working in partnership with Manchester Tenants Union. Their advocacy work focuses on the needs of clients who for multiple reasons of exclusion cannot access legal help from private solicitors. They provide in-depth case work to a specialist level in:

- Welfare Benefits
- Employment
- Housing
- Discrimination
- Human Rights
- Debt
- Domestic Abuse
- Education
- Community Care
- Mental Health
- Immigration and Asylum
- Public Law.

10.17 Since August 2022, GM Law Centre has been delivering the Neighbourhood Advice Project. Through this they have delivered over 60 advice sessions through the South Manchester Scheme advising 260 individuals. A monitoring report on this project is due to be published shortly.

10.18 Registered Providers

10.19 Registered Providers play a key role in delivering welfare and debt advice to their tenants. Below are some examples of the schemes offered:

- Housing Services (formally Northwards Housing) employ 3 Money Advisors and a Money Advice Team Leader who are affiliated to the Institute of Money Advice to support their residents. They also offer casework advice on welfare rights, including access to Universal Credit (UC) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP), as well as dealing with debt cases and working alongside the Appeals Team. In 2023/24 the team secured £875,416 of monetary gains for tenants.
- Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) has a team of 5 Financial Inclusion Officers who also advise tenants around their welfare benefits rights and debt management. They support tenants with foodbank

vouchers, signposting to local food pantries. They have an officer who assists people accessing community support which include warm hubs, food hubs and schemes designed to reduce social isolation. Their Livingwell fund is currently providing emergency fuel support, and white goods if there are no other support options.

- The One Manchester Financial Inclusion Team consists of 6 full time specialist benefits advisers. Caseloads are consistently high, often up to 50 cases per adviser and the demand on the service is increasing month on month. They offer tenants Benefit advice service, including budgeting, income maximisation and referrals to outside organisations for support with debt advice. They help tenants with grant applications where appropriate to external charities or to One Manchester's Thrive Fund. One Manchester launched their Thrive in Nov 2022, and this year has been awarded £600k budget to support customers with fuel top ups, plus white goods, beds and school uniforms. The applications are assessed by their Customer In need team and any follow-on support needs are referred to the Financial Inclusion team. During 2023-2024 - The Thrive Fund supported 1612 customers allocating £585,045 to customers. The financial inclusion team reported gains of £2.1 million for customers, supporting 966 customers.
- Southway Housing Trust has an Advice Team that can offer help and assistance to Southway tenants. The team consists of 4 Welfare Rights Advisers, a Debt Adviser, 2 Financial inclusion Officers and an Employment team with a Team leader and 2 Employment Support Officers. The team brought in £4.8 million in benefit income to Southway Tenants in 23/24. The Welfare Rights Officers support tenants with benefits checks and claiming benefits. Also help to challenge decisions, prepare appeal paperwork, and represent at tribunal hearings. The Debt Adviser works with tenants to resolve the debt problems; this includes completing bankruptcy and Debt Relief Order applications and other ways of consolidating debt and managing income. The Financial Inclusion Officers offer help with budgeting, opening bank and Credit Union accounts, offer help and advice with Energy Bills and refer to Energy Works. They help tenants access Foodbank vouchers and can offer other financial assistance schemes such as the Housing Association Charitable Trust fuel vouchers. Where a tenant has an urgent need, they can be referred to the Orange Blossom Fund where the team will help to resolve this concern. The Employment team help tenants move into work, and are part of the Support to Succeed programme, helping those who are farthest away from work and are delivering a programme aimed at 16-24 NEETS, Youth Elevate, with paid work placements of 21 hours a week.
- Clarion provides nonregulated money guidance via the telephone. They help residents to understand their household money needs, budget, entitlements, energy costs and money pressures so an action plan can be agreed. For residents engaging with the service, they can provide short term help in the form of supermarket and or energy vouchers as well as onward referrals to Debt agencies. Where there are cases of financial hardship, and the resident is actively engaging with the service, they can also help with white goods and beds and school uniform.
- Johnnie Johnson has three Money Advisers who provide customers with advice and guidance on a range of financial issues such as benefits and

entitlements, Universal Credit and managed migration, debt and rent arrears, energy advice and money saving tips, budgeting and benefit calculations, understanding bills and priority payments, cost of living information and benefits entitlements. They support tenants to complete applications for welfare benefit, discretionary housing payments, grant and hardship funding schemes. They also have a wellbeing team to provide a holistic support package to enable tenants to sustain their tenancies.

- Arawak Housing association are assisting their tenants through advice communication interventions promoting welfare and energy support schemes.

11.0 Recommendations

- 11.1 The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the information in the report.