

Improving Social Mobility

To: Communities and Partnership Committee

Meeting Date: 4 March 2021

From: Service Director, Communities and Partnerships

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: This report is the first of a regular report to be provided to Committee setting out the progress being made in delivering our social mobility priorities. In so doing, we will ensure that our ambitious and wide-ranging aspirations are being achieved, with any barriers removed and opportunities identified, to improve the social mobility, including all its aspects (e.g. economic, social, health and wellbeing), for all of our residents, and levelling up our county.

Recommendation: The Communities and Partnership Committee is asked to:

- a) Note and comment on the key themes discussed in this report;
- b) Identify and consider further opportunities to level up communities across Cambridgeshire; and
- c) Agree to end the Tackling Social Mobility working group in favour of the whole Committee collectively leading this work.

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1. Background

- 1.1 In January 2021, the Committee agreed to lead a new, wide-ranging and ambitious plan to level-up communities across Cambridgeshire, primarily through the lens of tackling social immobility. This agreement builds upon the progress made by the Committee and its staff on firmly establishing the Think Communities principles across the county, and the new and innovative ways of working during the pandemic.
- 1.2 Whilst it is true that for many people the impacts of COVID-19 have led to increased inequality, reduced opportunities and more significant challenges, the focus of the Committee is to level-up *all* of our communities regardless of the circumstances that have led to inequality. For some of our communities, we recognise the more entrenched and longer term challenges that residents are facing, and it is vital therefore that our rapidly developing social mobility focus meets the needs of all our communities.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 Following the discussion at the January Committee meeting during which Members agreed the focus on tackling social immobility, an interactive workshop with Committee members and key officers was held on 18 February. This workshop was designed to achieve a shared understanding of why social mobility and the overall levelling up approach was so critical to the vibrancy of our county and to the lives of our residents, and why now was exactly the right time to drive forward at pace with this focus.
- 2.2 In many ways, we are at an important tipping point as we slowly begin to emerge from the current lockdown. There is increased optimism as a result of the successful vaccination programme, and the ways in which the county council has worked alongside partners from across the local government, public, voluntary and faith sectors, continues to yield positive results. However, what is less clear at this stage is the full economic impact of the pandemic on society, and how this plays out in communities and households across Cambridgeshire.
- 2.3 The workshop heard about some of the national work of the Social Mobility Commission, which sits at the heart of Government, and of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and also from the voices of some of the people most affected by poverty. The workshop also revisited the information about local groups that are likely to be more adversely impacted by the pandemic than others, and reviewed some high level data that shows that some level of deprivation exists in all of our district and city council areas, as it does right across the country, albeit to different degrees.
- 2.4 The workshop went on to discuss the mechanisms through which our new focus will be delivered, using the Cambridgeshire Local service model as the engine room for change. A range of features were shared and discussed, all of which have been tested over the course of the pandemic, which would need to feature as part of our core way of working.
- 2.5 We went on to discuss what practically this would all mean for our residents. One of the key principles that was made clear and was agreed was that the work we are leading on social mobility needed to be practical, local, meaningful, accessible and relevant. Although the theories supporting the drive to improve social mobility are all important and help set

direction and measure impacts, it was a highly practical offer to residents that was agreed as the most important outcome. It is intended that any one of our councillors, whichever division they represent, will be able to engage with any resident and offer practical services, support and interventions to help that resident to help themselves, where appropriate. These services, support and interventions would likely be in the form of a hyper-local menu of options and opportunities, bent towards the profile of the community, and, where gaps begin to emerge, these would be filled through services themselves adapting or through additional commissioned or partnership-led activity to meet those needs.

