

East Northamptonshire Council

Date of Council Meeting	2 November 2009
Report of Councillor	Tony Boto

Representation on Outside Body

Event/Meeting/Organisation attended	Community Law Service (formerly the Welfare Rights Advice Service)
Date(s) attended	Board Meetings on various dates (January-September 2009)
Nature of event/meeting	Review of operations and developments of Community Law Service
Regional/County/Welland District/Ward/other	County
Matters on interest and/or Significance to report *	<p>With increasing activity in the area of legal work (which is funded by the Legal Services Commission) the organisation has recently changed its name.</p> <p>The organisation has undergone a change of status from an Unincorporated Charity to a Company Limited by Guarantee.</p> <p>The CLS continues to provide countywide Benefit and Debt advice together with support in the areas of housing, immigration and family law. The organisation also provides a court help desk under a Housing Duty/Possession Scheme Service.</p> <p>Within East Northamptonshire the CLS operates dedicated Benefits Advice and Debt Counselling services from a small office in the Rushden centre rented from ENC. They cite a number of issues that are shown on the attached sheet.</p>
Financial or resourcing issues *	The current recession has caused a large increase in demand for debt counselling throughout the county including East Northants.
Further action required by the councillor (if any) *	None
Request for action by ENC (if any) *	ENC is requested to consider an increase in funding as existing funding covers office rent only and all other costs and overheads for debt counselling in East Northants are borne by other funders. In South Northants provision appears to be much higher.
Relevance to the ENC aims and objectives *	Improved health and wellbeing; improved access to services; empowered communities; reduced deprivation.
Date of Report	21 October 2009

Community Law Service – Issues in East Northants

- **Need for more office space – cramped conditions in Rushden office and desire to develop services there and at other locations in East Northants.**
- **Recognition of the specialist nature of the service involving casework and advice in various legal areas.**
- **Availability of referral services in respect of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and arrears of Council Tax arrears.**
- **Funding issues – amount invested in East Northants is estimated by CLS at £86,000 p.a. (ENC funding £5,646)**