

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: Thursday 10th March 2022

Time: 2:00pm – 5:25pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Tom Sanderson (Chair), Hilary Cox Condron (Vice-Chair), Steve Count, Claire Daunton, Douglas Dew, Jan French, Ian Gardener, Bryony Goodliffe, Mark Goldsack, John Gowing, Ros Hathorn, Simon King, Lucy Nethsingha, Philippa Slatter, and Susan van de Ven

44. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Henry Batchelor (substituted by Councillor Susan van de Ven), Ken Billington (substituted by Councillor Mark Goldsack), Adela Costello (substituted by Councillor John Gowing), Steve Criswell (substituted by Councillor Simon King), Dan Schumann (substituted by Councillor Ian Gardener), Keith Prentice (substituted by Councillor Steve Count), and Firouz Thompson (substituted by Councillor Claire Daunton).

There were no declarations of interest.

45. Minutes – 2 December 2021 and Action Log

While discussing the second paragraph of item 41 on the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2021, it was observed that the Council had not committed to a further round of funding for the Communities Capital Fund (CCF), although it was clarified that at the time of that Committee meeting, it had still been under consideration. Some Members expressed concern about the transparency of this decision, with the Committee only receiving a briefing shortly before the meeting on 10th March 2022. It was observed that previous reports on the forthcoming budget had mentioned approximately £900k of the original CCF's £5m budget that remained unspent although it had been allocated, rather than any new funding, and Members were reminded that applications could be submitted for capital projects to the Council's Just Transition Fund. It was requested that the Committee be provided with a briefing note on the criteria for the Just Transition Fund and how to apply, as well as further explanation of the reasoning behind not continuing with the CCF in 2022/23, and for consideration to be given to providing the Committee with a report on how successful the CCF had been. **Action required**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Committee's minutes action log was noted.

46. Petitions and Public Questions

The Chair informed the Committee that no petitions or public questions had been received.

47. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Coroner Service Mortuary Facilities

The Committee received a report related to the approval of contracts for the provision of mortuary facilities to the coroner service in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Two separate contracts were required with the North West Anglia NHS Trust (NWAFT) and Cambridge University Hospital (CUH), as neither were able to provide complete coverage for the whole County. The proposed contract with NWAFT would run from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2023, with section 2.4 of the report detailing the causes for the retrospective nature of the contract's approval. The proposed contract with CUH would run from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2025, and the Assistant Director for Regulatory Services suggested to Members that the responsibility for awarding this contract could be delegated to the Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, rather than the Executive Director for People and Communities.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Noted that section 2.3 of the report stated that the costs of the contract were in line with what other local authorities would pay, which appeared to differ from previous information that Members had received about the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough coroner service generally having a higher workload than other areas. Acknowledging that the service continued to carry out a higher number of inquests, mainly due to the specialised nature of the area's hospitals, as well as the high number of prisons located within the County, the Assistant Director clarified that the costs were not more expensive on a case-by-case basis, although he confirmed that the overall size of the proposed contracts were larger than other areas.
- Expressed concern that the report did not include any evidence to support the statement that the costs of the contract were in line with other local authorities. The Assistant Director noted that there were no alternative providers in the area.
- Sought clarification on how the standard NHS contract with NWAFT had been developed into one that was more advantageous to the Council, as mentioned in section 2.4.4 of the report. The Assistant Director clarified that although local authorities and NHS trusts had their own standard formats for contracts, the content of the contracts had scope for variation. The significant impacts of the pandemic on the length and cost of coronial examinations and investigations, for example, had demonstrated the potential for escalation in the contracts, and these had been taken into consideration to avoid escalations in fees in the future.
- Expressed concern that approval of the contract with NWAFT was being sought almost four years after the contract had commenced, and sought confirmation that the entire amount of the contract had been included in the Council's budget. Noting that the coroner service had only been in the remit of the Communities and Partnership Committee, and subsequently the Communities, Social Mobility and

Inclusion Committee, since 2019, the Assistant Director acknowledged the concerns and informed the Committee that work had already commenced on preparations for the contract with NWAFT that would commence in April 2023, in order to avoid a repeat of the situation. He also confirmed that the contractual values had been included in the Council's budget, and that while there had not been any uplift in the contracts' values over recent years when an inflationary factor was applied, the robust budgetary planning process in place would also avoid any future shortfalls.

