

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: 21 March 2024

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 4:35 p.m.

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Tom Sanderson (Chair), Alex Bulat (Vice-Chair), David Ambrose Smith, Henry Batchelor, Ken Billington, Adela Costello, Steve Criswell, Claire Daunton, Ian Gardener, Bryony Goodliffe, Ros Hathorn, Lucy Nethsingha, Geoff Seeff and Philippa Slatter

155. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Costello declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5 (Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations), as the Chair of Ramsey Community Centre Trust, and confirmed that she would leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

156. Minutes – 11 January 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Committee noted the Minutes Action Log.

157. Petitions and Public Questions

It was noted that one public question had been received in relation to Agenda Item 5 (Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations), and that no petitions had been received.

158. Anti-poverty Commissioned Contracts and Budget Allocation 2024/25

The Committee received a report which included proposals to fund support to Cambridgeshire residents experiencing financial hardship from the £2.2m committed in the Council's budget for 2024/2025. It also provided information on a grant of £400,000 that had been made to the Citizens Advice Bureau to continue delivering income maximisation across the county.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the proposals for additional funding and highlighted the importance of continuity of financial support during the cost-of-living crisis, noting the extension of the Household Support Fund.
- Clarified that full procurement processes had previously been carried out for the organisations currently carrying out work, and it was noted that district and city councils had supported the proposals for the provision of additional funding.
- Requested further information on the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme's network of champions, including who they were and whether they were financially recompensed. **Action required**
- Requested a breakdown of how the £400k that had been allocated to the Citizens Advice Bureau would be spent. **Action required**
- Queried how the remainder of the £2.2m that had been allocated would be spent, and how the Council's broader anti-poverty strategy was being developed. Members were informed that a shared approach and anti-poverty strategy would be developed with partners, including district and city councils, which would also be informed by how people experienced poverty and the impacts that it had.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve proposals to provide an additional £150,000 to Cambridge Housing Society for the delivery of the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme for the period April 2024 to March 2025; and
- b) Note the decision to issue a grant of £400,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver income maximisation across Cambridgeshire for the period April 2024 to March 2025.

159. Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations

The Committee received a report which provided the outcomes of the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund Assessment Panel's meeting on 5 February 2024. Of the 93 applications that had been received, 15 had scored over the required 80 points and had subsequently been recommended for funding. Following publication of the report, an addendum had been published which detailed a further 11 applications that had scored over 75 points, and which had been recommended for funding if the committee agreed to reduce the minimum score to 75.

Mr John McKee, a trustee of the Gamlingay Eco Hub, was invited to present his question to the committee. Noting the work of the Eco Hub in supporting the local community, Mr McKee informed Members that it had submitted an application for funding for a battery supply for solar panels to help mitigate recent increases to the cost

of electricity. He expressed concern that the Council had not provided an explanation for why the bid had not been successful and noted that even if funding was approved for all the recommended projects, there would still be £47,231 available for allocation. Acknowledging the disappointment of all the unsuccessful applicants, the Head of Communities emphasised that although the Council had sought to manage expectations, the fund had been heavily oversubscribed with applications and only the highest scoring bids could be recommended for funding after the comprehensive scoring process. Due to the number of applications and the multiple levels of input from officers across the Council, it was not possible to provide detailed feedback to the unsuccessful bids.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the level of interest in the fund and paid tribute to the range and value of the projects to local communities. Members also supported the proposal to reduce the minimum score and therefore enable additional projects to be funded.
- Acknowledged the significant level of work required in preparing and submitting an application and suggested that feedback could be provided to unsuccessful applicants, noting that it could be confusing when similar bids had been successful. Members also paid tribute to the work of officers in assessing and supporting the applications that had been submitted.
- Noted that most of the applicants had applied for the maximum level of funding and expressed concern that this therefore may not be indicative of the true costs of some of the projects. It was clarified that all applicants were required to provide three written quotes for the work they sought funding for, and that value for money, viability, level of match funding, and previous accounts were all assessed by the Council's Finance team, representing 20% of the overall scoring. There were terms and conditions for all applications, and they had been advised to include an element of contingency funding. Members were informed that funds would not be released until milestone documents had been provided, while standardised grant agreements for the projects sat alongside individual specific agreements.
- Suggested that in the future it would be helpful for reports to include information on the amount of match funding each project had obtained, and an indication of the proportion of overall costs that the funding request would represent.
- Queried whether lessons had been learned and whether any similar such fund in the future would be operated differently. It was suggested that a shorter time period could have been implemented for the submission of Expressions of Interest, although it was emphasised that the two-stage process, while cumbersome, had been successful in filtering out ineligible projects and ensuring such potential applicants did not waste time or effort in developing full applications. It was also suggested that further work could have been done on managing expectations.

