



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND RESOURCES**

**to
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 DECEMBER 2023**

MEMBER SCRUTINY REQUEST – MALDON CITIZENS' ADVICE (MCA)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the outcome of the Committee's Working Group's examination of the background to this request and the scoping of potential scrutiny.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- (i) That the Committee endorses the conclusions of its Working Group and refers to the Council the findings of this scrutiny as detailed in the briefing paper at **APPENDIX A** to this report;
- (ii) That Members' attention is drawn to the financial implications of the contractual arrangement with MCA and the excellent value for money delivered by way of supporting a wide range of Council services, so that this is borne in mind when the contract is reviewed next year.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 A scrutiny request was submitted by Councillor S J N Morgan and in line with the agreed procedure an Officer response was prepared for consideration by the Committee's Working Group. At the October meeting of the Working Group a paper addressing the points of concern raised by Councillor Morgan was submitted by the Assistant Director, Service Delivery. This paper is attached at **APPENDIX A** to this report by way of background information.
- 3.2 The concerns raised followed a visit to the MCA earlier in the year by Councillors when concerns had been expressed for those residents seeking help because they do not have access to computer facilities, or where difficulty is experienced in accessing and dealing with the requisite forms due to their limited IT skills. Reference was also made to the specific forms that either had to be downloaded or were complicated to use.
- 3.3 The Working Group was reassured by much of the information received particularly on the Digital First approach and on hearing the arrangements in place to support those customers unable to access on-line services, and the opportunities being taken to improve the working relationship with MCA and the services it provides. In addition, work was under way to address the concerns expressed around the complexities of certain specific forms and explanatory letters.
- 3.4 The Working Group was mindful that Members generally might be unaware of the various financial implications and other issues affecting the services offered by MCA

under an existing contract which was due for review/extension in the spring next year. In order to appreciate fully the excellent value for money delivered by MCA in supporting a wide range of Council services, it was felt important that the Council should be made aware of the findings of this scrutiny and ensure that this is incorporated in the review and presentation of its Customer Strategy and through other forms of communication.

- 3.5 It was further noted that three Members of the Council together with Officers meet with MCA on a six-monthly basis to review performance and contractual arrangements.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Working Group concluded that the Committee should be recommended to formulate a proposal for reference to the Council highlighting the value of MCA in supporting delivery of a wide range of Council services.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027

5.1 Provide good quality services.

- 5.1.1 Thorough scrutiny processes support improved performance and efficiency which in turn will contribute to the quality of services provided, and functions undertaken by the Council.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None directly, but individual scrutiny reviews will enable the impact on customers to be assessed.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Equalities are considered as part of the reporting on review work undertaken by Officers.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Scrutiny reviews enable potential Corporate Risks to the organisation and their mitigation to be identified.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of financial impact to the organisation.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of any resource impact to the organisation.

Background Papers:

None

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