- Confirmed that although there had been a period of disagreement between the Council and NWAFT, during which time payment had not been made for the provision of the service, both parties were now in agreement.
- Established that the contract with CUH would run until 31st March 2025, and agreed to delegate the responsibility for awarding the contract to the Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, rather than the Executive Director for People and Communities.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the contract between Cambridgeshire County Council (the Commissioner on behalf of HM Coroner) and North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust (the Provider) which covers the provision of mortuary facilities during the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2023; and
- b) Delegate responsibility for awarding the contract between Cambridgeshire County Council (the Commissioner on behalf of HM Coroner) and Cambridge University Hospital (Addenbrookes Hospital) which covers the provision of mortuary facilities from 1st April 2022 to the Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

48. Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation

The Committee received a report on the commissioning of services for victims of domestic abuse, including refuge accommodation, a domestic abuse mobile outreach service, and dispersed safe accommodation. These services were three elements of the Council's Safe Accommodation Strategy that was approved by the Committee in July 2021. The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Partnership Manager informed the Committee that a waiver to notify the proposed provider of refuge accommodation of intent to award had been granted, following the completion of a procurement process that concluded with only one compliant bid for each lot of the tender, and to ensure the continued provision of the service once the current contract ended.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Sought clarification on how a consistent mobile outreach offer across the County would align with the Council's Think Communities approach which focussed on local needs. Acknowledging that there were differences in how the service would need to

be provided and accessed across the County, the DASV Partnership Manager informed the Committee that, in order to shape the service appropriately, victims and survivors of domestic abuse had been consulted on how they felt the service should be provided. She also noted that the tender process allowed for small providers to work together under one lead provider, in order to ensure consistency across the County, and that the chosen provider would work with local services to offer the widest range of support as possible.

- Established that the funding received from the Government to support the Council fulfilling its statutory duty to provide safe accommodation had only been confirmed as ongoing, rather than under a specific timeframe. Noting that the service was accustomed to such uncertainty over future funding, the DASV Partnership Manager informed Members that break clauses would be included in the contracts where necessary.
- Observed that refuge accommodation was largely intended for people fleeing from situations outside of the County, and sought clarification on whether there were reciprocal arrangements for the provision of safe accommodation for Cambridgeshire residents in neighbouring areas. The DASV Partnership Manager confirmed that most Cambridgeshire residents would use services outside the area.
- Established that all the services, apart from refuge accommodation, were available to members of any sex and were not gender dependent. While acknowledging the importance of ensuring safe spaces for women, it was noted that Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) worked with all victims, regardless of their gender. The DSVAs informed Members that the Council had recently recruited its first IDVA for specifically working with males.
- Confirmed that staff in the Library service had received training to support victims of domestic abuse and that posters were displayed in the libraries around the County to provide information on available support. Noting that the Council's website provided information on available support and links to other agencies' websites, the DASV Partnership Manager informed Members there were over 300 domestic abuse champions around the County, and that the national helpline was able to signpost any callers to the local services. She undertook to supply posters to any library in the County that lacked such material. **Action required**
- Requested a briefing note providing further information on how the mobile outreach service would operate. Noting that details of the operation of the service would be established by the selected provider, the DVSA Partnership Manager informed Members that it would include telephone, virtual and in-person support through collaboration with local providers, and she undertook to provide Members with a briefing note, as well as a template email that Members could send in response to residents' queries about available support. **Action required**
- Expressed concern that a waiver had been required as part of the procurement process.
- Clarified that the £1,140,318 funding received from the Government could be ringfenced by the Council, despite it being provided as a non-ringfenced grant.

The following additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Count and agreed unanimously:

- d) Request that the Strategy and Resources Committee ringfences the money identified in Section 1.2 of the report.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the contract for the provision of refuge accommodation, as set out in section 2.1 of the report;
- b) Approve the procurement exercise for a domestic abuse outreach service and delegate responsibility for awarding the contract to the Executive Director: People and Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee; and
- c) Approve the procurement exercise for dispersed safe accommodation and delegate responsibility for awarding the contract to the Executive Director: People and Communities, in consultation with the Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.
- d) Request that the Strategy and Resources Committee ringfences the money identified in Section 1.2 of the report.

