

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: Tuesday 1 November 2022

Time: 10:00am – 11:20am

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Tom Sanderson (Chair), Hilary Cox Condron (Vice-Chair), Henry Batchelor, Adela Costello, Steve Criswell, Claire Daunton, Doug Dew, Janet French, Bryony Goodliffe, Ros Hathorn, Lucy Nethsingha, Keith Prentice and Philippa Slatter

81. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

82. Minutes – 22 September 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

While noting the Minutes Action Log, the Committee welcomed that further work by officers in relation to the action on Minute 78 (Household Support Fund Update) had ensured that customers of Cambridgeshire Water would be able to benefit from the same support as those of Anglian Water.

83. Petitions and Public Questions

No public questions or petitions were received.

84. Household Support Fund (October 2022 to March 2023)

The Committee received a report on the third iteration of the Household Support Fund (HSF), which would run from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, with a funding allocation of £3,581,424 for the Council to provide support to residents faced with inflationary challenges and the rising cost of living. While the third tranche of funding would be managed in largely the same way as the previous two tranches, it was proposed to increase the standard financial offer to applicants from £100 to £110, and to revise the eligibility criteria as set out in section 2.5 of the report.

While discussing the report, members:

- Welcomed the broader eligibility and increased level of financial support on offer, but emphasised the importance of ensuring that such an approach did not use up the limited resources too quickly, noting that the peak level of applications in 2022 had been made during January and February. It was acknowledged that adopting a standard financial offer for applicants made it easier to calculate the rate at which the funding from the demand-led scheme was being allocated, thus enabling the Council to make any necessary adjustments to the process in the future to ensure funding remained available until 31 March 2023.
- Considered the effectiveness of various methods of communication to publicise the HSF to potential applicants. Members were informed that evaluation of the first tranche of the fund had identified word of mouth as the most common form of reaching people, while evaluation of the second tranche concluded that traditional methods of communication, such as posters and flyers, had not been particularly effective. Targeted communications had proven to be the most effective, and data provided by the Department for Work and Pensions had been of significant assistance in identifying people who may require support. This method would be expanded for the third tranche of funding where possible, exploring whether the NHS and other partner organisations could undertake such targeting on behalf of the Council, although traditional methods would also continue to be used.
- Clarified that the figures in Table 2 (net income per week) in paragraph 2.5.3 of the report included pre-tax earnings alongside any benefits received by households, such as Universal Credit, Child Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, whereas the figures in Table 1 (gross annual income) were restricted to just pre-tax earnings.
- Requested a list of the Council's trusted partner network. Members were informed that a list was published on the Council's website, although it was noted that this did not include all the trusted partners, as some preferred not to publicise their services in this way, instead working with clients through alternative referral routes. It was agreed to circulate a full list to members. **Action required**
- Queried how the county, district and city councils were organising warm hubs in their respective areas, and how they were being funded. Members were informed that Cambridgeshire ACRE had been commissioned to run warm hubs in South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire, while Cambridge City Council was using its own buildings, and Huntingdonshire District Council had published a list of open venues that could act as warm hubs. The Council did not receive any specific funding for warm hubs, while those in South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City were being supported by financial resources from the NHS and integrated care system. The Council was moulding the support available through the HSF around varying approaches being taken across the county. Members would be provided with an update on the approach being taken by Fenland District Council. **Action required**
- Acknowledged that some residents had proven reluctant to engage with the Council, and expressed concern that labelling venues, such as libraries, as warm hubs, could create a sense of stigmatisation and deter people from using them. Members

nonetheless highlighted such venues as important locations for promoting the HSF, as well as other support available for residents, and suggested that the Council could monitor the patronage of libraries during colder months in order to identify to what extent people were using them as warm hubs. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the eligibility criteria for the Household Support Fund, as set out in section 2.5 of the report;
- b) Increase the standard financial offer to beneficiaries of the Household Support Fund from £100 to £110;
- c) Allow a further application to the fund from those who have previously received support; and
- d) Delegate further decisions relating to the delivery of the Household Support Fund to the Interim Deputy Director for Communities, Employment and Skills, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

85. Coroner Service Mortuary Facilities Contract

The Committee received a report on the initiation of a procurement process for mortuary provision, including body storage and post-mortem facilities, in the north of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough coronial jurisdiction. The current contract with North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust (NWAFT) was due to expire on 31 March 2023, and it was estimated that the new three-year contract would cost approximately £900k.

