

## **CAB Trustees Report**

The trustees of the Epping Forest CAB met on the 2nd July at Loughton Town Council Offices. I attended part of the meeting (having to leave early) as the substitute representative Member of EFDC.

The key issues from the meeting were as follows:

The building in Epping is due to be demolished and replaced as the cost of dilapidations on the adjacent social club building makes this an uneconomic solution and redevelopment of the whole site is now the most likely option; however this is still under discussion. The landlord is willing to consider offering accommodation to the CAB in a new development but at a rent rise of around £23,000 from £1,000. This is unaffordable but discussions are continuing and grant funding is being explored as well as a continuing search for alternative accommodation.

The St. Marys Church accommodation in Loughton is also vulnerable. The Church is undertaking a feasibility study into redeveloping the Parish Centre. This may become essential in the near future as this building is also in need of significant attention. If this comes about there will be no room for the CAB. In the meantime it has been agreed that the CAB's annual rent reviews will be re-scheduled and will go up annually roughly by inflation but that the bureau's occupation could be terminated with 6 months notice by either side. The Loughton CAB is therefore also seeking new premises. Their particular needs makes this difficult to achieve.

The CAB is considering outreach work from the Restore Centre in Loughton Broadway. Discussions are continuing.

Demand for services has risen by 780 cases this year which has put a strain on the bureau but they are attempting to recruit more volunteers where possible, and training has become an issue because of the large number of legislative changes this year (still ongoing). They are expecting a further sharp rise later this year as the new Benefits regime kicks in. Whilst Benefits and debt issues continue to rise steeply, employment issues and relationship issues have gone down for reasons that cannot easily be explained although the statistical analysis may be slightly suspect.

A budget for 2012/13 was accepted although there were concerns about adequate funding for ongoing training of new advisors and on the legislative changes that are being implemented this year. A grant of £69,669 from the Cabinet Office from the Advice Services Fund will be used for additional supervision, tutoring and specialist housing and debt work but this grant is for one year only. The approved budget is £217,258.50 for 2012/13.

Ken Angold-Stephens