49. CUSPE Policy Challenges Research – How Can We Best Align Partners and Community Assets to Ensure Whole Communities Can Access Opportunities to Enhance Social Mobility?

The Committee received a report from the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange (CUSPE), which suggested ways in which the Council could best align its partners and community assets to ensure whole communities could access opportunities to enhance social mobility. Having established a definition of social mobility, the researchers identified an increase in social, cultural and economic capital as being the underlying requirement for enhancing one's class position. Initially they had considered a digital platform to support this objective, however the response from interviews carried out during their research had been sceptical of such a solution. Several priorities emerged during the process, including awareness of opportunities, relationship building and volunteer management, which were largely centred around improving communication between different organisations. Attention was drawn to the six recommendations that were concluded from the research, as set out in section 7 of Appendix 1 of the report:

- (1) Enrich the Cambridgeshire County Council website's current online directory;
- (2) Create a database of ready-to-go volunteers;
- (3) Provide opportunities for mediation for community groups and share evidence of the positive impact of collaboration;

- (4) Invest in community hubs with affordable premises for hire;
- (5) Consult with community groups on the utility of a digital platform enabling networking between groups close in function and/or proximity; and
- (6) Model information flow and reach.

While discussing the CUSPE research and the researchers' recommendations, Members:

- Welcomed the research carried out by the CUSPE research team and the report that had been produced, noting the value in receiving external analysis and perspectives of how the Council worked.
- Queried whether the researchers were aware of any other local authorities having created a database of ready-to-go volunteers, as suggested in their second recommendation. While such databases had been created elsewhere, the researchers acknowledged that those examples had been of a less diverse nature than the proposed database, and therefore further investigation and work would be required. It was noted that the Trumpington Youth Partnership was developing a similar database, specific to its needs, which would also include a database of ready-to-go community assets.
- Drew attention to the Do IT national database for volunteers and its benefits for connecting the voluntary and community sector together. Noting that they had investigated various national databases and how they were managed, the researchers highlighted the burden of managing the databases, as well as the varying quality of volunteers on the databases, as significant issues. The proposed database would be an improvement by including a pool of volunteers that had already gone through any necessary processes of vetting or training on a local basis. It was suggested that although the Council would not necessarily need to manage such a database, it could support the development and implementation due to its central role in the community.
- Suggested that a centralised management of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) would be a welcome benefit of a database of ready-to-go volunteers, and queried how such a system would be able to deal with the different needs of agencies, such as short-term shift cover and long-term job requirements.
- Expressed concern that some people would be unable to benefit from a digital solution due to digital poverty, although it was acknowledged that the researchers had emphasised the importance of ensuring that a hybrid approach offered the opportunity for a physical alternative to those were unable to access a digital platform.
- Acknowledged the Council's important role as a partner that could link different agencies together.

- Highlighted libraries as community hubs that provided digital access to their local areas.
- Argued that the most effective way to put the findings of the research into practice was through the Council's decentralisation agenda, as it focussed on the needs of residents on a local basis.
- Expressed concern that recommendation (c) appeared to effectively delegate to officers the decision on which of the CUSPE recommendations should be taken forward, rather than involving the Committee in such a decision. It was agreed that a further report would be presented to the Committee once officers had considered the recommendations that had emerged from the CUSPE research. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the research undertaken by CUSPE aligning partners and community assets to ensure whole communities can access opportunities to enhance social mobility;
- b) Consider the recommendations made by CUSPE, as set out in Section 7 of the CUSPE report; and
- c) Task officers to consider which of the CUSPE recommendations, if supported by the Committee, can and should be driven forward and delivered, either by the Council or in collaboration with its partners.