The following amendment was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair, and agreed unanimously (additions in bold, removals in strikethrough):

- ~~b) Delegate the responsibility to allocate any remaining funds to applications scoring 75 and above to the Executive Director for Strategy and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.~~
- b) Agree to reduce the minimum score to 75 for applications to be recommended for funding; and**
- c) Agree to fund the following eleven applications to the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund:**
 - (i) Cottenham Community Centre**
 - (ii) Dry Drayton CE Primary School**
 - (iii) Eaton Socon Cricket Club**
 - (iv) Loves Farm Community Centre CIO**
 - (v) Offord Village Hall**
 - (vi) St Barnabas Church**
 - (vii) St Neots Town Council**
 - (viii) Teversham Parish Council**
 - (ix) Upwood and The Raveleys Village Hall**
 - (x) Wilbrahams Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground Trustees**
 - (xi) Wisbech Community Development Trust**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree to fund the following fifteen applications to the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund:
 - (i) Abbey People CIO
 - (ii) Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth Parish Council
 - (iii) Bury Parish Council
 - (iv) Glatton Village Hall
 - (v) Little Thetford Village Hall
 - (vi) Olive Academies
 - (vii) Orchard Park Community Primary School
 - (viii) Orwell Parish Council
 - (ix) People and Animals CIC
 - (x) Somersham Parish Council
 - (xi) The Commemoration Hall Charity
 - (xii) The Ferry Project
 - (xiii) The Ramsey Community Centre Trust
 - (xiv) Warboys Parish Council
 - (xv) Wysing Arts Centre
- b) Agree to reduce the minimum score to 75 for applications to be recommended for funding; and

c) Agree to fund the following eleven applications to the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund:

- (xii) Cottenham Community Centre
- (xiii) Dry Drayton CE Primary School
- (xiv) Eaton Socon Cricket Club
- (xv) Loves Farm Community Centre CIO
- (xvi) Offord Village Hall
- (xvii) St Barnabas Church
- (xviii) St Neots Town Council
- (xix) Teversham Parish Council
- (xx) Upwood and The Raveleys Village Hall
- (xxi) Wilbrahams Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground Trustees
- (xxii) Wisbech Community Development Trust

160. High Intensity Users Funding Agreement with The Integrated Care Board

The Committee received a report on the Council being selected by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to host the High Intensity Users (HIU) Operational Team, which would seek to address the impact of residents who frequently presented at hospital accident and emergency departments, and whose needs were often complex, but not necessarily medical, needs. The report sought approval to enter into a Section 256 Agreement with the ICB to receive funding to host the team, and for the agreement to be signed under seal.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Clarified that the project would involve a new team and that staff would be sought either internally through secondment or externally on a fixed-term basis, due to the pilot lasting 18 months. Members were informed that there had already been a significant level of interest from potential applicants, and that the ICB would be evaluating the new model's effectiveness to identify a suitable long-term approach.
- Requested further information on the partnership arrangements and responsibility for risks. It was suggested that the NHS could not deal with the issue of high intensity use on its own, and that involving a wider group of partner organisations would be more effective. Members were informed that while the Council would host the team and carry out delivery, it would do so under the framework and reporting process established by the NHS, and oversight of the workstream would be carried out by the wider partnership of organisations.
- Highlighted the importance of oversight of data-sharing when dealing with partners, and it was noted that an information sharing agreement was being developed for all the organisations that were involved.
- Acknowledged the achievement of winning a competitive process and suggested that the Council should publicise the award.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Authorise the Council to enter into a Section 256 Agreement with the Integrated Care Board for receipt of funding to host the High Intensity Users Operational Team; and
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, to sign the agreement under seal.

161. Closer to Communities - Interim Update

The Committee received an update report on the seventeen decentralisation projects across the county that formed the Closer to Communities workstream, and an outline of their early findings. More detailed updates were also provided to the committee on individual projects related to child and family centres, highways, and adult education.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the development of the pilot projects and queried whether any of them had identified situations where a decentralised approach was either unsuccessful or less successful than expected. Members were informed that targeted support was most successful when the team knew the place well, when data was already available, partnerships were strong, and people could come together quite quickly to mobilise the response and put something in place. It had been more difficult when this was not the case, and also when projects involved devolved budgets. However, learning had been taken from these cases to improve such situations in the future.
- Highlighted the importance of communicating with Members and ensuring they were kept informed on projects in their divisions. Members were informed that guidance for keeping local Members informed was being developed, while a Closer to Communities workshop was also being organised for all Members.
- Noted that some of the projects involved work that was already being undertaken by other teams and committees of the Council, as well as other organisations, and expressed concern that this represented duplication. While it was acknowledged that there was already ongoing work on some of the themes, it was clarified that Closer to Communities sought to connect across these different bodies and specifically bring the work closer to communities. The purpose of the pilots was to draw conclusions on a strategic level that could then be implemented across wider Council services.
- Clarified that the Integrated Neighbourhood pilot was taking place in Cambridge, although it was noted that while some of the projects were mentioned in relation to specific districts, the work was not necessarily restricted to those districts.
- Clarified that although a formal meeting of the Cambridge Joint Area Committee had not yet been held, related business had continued to take place. Attention was

drawn to the importance of keeping local Members and the public informed on how any processes were being changed.

