

## Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: Thursday 18 May 2023

Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

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

### 117. Notification of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Committee noted that Councillor Tom Sanderson had been appointed Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, and Councillor Alex Bulat appointed Vice-Chair, by Full Council on 16 May 2022 for the 2023/24 municipal year.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ken Billington (substituted by Councillor Gardener) and Councillor Steve Criswell (substituted by Councillor Goldsack).

There were no declarations of interest.

### 119. Minutes – 23 March 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

The Committee noted the Minutes Action Log.

### 120. Petitions and Public Questions

No public questions or petitions were received.

## 121. Cambridgeshire Skills Accountability Agreement

The Committee received a report which included the draft accountability agreement for Cambridgeshire Skills, which was a new requirement for providers that received in excess of £1m in funding from the Department for Education (DoE). The accountability agreement set out Cambridgeshire Skills' vision and statement of purpose, and proposed some additional key performance indicators for monitoring purposes.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Clarified that although the submission of an accountability agreement was required by the DoE, future receipt of funding was not subject to the content of the accountability agreement. While it was acknowledged that the process could evolve following the submission of the initial agreement, Members were informed that its purpose was to provide inspectors and funders with an overview of Cambridgeshire Skills' wider aims and objectives. It was also noted that such work was previously already carried out in a different form and therefore did not represent an additional workload for officers.
- Suggested that the accountability agreement could be more explicit in demonstrating the alignment of the service's strategic objectives with those of the Council. It was also argued that the diagrams used in the accountability statement negatively affected the readability of the document and that a written list could be more effective. It was clarified that the draft document would be reviewed by designers before being submitted, in order to pick up and resolve such details.
- Welcomed that the service would work with the Traveller Health Team to provide vocational learning to the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community that provide a pathway into paid employment. Members highlighted the importance of tackling digital exclusion by providing residents and learners with information on how to access devices, safe spaces for learning and cheaper tariffs.
- Supported the adoption of the proposed additional key performance indicators and suggested that future monitoring of the data could include comparisons with previous data, along with more information on how that data had been compiled and calculated, to help anticipate where growth in certain areas was expected that would subsequently require higher allocations of available funding.
- Requested that a workshop be arranged to provide Members with an opportunity to discuss the wider issues surrounding Cambridgeshire Skills. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the Accountability Agreement; and
- b) Adopt the key performance indicators listed in the Accountability Agreement, in addition to those already in place.

## 122. Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund

The Committee received a report detailing the proposed criteria, eligibility and two-stage application process for capital grants from the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund (CPCF). It was also proposed to reserve £500k from the £1.5m of available resources to be allocated to Council owned community assets and projects in a separate process from the main fund.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Queried why it had been proposed to reserve £500k for Council owned assets from a fund that had been established to provide resources to community organisations and assets, rather than to allocate such resources through the Council's own budgetary procedures. Members were informed that although the proposal had not been previously considered by the committee, it had been discussed with the Capital Fund Steering Group, and that it was predicated on the benefit that such assets and projects could have on local communities.
- Sought clarification on whether a bid submitted by a community organisation or project would be considered alongside any potential allocations for Council owned assets, expressing concern that there could be a perceived bias towards awarding funding to a Council owned project or asset instead of a non-Council owned project or asset. Members also requested further information on the process for allocating the £500k that it was proposed to reserve for Council owned community assets and projects, including whether the projects would have the same budget limit and level of scrutiny as the non-Council owned projects. Members were informed that the process for allocating any reserved funds had not yet been developed, and would be presented to the committee in a separate, future paper, although it was suggested that the projects would not receive higher levels of resources than those applying as non-Council owned assets or projects, and that such bids would not be considered alongside each other.
- Expressed concern over the lengthy applications process, arguing that community organisations and projects needed financial support now, rather than in early 2024 when it was proposed to consider recommendations on bids from the assessment panel. It was clarified that the proposal was for the fund to be launched in summer 2023, although the application process would be for an extended period to ensure that all potential applicants, including parish councils, had sufficient time to prepare, agree and submit a bid through their own governance procedures.
- Emphasised the importance of making it clear what kind of bids and projects would be accepted, to avoid organisations devoting resources to develop a proposal that would then be considered ineligible, and clarified that officers would be available to discuss proposals with potential applicants before their bids were submitted. Officers would also provide guidance and support to applicants in obtaining potential additional matched funding from other sources, with organisations such as Hunts Forum, Cambridgeshire ACRE and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) also agreeing to publicise the fund or provide such support or guidance to bid applicants. The two-stage process would also ensure that