50. Decentralisation

The Committee received a report detailing the overarching purpose, principles and outcomes of the Council's decentralisation agenda. Emphasising that the report focussed on the underlying intended outcomes in order to establish a platform to work from, rather than identifying the actual mechanisms for achieving them, the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships highlighted the importance of maintaining and building on the relationships that had developed significantly with partner local authorities and organisations over recent years. In recognition of the need for decentralisation to be embraced across the whole Council, it was proposed that the Strategy and Resources Committee also participate in the development of the agenda, by considering the implications and opportunities that decentralisation would bring across the Council's work, and how it connected with other strategic priorities.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Expressed frustration that the report did not provide further detail on the mechanisms for achieving decentralisation or how the Council would work with district, city and parish councils, and suggested that a further report be presented to the Committee to consider such matters. Acknowledging that the report focused on the theoretical principles underlying decentralisation, the Service Director informed Members that a round of formal discussions had been held with district and city

councils, along with more operational discussions, although he acknowledged that Members of those councils also needed to be involved.

- Emphasised the need to involve parish councils more in the development of the decentralisation process.
- Argued that decentralisation was effectively already underway through the Think Communities approach, while initiatives such as the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, Food Poverty Alliance, and projects within the Library service, were expanding local networks, as well as social and cultural links.
- Acknowledged the complexity of decentralisation and the need for all the Council's committees and services to be unified in their approach, and it was noted that the new Chief Executive supported the agenda.
- Observed that the Covid-19 pandemic had brought local authorities, as well as community and voluntary organisations, closer to communities, but argued that it had also developed a greater resilience within communities themselves to support each other. Their empowerment and provision of tools, including financial resources, was a fundamental aspect of decentralisation.
- Expressed concern about the Strategy and Resources Committee becoming involved in decentralisation before more concrete proposals on mechanisms and a clearer strategy had been developed, and argued that it was within the remit of the Communities, Social Mobility Committee to undertake such work. The Service Director observed that it had currently only been discussed by the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, and given the need for agreement and support from other Committees and directorates, it was important to widen the conversation to include more Members and officers.
- Considered whether the Committee should support the strengthening of local communities by requesting at least a further £5m to be allocated to the CCF. Noting that the Committee had already made such a request at its meeting in July 2021, some Members argued that such a matter should have been considered as part of the budget-setting process and discussion at the Strategy and Resources Committee and Full Council meetings in January and February 2022.

Councillor Count proposed an amendment to the recommendations which was rejected by the Chair as it was not submitted within the time requirements set out in the Constitution.

It was resolved by a majority using the Chair's casting vote to:

- a) Agree that the overall purpose of decentralisation is to improve Council decision making, and thereby outcomes for Cambridgeshire residents, by giving residents more opportunities to influence decisions that affect them;
- b) Agree that the work of officers across the Council being more embedded in local communities is one of the main ways for decentralisation to fulfil that overall purpose;

- c) Comment on the overall approach to aligning County Council services to local communities, as set out in this report; and
- d) Agree that Strategy and Resources Committee should next consider the implications and opportunities decentralisation will bring across the Council's work, and how it connects with other strategic priorities.

51. Anti-Poverty and Social Mobility

The Chair welcomed the new Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, who presented a report to the Committee setting out how a range of practical actions being undertaken to address inequality and the consequences of poverty could be enhanced to tackle the embedded issues of social immobility as the root causes of such poverty and inequality. Attention was drawn to Figure 1 in the report, which demonstrated that while much of the Committee's work was focussed on anti-poverty, it was necessary to consider this as part of the broader social mobility agenda. Noting that this would be done through Community Wealth Building, the Interim Service Director emphasised that such work would cut across committee boundaries and organisational delivery structures, and would therefore require coordinated action, with a roadmap for this action set out in section 2.5 of the report.

