

## Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Time: 2:00pm – 3:35 pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Tom Sanderson (Chair), Hilary Cox Condron (Vice-Chair), Henry Batchelor, Adela Costello, Piers Coutts, Claire Daunton, Douglas Dew, Janet French, Ian Gardener, John Gowing, Bryony Goodliffe, Dan Schumann, Philippa Slatter, and Firouz Thompson.

### 54. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Keith Prentice (substituted by Councillor John Gowing), Ken Billington (substituted by Councillor Ian Gardener), Ros Hathorn (substituted by Councillor Claire Daunton), and Lucy Nethsingha (substituted by Councillor Piers Coutts).

There were no declarations of interest.

### 55. Minutes – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022

While discussing Minute 45 (Minutes – 2 December 2021 and Action Log) from the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022, it was noted by the Chair that the Just Transition Fund and the Communities Capital Fund (CCF) were two separate funds.

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

While discussing the Minutes Action Log, the Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships informed Members that the action related to Minute 45 (Minutes – 2 December 2021 and Action Log) had been completed since the agenda had been published. He clarified that funds for the CCF for 2021/22 had been fully allocated, but, following slippage and consequent redetermination of some red-rated projects, £40k was available for reallocation. He confirmed that a report would be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022, which would set out the process for reallocating funds from such projects and for reviewing projects that were not progressing according to plan.

The Committee noted the Minutes Action Log.

### 56. Petitions and Public Questions

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

## 57. Household Support Fund

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the Household Support Fund 2021/22 and the recommissioning of the fund for 2022/23. On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022, Full Council had approved the allocation of £1m for a Household Support Fund (HSF) wider scheme for 2022/23, and an investment of £3.6m to fund the direct award voucher scheme, should the money for these not be available from the Government. Following an announcement by the Government on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 that the HSF would be repeated, the Monitoring Officer approved a general exception to the 28 days notice rule for key decisions, on the basis of short notice from the Government and the need for the Council to be able to distribute the funds as soon as possible to provide support to Cambridgeshire residents.

Following the publication of the meeting agenda, guidance for the fund had been published by the Government and a late appendix was therefore published on the Council's website, which outlined the requirements of the fund and the expected break down of support for 2022/23. This included a condition to spend a third of the eligible fund on pensioners, and it was noted that as only 600 of the 16,000 people currently receiving support were pensioners, applying this caveat would therefore reduce the Council's capacity to meet all-age demand. The Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships suggested to Members that this could be mitigated if the Strategy and Resources Committee agreed to release funding that had been set aside by Full Council for the HSF in the event that further resources were not provided by the Government in 2022/2023.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the additional funding that had been announced by the Government, but argued that the countrywide restrictions did not necessarily align to local needs.
- Established that the HSF was a reimbursement scheme that would only run for a six-month period, and emphasised that spending would therefore need to be managed to ensure that it was neither over nor below the grant offer.
- Drew attention to the gaps in support for pensioners not making claims, and considered how to promote the fund to this sector once further details for the new fund had been released, such as through mobile libraries, the Cambridgeshire Hearing Scheme, local community groups, Age UK, QR codes, posters, community shop adverts, local media and radio. It was confirmed that the Council would publish information on these further details once the final provision on offer had been established, and services had been prepared to meet the new demand.
- Clarified that people who currently applied to the HSF would continue to receive support as per the eligibility criteria and benefits available as operated for the scheme that was running at the end of March 2022.
- Welcomed that the new local scheme would be based on a long-term approach to tackling underlying issues, and that it would be available for those requiring help

who were not eligible for other schemes. It was confirmed that there would also be an increased focus on catering for telephone applications, which were expected to increase due to the focus on pensioners.

- Clarified that schemes were publicised by, and run through, both district and county councils. It was argued that along with deprivation levels, this affected the disparity of application numbers across the County in 2021/22.
- Requested that Members be provided with promotional material on the HSF 2022/23 that could be distributed at local events in communities. **Action required**
- Suggested that trusted partners could be provided with appropriate financial resources to be able to make immediate payments for urgent applications that may arise.
- Argued that pensioners were disproportionately impacted by increases in fuel costs due to a higher probability of increased time spent in their house. It was confirmed that due to the multiplicity of energy providers, cash vouchers had been used in the previous iteration of the fund to contribute towards fuel costs.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Adopt, within the scope of any guidance issued, the approach to delivering the Household Fund in 2022/23 (as set out to Committee on March 2022 and informed by extensive co-production with partners) for the enhanced financial envelope now likely to be available to the scheme.
- b) Delegate to the Interim Director of Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, additional decisions (including procurement decisions) in relation to the fund. This is in order that they may be made at pace following the late government announcement of the intention to resource Household Support Funds in 2022/23.
- c) Bring an update on the delivery of the scheme to the next meeting of the Committee.
- d) Delegate the consideration of matters relating to and impacting on the delivery of a direct voucher scheme to the Director of Education and the Children & Young Person Committee.