- Requested information on whether the street lighting project could help align suppliers with the needs of communities and parish councils, including those with unadopted roads. It was also agreed to investigate whether streetlights could be powered by animal waste. **Actions required**
- Clarified that the street lighting project involved established communities as well as new ones. It was emphasised that issues could be raised with Local Highway Officers, while dedicated street lighting resources were available to support them. Members emphasised that supporting local communities with such issues did not necessarily involve a financial cost to the Council.
- Highlighted the need to better connect rural communities to improve access to services, and members were assured that the Council and other bodies acknowledged such a need and were always working to make improvements.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the contents of the report.

162. Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-2027

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of work delivered under the current Safe Accommodation Strategy, covering the period 2021-2024, and which provided details of new areas for inclusion or removal in the refreshed strategy covering the period 2024-2027.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Emphasised the importance of providing support to the children of victims of domestic abuse, noting that the report stated 99 children in Cambridgeshire had been able to access trauma informed counselling and therapeutic support, and clarification was sought on the percentage of overall children of victims of domestic abuse that this figure represented. **Action required**
- Queried whether the varying priorities for housing allocation of different local authorities impacted the ability of victims of domestic abuse to access social tenancies in other areas as part of the managed reciprocal programme. While it was acknowledged that local authorities were able to set their own priorities for housing allocation, and that reciprocal arrangements were not a statutory requirement, it was highlighted that the majority of local authorities and housing associations with stock in the region sought to ensure properties were available for the reciprocal scheme. The system allowed people to move from one social tenancy to another in a process that tried to avoid the need for temporary accommodation, and which sought to reduce barriers and causes of stress or difficulty for vulnerable people.

- Clarified that the Safe Accommodation Strategy ensured that support was available to male victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, along with all victims, regardless of their gender, age, or any other characteristic. It was acknowledged that there were a limited number of male refuges across the country, which was one of the reasons for providing disbursed safe accommodation, to ensure that all victims could access such support.
- Requested further information on the first language support that was available and suggested that the Council could work with other organisations that already had such provisions in place. It was clarified that there were two Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) that offered first language support to Lithuanian and Polish communities, along with a few other languages, and it was confirmed that the Council, as well as IDVAs, sought to collaborate with domestic abuse services that offered specific first language support whenever it was possible.
- Noted that the Council had agreed to treat care experience as a protected characteristic and highlighted the importance of acknowledging this in Equality Impact Assessments. Members were informed that young person IDVAs worked closely with looked after children.
- Drew attention to the need for security and protection for victims when in safe accommodation and sought clarification on the involvement of the police. Members were informed that all refuges had a direct link to the local police force, along with strict health and safety rules and protocols. Although security and safety were the responsibility of each individual refuge, the Council provided financial support and the police maintained a strong relationship.
- Clarified that the strategy was funded from resources provided by the government, although joint work with other bodies and organisations also involved funding from other sources. Members were informed that while the strategy provided funding for the management costs of safe accommodation, rent was paid by housing benefits, with some organisations seeking to also support people without recourse to public funds.
- Acknowledged the vital support that safe accommodation had provided for victims and survivors across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, but expressed concern that eight units across the region could be insufficient, particularly given the existence of the reciprocal scheme, and sought clarification on the shortfall between the number of people currently in temporary accommodation and the number of dispersed accommodation units. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the Safe Accommodation Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough covering the period of April 2024 to March 2027.

163. Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 3 2023/24

The Committee received a report providing an update on the performance of services within its remit over Quarter 3 of the 2023/24 financial year.

While discussing the report, Members queried why the directions for improvement for indicator 36 (number of active library users) and indicator 37 (Number of visits made to library sites reported quarterly) were marked as up when the data indicated that performance was declining, and it was agreed to provide a briefing note. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on performance information and act, as necessary; and
- b) Approve the proposed changes to key performance indicators, as set out in section 4 of this report.

164. Finance Monitoring Report – January 2024

The Committee received the Finance Monitoring Report to the end of January 2024 for the services within its remit. The revenue budgets within the remit of the Committee were currently forecasting an outturn underspend position of -£30k, and there were no significant variances on the capital programme.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Clarified that although the table in Section 3.2 of the report appeared to show a £1.639m underspend for the directorate, the business planning process for 2024/25 had moved funding for the two projects to the Just Transition Fund.
- Requested information on how the figures presented in the table in Section 2.2 of the report were calculated. **Action required**
- Clarified that the EverySpace Library Improvement Fund was funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and that the underspend was related to work not having been completed at Cambridge Central Library.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Review and comment on the report.

165. Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Agenda Plan

While discussing the committee's agenda plan, it was noted that cross-directorate work was being carried out on accommodation for foster parents and it was suggested that, due to it involving partnership work, it could be appropriate for the committee to be

involved. Members also requested updates on the progress of projects that had received funding from the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund. **Action required**

Chair
11 July 2024