The report also provided an update on the work of the Household Support Fund (HSF), and it was noted that the anticipated fluctuations and variations of expenditure made it difficult to manage the balance between overspending and underspending the available resources, with restrictions implemented in February to ensure the support could continue until the end of March 2022. The Council had approved an allocation of £1m for an HSF wider scheme, alongside an investment of £3.6m to fund the direct award voucher scheme throughout 2022/23, in the event that government funding was discontinued, and Members were informed that work had commenced with partners to establish what such support could look like, as indicated in section 2.16.12 of the report. The Interim Service Director highlighted concerns that had been raised during this work that the HSF currently worked only as a means for alleviating crisis rather than tackling root causes.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Expressed concern about the potential impacts that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine could have on fuel poverty and other areas. Acknowledging that impacts were already becoming evident, the Interim Service Director noted that the increase of the energy price cap on 1st April 2022 was also likely to have negative impacts, and informed Members that residents would be supported by linking them with providers so that they were aware of possible services and approaches that were available, although he acknowledged that simply signposting people was not necessarily the most helpful way to support people in crisis.
- Considered whether it was appropriate for the Strategy and Resources Committee to work with the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee on

developing a social mobility and community wealth building strategy, given that the responsibility lay with the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

- Acknowledged that the Council had allocated an additional £1m for the HSF, but expressed concern that there would not be sufficient financial resources to provide the level of support that was currently being considered, and it was suggested that the Strategy and Resources Committee could be requested to provide additional funding. Some Members also expressed concern about the recommendation to delegate approval of the final design of the new Household Support Fund wider scheme to officers, rather than the Committee making such an approval.
- Highlighted the important role that volunteers could play in providing support in areas of expertise that were beyond the capabilities of the Council.
- Expressed concern that there may not be sufficient funding available for the Council to continue to provide support to the end of March 2022, noting that the strain on resources could potentially be exacerbated if refugees arrived from the conflict in Ukraine. It was noted that the funding to the end of March 2022 was received from the Government and Members highlighted that the high demand reflected the need for such support. The Interim Service Director also acknowledged that the deadline to implement the new scheme by 1st April was also challenging, although he confirmed that the Council would be prepared to deal with a delay if necessary, with some elements of the new approach not needing to be in place immediately.
- Paid tribute to officers for managing the HSF under tight time constraints.
- Observed that the Council had learned of some residents needing support through HSF that had not previously been known for requiring such support, and queried how long this data could be held for, and whether the Council could proactively offer further perpendicular support. The Interim Service Director informed Members that due to the scheme being set up under tight time constraints, data retention measures had not been taken into consideration, and so the Council was unable to approach individuals with further offers of support from itself or partners due to strict regulations. However, as part of the ongoing evaluation and consultation with receivers of support, consent would be sought for this, and he confirmed that the new scheme would incorporate such measures. It was noted that such new relationships were built on trust and Members welcomed that the Council had been able to provide support to a wider range of residents.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the key themes discussed in the report;
- b) Endorse the proposals to take forward a whole Council approach to social mobility, anti-poverty, and Community Wealth Building;
- c) Recommend to Strategy and Resources Committee a joint workstream to take forward the roadmap described in Section 2.5 of this report to take forward social mobility and community wealth building as organisational priorities, with this approach supported and mirrored by officers;

- d) Comment on the options set out in section 2.6.12 of this report, to amend the way the current Household Support Fund wider scheme operates, and to identify further ways of achieving maximum value for money and impact; and
- e) Delegate the approval of the final design of the new Household Support Fund wider scheme to the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, in order that the scheme can launch from April 2022.

52. Finance Monitoring Report – January 2022

The Committee received the Finance Monitoring Report for People and Communities, as well as Public Health, covering the period to the end of January 2022. The Communities and Partnerships directorate continued to have a forecast overspend, although this had reduced to £428k since the previous meeting. Noting that the main causes of the overspend were reduced levels of income through the Library service and additional costs for the Coroners service, both as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships informed Members that the 2022/2023 budget had accounted accordingly for these issues in order to remove the pressure on the directorate.

While discussing the report, Members requested a briefing note on how the two recorded overspends were being addressed. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Review and comment on the report.

53. Communities Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Agenda Plan

Members paid tribute to the work led by the Service Director of Communities and Partnerships and thanked him for the support he had provided to the Communities and Partnership Committee, as well as the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee since they had been formed.

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Costello to the Cross Part Working Group for Library Services, and for the Spokes to consider nominations for the two new focus groups being set up for the Registration service. **Action required**

Confirming that the next meeting on 14th April would include an additional item on the Council's response to the situation in Ukraine, and would be followed by a Committee workshop on performance management, the Committee noted its agenda plan.

Chair
14th April 2022