## 58. Innovate and Cultivate Fund - Endorsement of Recommendations and Future Fund

The Committee received a report containing details of thirteen projects that had been recommended for approval by the Innovate and Cultivate Fund (ICF) Recommendation Panel. The report also set out recommendations that had arisen during a Member-led review of the ICF, including the retention of a single countywide Recommendation Panel, an increase to the role of Think Communities Place Coordinators and Community Connectors to improve the fund's alignment with local offers, and a

delegation for the approval of bids to the Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships to expediate the process. Finally it was proposed to change the name of the fund to Cultivate Cambs.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to the contribution of the Think Communities Area Manager to the success of the ICF during its existence, and wished her a wonderful retirement.
- Argued that keeping funding centralised, rather than devolving the fund to district councils, would ensure outcomes were demand-led, rather than place-led.
- Encouraged officers and organisers to share templates and resources which may be used in other contexts to reduce duplication of work. The Think Communities Area Manager noted that the steering group and Committee Spokes engaged in such discussion, and confirmed that the Head of Communications attended the Steering Group meetings. It was clarified that duplication of work was mitigated through the required declaration of spending costs in the application and monitoring processes, although it was acknowledged that in some circumstances district councils could fund a different aspect of the same project.
- Highlighted the role of local Members in the place-based work outlined in section 2.5.1 of the report.
- Noted that an Equalities and Diversity Impact Assessment was under development to ensure that the policies and terms of references were transparent and fair, and also that they met social and environmental needs.
- Expressed concern that delegating approval of recommended applications to the Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships could reduce awareness of the successful applicants, both for the Committee and the wider public. It was suggested that steering group meetings could instead be scheduled to align with the dates of Committee meetings, and Members therefore agreed to continue with the current process of final approval being given by the Committee.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree to fund the following 13 applications through the Cultivate funding stream:
  - i. Astrea Academy Trust
  - ii. Cambridge & District Youth for Christ
  - iii. Fusion Youth Projects CIO
  - iv. The Blue Smile Project
  - v. Deafblind UK
  - vi. Find Your Wild CIC
  - vii. March Make and Mend
  - viii. The Mordens and Litlington Mobile Warden Scheme
  - ix. Cambridge Re-Use
  - x. Cambs Community Reuse and Recycling Network Ltd

- xi. Diamond Hampers CIC
- xii. Meadows Children and Family Win
- xiii. Anglia Ruskin University

b) Endorse the following recommendations resulting from the Member led review of the fund shown at 2.5 - 2.6.

- i. Retain a single countywide Recommendation Panel and increase the role of Think Communities place-based teams in the fund process at all stages.
- ii. Change the name of the Innovate & Cultivate Fund to Cultivate Cambs.

## 59. Council Response to the War on Ukraine

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Government had delegated responsibility for the accommodation of refugees from Ukraine to upper tier authorities under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Ukraine Family Scheme, and the Committee received a report on the Council's response to the crisis, which included details of the Local Resilience Forum and Cambridgeshire Ukraine Response Group, collaboration with district councils, the Health Service, police, voluntary sector organisations and DWP, the £10.5k allocated from Government to upper tier authorities to support the Scheme, the devolution of this funding allocation to district councils, and separate school funding.

In a further oral update provided to the Committee by the Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, accompanied by a presentation that is attached at Appendix 1 of the minutes, it was estimated that the County would house 1,119 refugees (predominantly women aged 25-44 and children) through 531 sponsors, and that the majority of guests would arrive in South Cambridgeshire. However, it was clarified that this number did not include those informally registering under the Ukraine Family Scheme. There were currently 510 registered Ukrainian adults in Cambridgeshire, and the Interim Service Director encouraged individuals partaking in this scheme to notify the County Council via the Council's website, so that supporting families could easily receive the community offer and welcome pack.

It was confirmed that both hosts and refugees would be subject to a DBS check, a welfare check, a safeguarding check and an accommodation suitability check, with the final two performed by district councils. Refugees entering the country would be able to access public funding, subsistence funding, and work or study in the country for up to three years. The Interim Service Director for Communities and Partnerships noted that expected dates of arrival were often missed by refugees, and while it was difficult to identify the causes for this, he highlighted that the form required an arrival date to be included, despite many individuals being unsure as to when they would either receive their visa or enter the country.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Confirmed that the funding of £350 per month was per accommodation, rather than per person, and argued that both refugees and hosts might require emotional, peer and financial support.
- Acknowledged that language services were currently being provided through goodwill and welcomed that there had been few complaints with respect to this, and it was suggested that a funding stream could be developed to support the service.
- Noted that some individual employers had offered employment to refugees, which were being assessed by the working groups. The Interim Service Director also undertook to follow up on the County Council's own employment offer. **Action required**
- Expressed concern about reported delays to visa applications and accommodation checks, and drew attention to the hunger strike undertaken by Rend Platings in protest to such delays, although it was acknowledged that safety checks needed to be carried out thoroughly.
- Highlighted the importance of finding school places for refugees from Ukraine and elsewhere that were near to their place of accommodation.
- Observed that some Ukrainians could have missed their arrival date due to reconsidering their departure or choosing to return to their country. The Interim Service Director undertook to further consider the issue, especially with regard to ensuring a process for stopping payments should a guest choose to return to Ukraine. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note and endorse the actions set out in this paper and the verbal update given to the meeting.

## 60. Communities Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Agenda Plan

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillors Sanderson, Kindersley, Hathorn and Bulat to the Registration Service Ceremonies Focus Group and the Registration Service Functions Focus Group, with further nominations to be made by the Conservative Group.

Confirming that an update on decentralisation would be presented in due course, the Committee noted its agenda plan.

Chair  
21<sup>st</sup> July 2022