unsuitable projects were rejected before they reached the stage of developing a full application.

- Observed that other funding providers were known to withdraw financial support from projects when it became known that the project had obtained additional funding, such as through the CPCF, and sought reassurance that funding agreements would ensure that other public sector bodies did not withdraw their funding following the allocation of any resources from the CPCF. Members were informed that the Council would not withdraw its own funding if projects obtained further funding from alternative sources, and it was confirmed that matched funding would be encouraged, particularly with any applications submitted by a district or city council. Members suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to offer financial advice to applicants to ensure that their bids were realistic and took into consideration potential risks and issues.
- Drew attention to the high costs of construction and renovation, even when small in scale, and expressed concern that an upper limit of £25k for bids would not provide sufficient resources for the kind of projects that were envisioned to apply. Some members supported increasing the upper limit, while one member suggested that there should not be a limit. It was noted that the Section 151 Officer had advised setting a lower limit than the previous Community Capital Fund because of problems that had arisen with some of the earlier projects, and to minimise financial risk to the Council. Some members observed that the amount of time and resources that small organisations would have to commit in order to prepare an application and provide ongoing evidence for monitoring purposes, including contracting professional advice or consultancy, could outweigh the financial benefit of a relatively small award, while at the same time such organisations may also feel that they did not have a suitable governance structure in place to allow them to apply for a significantly higher level of funding.
- Considered whether it would be more appropriate to measure the social value of a project to the local community, rather than set an arbitrary financial limit, although it was acknowledged that the impact on local communities would be a key consideration in the scoring process. One member also expressed concern that such a process would unfairly favour bids from projects in larger communities.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Daunton, seconded by Councillor Seeff and agreed by majority (addition in bold):

- a) Approve the proposed criteria, eligibility and two stage process for applications to the £1,000,000 Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund, as set out in the report, **subject to increasing the bid limit to £40,000;**

It was resolved to:

- a) Approve the proposed criteria, eligibility and two stage process for applications to the £1,000,000 Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund, as set out in the report, subject to increasing the bid limit to £40,000;

- b) Reserve the remaining £500,000 of available resources to make capital improvements to Council owned community assets and projects; and
- c) Appoint Councillors Batchelor, Bulat, Costello, Criswell, French, Hathorn and Sanderson to the Assessment Panel.

### 123. Committee Agenda Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies, Internal Advisory Groups and Panels, and Member Champions

The Committee received a report which detailed the agenda plan and sought appointments to outside bodies, as well as internal advisory groups and panels. Appointments were also requested for the roles of Migrant Champion and Community Safety Champion.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Review its agenda plan attached at Appendix 1;
- b) Agree the appointments to outside bodies, as detailed in Appendix 2, subject to:
  - (i) Councillor Bradnam and Councillor Smith being appointed to the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Gypsy Roma Traveller Accommodation Member Reference Group;
  - (ii) Councillor Ambrose Smith being appointed to the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership in place of Councillor Whelan;
- c) Agree the appointments to internal advisory groups and panels, as detailed in Appendix 3, subject to:
  - (i) Councillor Daunton being appointed to the County Advisory Group on Archives and Local Studies in place of Councillor Bulat;
  - (ii) Councillor Shailer being appointed to the While Ribbon Delivery Group; and
- d) Agree to appoint Councillor Slatter as the Community Safety Champion and Councillor Bulat as the Migrant Champion.