- 2.6 Alongside this menu of options, we discussed the ways in which the needs of our residents should be viewed and resolved, with an absolute commitment to move away from the traditional siloed service-by-service or agency-by-agency approach to one which is about the whole individual or family. There is much evidence to support this style of approach, most notably the Counting Every Adult programme and the Troubled Families programmes. We also agreed that taking a whole life journey approach would be a far more meaningful way of engaging with residents than the current model that tends to be focussed on services working with or supporting residents based on specific periods of their lives.
- 2.7 To bring these concepts to life – including both the range of service and support that would need to feature on the menu, and the whole-person or whole-family approach – we discussed a series of personas that the team are developing. These personas are based on real lives and are drawn from a range of contacts and experiences the team are aware of. They set out a brief description of the challenges each person or family is facing, and the current ways in which they are able to access help and support and/or take opportunities. They go on to describe what a Cambridgeshire Local approach will look and feel like, all of which has been tested and in most cases implemented during the pandemic response work to date.
- 2.8 A range of other personas, representing a diverse range of residents and circumstances, are being developed and will form the basis for the Cambridgeshire Local events and broader activity over the coming weeks. They will also be used to assemble the menu of options, at pace, beginning with the services and opportunities directly available to the Committee to influence and shape but rapidly expanding to incorporate other council as well as partnership services.
- 2.9 The presentation used to form the basis of the interactive workshop is attached at Appendix 1, including one of the personas discussed during the session.
- 2.10 Work has already begun to mobilise the practical actions that have been agreed, and the Committee will be kept closely informed and involved as this vital work progresses. Additional staff resources, funded using the national COVID-19 support grants, should be in situ by the time the Committee meets, which will be used to release other members of the Cambridgeshire Local staff team from intense COVID-19-specific activity to support this broader agenda. A lead officer is also being identified, who will report direct to the Service Director, to ensure pace and consistency.
- 2.11 Finally, and given the whole focus the Committee has agreed to, it is clear that the significance of this agenda requires the substantive focus of the whole Committee going forwards. This will be especially important when exploring how this agenda can support the work and priorities of our other service committees, as well as the many partnerships that

exist across our County. To ensure that all Members are involved and engaged in all discussions about this agenda, it is proposed that the existing Social Mobility working group now be disbanded, and its delivery plan be transferred into the approach now being taken. Members are asked to consider and approve this important step in ensuring our social mobility focus becomes mainstream and core business.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The Committee's focus on improving social mobility and levelling up our county will inevitably lead to a better quality of life for everyone. The whole-life approach being developed will ensure that the needs and aspirations of our residents, alongside the opportunities they have, are well considered and focus on broad quality of life outcomes.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

For citizens to be confident, healthy, safe and secure, they need to live in communities that mirror those attributes, and where there is a strong sense of local identity and cohesion. The work to improve social mobility will be systemic in nature, and will, for example, need to tackle the physical issues within neighbourhoods, ensure hyper-local opportunities for work and learning, and ensure a vibrant range of community-led community-based social opportunities exist.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

The social mobility work will focus especially on the opportunities that exist to shape the futures of our youngest residents, and the Best Start in Life programme, part of the Think Communities concept, forms a fundamental part of our delivery programme.

3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

Every opportunity will be taken to contribute towards our targets, especially as these opportunities will lead to improved outcomes for our residents. Practically, for example, where households are struggling to afford to heat their homes, schemes that support household or community-wide energy improvements will directly alleviate hardship, and schemes that support the provision of locally produced and healthy food will lead to improved health outcomes.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Any purchases to support the service directorate's work will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.3 **Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 **Equality and Diversity Implications**

The primary focus of the work described in this report is to level up communities across Cambridgeshire, helping to make them more equal.

4.5 **Engagement and Communications Implications**

There are a number of communications and engagement aspects to this report that our Communications team are aware of, and they are working closely and proactively with relevant officers where appropriate.

4.6 **Localism and Local Member Involvement**

Local Members remain at the heart of our work and at the centre of the Cambridgeshire Local principles. The work described in this report will be developed closely with local Members, as they represent our residents and will have amongst the best views about what will work and what will not work within the communities they represent.

4.7 **Public Health Implications**

This paper clearly lays out the diverse contributions that are to be made through the work of the Communities and Partnerships Service Directorate to health and wellbeing, in relation to tackling social immobility.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Gus de Silva

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes

Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes

Name of Officer: Val Thomas

5. Source documents

5.1 None