While discussing the report, members:

- Established that aside from the two current providers of mortuary services (Cambridge University Hospital in the south and NWAFT in the north), some cases involving children were taken to Great Ormond Street Hospital in London or Leicester Royal Infirmary.
- Noted the importance in some cultures and communities for the coronial process to be carried out swiftly, and queried whether the service was able to accommodate such requests. It was emphasised that the service worked hard to resolve all such cases as quickly as possible, regardless of the time or day when they were received, although it was acknowledged that the resolution of more complex cases was often subject to the availability of expert specialists.
- Clarified that post-mortem examinations were always carried out within three working days of permission to proceed having been received from the Coroner or the Coroner Service, subject to the availability of pathologists in the relevant hospital.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the procurement exercise for mortuary provision, as set out in section 2.1 of the report; and
- b) Delegate responsibility for awarding the contract to the Executive Director for Place and Sustainability, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

86. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Coroner Service Annual Report

The Committee received an annual report on the Coroner Service, which included updates on overcoming staffing issues and establishing suitable facilities and venues. Information was provided on how partnerships with other organisations had been developed and expanded, while an increased use of technology had led to expert specialists increasingly attending inquests remotely, although most family members continued to attend in person. A significant proportion of the delays in inquests was due to the complexity and the need to await specialist reports, while the service had focused on resolving complex cases that had been ongoing for over twelve months. The underlying objective related to staffing and process for the service was minimising the length of inquests and resulting waiting time for families and relatives.

While discussing the report, members:

- Clarified that the additional complexity faced by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough compared to most other jurisdictions, due to the area having four main hospitals and three prisons, did not result in additional financial resources being provided from the NHS or the government. Members were informed that the Association of County Chief Executives had raised concerns to the Chief Coroner about the national funding of coronial services, questioning whether more complex jurisdictions should receive additional funding to reduce the financial burden on local authorities.
- Sought clarification on whether bereaved families received financial support for travelling to inquests. It was confirmed that although direct support for travel costs was not provided, the service liaised with family members to try and ensure that inquests were held at the most convenient venue for them to attend, and it was also noted that the option of remote attendance increased the level of accessibility.
- Established that officers from the Coroner Service provided dedicated pastoral support for each inquest, which included regular contact and updates, particularly for families who did not have legal representation providing such support. The Coroners Courts Support Service also provided pastoral care alongside advice on the coronial process.
- Noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had exacerbated a backlog of cases and requested further information on the extent of the backlog, querying when the

service envisioned it would be overcome. Members were informed that there was currently a backlog of approximately 297 cases, although it was not possible to provide a date for overcoming the backlog due to its continuous fluctuation. A balance was required between focusing on less complex cases to reduce the overall number and focusing on the more complex cases to resolve the longer-running cases. The service was working to identify which interventions were the most effective, through an improved method of monitoring performance, in order to ensure resources were focused in the right area.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the report.

87. Business Planning Proposals for 2023-28: Opening Update and Overview

The Committee received a report which outlined the process of setting the Council's business plan and financial strategy for 2023-2028, and which included initial estimates for demand, inflation and other pressures, as well as an overview and estimate for the updated capital programme. The specific pressures, risks, and proposals for savings relating to services within the remit of the Committee were detailed in section 4 of the report. In relation to the £563,406 shortfall for staffing costs in the Think Communities team, as set out in paragraph 4.5 of the report, Members were informed that the indicative funding gap had since been reduced to £230k through a proposed closer integration of the Think Communities and Youth in Communities teams. Alternative funding streams had also been identified to ensure the continuation of the Business Intellectual Property Centres.

While discussing the report, members:

- Suggested that decentralisation would lead to savings and other benefits through an increase in partnership work in a place-based approach, with one member expressing concern that the decentralisation process had not progressed significantly, and arguing that that the Think Communities team had been specifically established to deliver decentralisation. Members nonetheless paid tribute to officers in the Think Communities team, acknowledging the additional workload that they had taken on over recent months, and highlighted the importance of improving the team's long-term financial sustainability. It was also noted that a report on decentralisation would be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 8th December 2022.
- Queried whether the Archives Service was experiencing any pressures or was required to make any savings. Members were informed that the service was included in the general Libraries budget, and although it had striven to increase its income, for example by expanding its partnership with genealogy companies, data was being analysed to benchmark how it performed in comparison to other archive services.
- Confirmed that the Council was committed to paying its staff fair wages.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2023 – 2028 business plan;
- b) Note the initial estimates made for demand, inflationary and other pressures; and
- c) Note the overview and estimates made for the updated capital programme.

88. Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 1 (2022/23)

The Committee received a report providing an update on the performance of services within its remit over Quarter 1 of the 2022/23 financial year. Attention was drawn to the data in Appendix 1 of the report for Key Performance Indicator 222 (percentage of business brought into compliance in all priority areas following inspection/intervention), and it was clarified that the figure for Quarter 1 should have stated 55%, rather than 100%.

While discussing the report, it was agreed to establish whether members could be provided with data on specific libraries, rather than the service as a whole. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note and comment on the report.

89. Community, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Agenda Plan

The Committee noted its agenda plan.

Chair
8th December 2022