

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting

Date: 17 June 2025

Outside Organisation Updates from the Councils appointed representatives:

Brief:

The Council's representatives are invited to report on any meetings of the appointed outside organisation, the role the organisation(s) they represent plays in promoting and aligning with the Council's priorities, policies and strategies, their impact and results, and advising on partnership discussions which are open and in the public domain. Feedback is scheduled across a full year cycle once per annum for most organisations and twice where meetings are more frequent (greater than 5)

Update from: Cllr Palethorpe

Outside Organisation/Body: Citizens advice Teignbridge/Newton Abbot

Purpose of the Organisation:	Purpose of Report To update the Committee on the current situation facing Citizens Advice Teignbridge (CAB), including ongoing operational challenges, the implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and future funding uncertainties. The report also highlights TDC's recent support and outlines considerations for future action. Background Citizens Advice Teignbridge is a vital charitable organisation providing free, confidential, and impartial advice to residents across the district. The service is delivered predominantly by trained volunteers and is instrumental in supporting residents with a wide range of issues, particularly relating to debt, housing, and benefits. TDC has historically supported the organisation through core funding and premises support. Most recently, the council approved a rent rebate of £4,000 to assist with the financial sustainability of the charity. Governance and Representation As the Council's appointed representative on the board of Citizens Advice Teignbridge and will attend board meetings and act as a conduit for issues affecting the organisation that require attention from the local authority.
Attendance requirements/ meetings attended:	As required and programmed by CAB Board
Feedback:	Key Issues a. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) LGR presents significant uncertainty for Citizens Advice across Devon, including Teignbridge. It is currently unclear whether core funding streams from district councils—including TDC—will continue under any future unitary authority arrangements.

	<p>This lack of clarity is affecting both medium and long-term financial planning for the organisation and is a concern shared by trustees of CABs throughout the county. As a result, strategic conversations around structural consolidation and the potential merger of CAB branches are taking place to preserve essential services.</p> <p>b. Premises and Future Accommodation With the Wilko block set to return to TDC ownership, there is further uncertainty regarding the future of CAB's current premises. Trustees have expressed concern about facing unaffordable rental costs without alternative accommodation being identified in any emerging Newton Abbot masterplan.</p> <p>c. Funding Environment Since 2020, CAB has lost access to several external funding streams, many of which were previously relied upon to deliver services. Trustees are now investing significant time in applying for new grants and sources of funding—often without success. This has led to increased financial caution and a focus on securing core operational sustainability. The recent £4,000 rent rebate awarded by TDC was well received and acknowledged as a meaningful contribution, helping to mitigate some of the pressures in the short term. However, long-term sustainability remains at risk.</p> <p>d. Service Demand and National Policy Changes There has been a sharp rise in demand for advice services in recent months, particularly relating to welfare benefits. Following the October 2024 budget and proposed changes to Personal Independence Payments (PIP), CAB advisers have reported a significant increase in queries. This includes new clients who had previously been discouraged by the complexity of the claims process but are now seeking help due to increased cost-of-living pressures.</p> <p>Collaboration and Strategic Response Citizens Advice Teignbridge continues to work closely with the South Hams and Torbay CAB branches. While current collaboration focuses on cost-sharing and joint funding applications, trustees are exploring wider integration options as part of strategic planning for long-term viability.</p> <p>Recognition of Volunteers It is essential to note that CAB's services are delivered predominantly by volunteers who generously contribute their time and expertise. These individuals are the backbone of the organisation. Should funding gaps or post-LGR service disruptions occur, the burden of unmet need is likely to fall back on the statutory authority, potentially at far greater cost.</p>
Examples of where the brief above has been followed:	Annual CAB report to funding organisations provides detailed information on assistance that aligns with CAB strategic aims.
Additional information relevant to Overview & Scrutiny including the	Considerations.

value that TDC brings to this organisation and/or why this organisation needs TDC:

- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the valuable contribution of Citizens Advice Teignbridge to residents across the district.
- That the Committee recognises the uncertainty created by LGR and encourages clarity at the earliest opportunity regarding future funding responsibilities.
- That the Committee supports further engagement with CAB trustees to explore long-term accommodation options within any future Newton Abbot redevelopment.
- That the Committee considers, as part of budget-setting processes, maintaining a degree of funding support or facilitating access to premises for CAB post-LGR to ensure continuity of services.
- That the Committee considers as part of the budget setting processes looking at providing a period of fixed rental for CAB to provide financial stability for the organisation.

Conclusion

Citizens Advice Teignbridge plays a critical role in supporting our residents. While recent council support has been appreciated, the organisation now faces a convergence of challenges which require careful consideration by this council—both in the context of ongoing support and in preparing for the transition to a new unitary authority.

Failure to address these issues risks the loss or reduction of essential advice services at a time of growing public need.