

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: Thursday 8 December 2022

Time: 10:00am – 1:25pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Tom Sanderson (Chair), Hilary Cox Condron (Vice-Chair), Henry Batchelor, Alex Bulat, Adela Costello, Steve Criswell, Claire Daunton, Doug Dew, Ian Gardener, Ros Hathorn, Sebastian Kindersley and Philippa Slatter

90. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ken Billington (substituted by Councillor Gardener), Jan French, Bryony Goodliffe (substituted by Councillor Bulat), and Lucy Nethsingha (substituted by Councillor Kindersley).

There were no declarations of interest.

91. Minutes – 1 November 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

The Committee noted the Minutes Action Log.

92. Petitions and Public Questions

No public questions or petitions were received.

93. Review of Draft Revenue and Capital Business Planning Proposals for 2023-28

The Committee received a report outlining the current business and budgetary planning position and estimates for 2023-2028, the principal risks, contingencies and implications facing the Committee and the Council's resources, and the process and next steps for the Council in agreeing a business plan and budget for future years. Attention was drawn to the draft revenue and capital programmes specifically related to the Committee, set out in sections 6 and 7 of the report respectively, which included

proposals to reorganise and integrate the Think Communities and Youth in Communities teams, and to end some existing activities, such as the direct provision of anti-scams work and Time Credits programmes, operation of the Cultivate Cambs Fund, and operation of the Community Engagement Vehicle, which had reached the end of its economic operational life. Members were informed that the consultation referred to in section 6.16 of the report would last for the statutory period of 45 days, rather than three months.

While discussing the report, members:

- Welcomed the triple bottom line approach that had been adopted by the Council, and used throughout the development of the 2023-24 Business Plan.
- Argued that the Council received insufficient levels of funding from the Government, leading to negative impacts for residents during the ongoing cost of living crisis. Members paid tribute to the creativity of officers in developing a budget for the Council to consider, but emphasised the difficulty that the Council was faced with when making decisions on expenditure and savings.
- Expressed concern about the proposal to end the direct provision of scams work, given their increased prevalence, and suggested that alternative provision should be developed with partners before a decision was made on the proposed saving to ensure the work continued. One member noted she had received positive feedback from residents on the support it provided, and it was queried whether there was an alternative way to fund and continue the work, with one member suggesting organisations in the financial sector as a potential source of funds, given that many scams involved their customers. It was clarified that the Council currently had two full-time equivalent officers supporting the Against Scams Partnership in delivering primary prevention work, through publicising and disseminating information on scams, and secondary prevention work, through supporting individuals who had already been victims of scams or were targeted by scammers. Members were assured that the Council was working with partners to explore alternative funding mechanisms for this work.
- Highlighted the positive impacts of the Cultivate Cambs Fund in decentralisation and building community resilience, and expressed disappointment that it was proposed to end the fund's operation.
- Expressed concern about the impact of the reorganising and integration of the Think Communities and Youth in Communities teams, suggesting that the Council should expand its partnerships with non-governmental organisations, as well as district and city councils, to avoid any gaps in provision.
- Requested further information on the adult social care reforms set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report. Members were informed that clarity was still awaited on when the reforms would take place and how they would affect the Council. A settlement agreement was due to be received on 21st December 2022, and it was agreed to provide members with a briefing note with further information. **Action required**

- Paid tribute to the support provided by officers to veterans and their families through the Armed Forces Covenant, and welcomed its continued funding.
- Observed that Section 106 funding was time-limited to five years for developments, and queried whether the delays indicated in paragraph 7.4.1 of the report could lead to a loss of potential Section 106 funding. Members were informed that the five-year period began once construction on a development had commenced, with a delay to the development itself therefore not reducing the time available to apply for Section 106 funding.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- a) Note the progress made to date and next steps required to develop the business plan for 2023-2028;
- b) Comment on and endorse the budget and savings proposals that are within the remit of the Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan;
- c) Comment on and endorse the proposed changes to the capital programme that are within the remit of the Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan; and
- d) Note the updates to fees and charges for 2023-24, and the principles that will be applied for locally set 2024-25 registration service fees.

94. Decentralisation in Action

The Committee received a report on progress that had been made on developing the decentralisation approach that had been adopted by the Council, which included details of specific services and issues that were being operated and addressed in a decentralised manner. Following the Committee's agreement to establish the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund (CPCF) with resources that were unallocated from, or returned to, the former Communities Capital Fund, it was proposed to align the CPCF with the Care Together programme, as set out in section 2.9.5 of the report.

While discussing the report, members:

- Acknowledged that decentralisation was more an enabling attitude than a specific programme, and while it would affect the work of other committees, for example with the Highways and Transport Committee's work on Local Highway Improvement schemes, the underlying approach would be overseen by the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.
- Emphasised that data should be shared with neighbouring upper tier local authorities, given that residents living close to the border of Cambridgeshire often had more interaction with communities and services outside the County. It was acknowledged that sharing data and working in partnerships more widely across the

public sector had proven particularly important and effective during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Highlighted the importance of decentralisation beyond the Council itself, for example by improving public transport to ensure that all residents, including those in more rural parts of the County, could access education and were empowered, enabled and listened to.
- Welcomed the proposal to align the CPCF with the Care Together programme, but expressed concern that considering the criteria and details of the fund's governance and application process in March 2023 would be too late to provide support to residents and communities during the colder winter months. Members were informed that while the purpose of the fund would be to improve access to and use of community buildings in general, the intention was not directly linked to providing support relating to the cost of living crisis. It was also noted that the approach for running warm hubs differed in each district, and that the County Council had chosen to focus on encouraging use of libraries as warm spaces, preferring not to stigmatise users by adopting such a title.
- Noted that the report focused on collaboration with Cambridge City Council and requested further information on how the decentralisation approach was being carried out in partnership with the other district councils. While it was acknowledged that the partnership with Cambridge City Council was more developed, members were assured that discussions were ongoing with the other district councils. It was suggested that the Council could develop a toolkit for partnership working.
- Welcomed the proposal to establish a residents panel, highlighting the importance of ensuring that it was truly representative and inclusive of all age groups and ethnicities, as well as empowering the participants to monitor the response to their contributions. It was suggested that selecting themes for the panel could be more productive than just seeking general input. One member expressed concern that it had taken so long to develop such a proposal and called for the panel to be established as soon as possible.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the report; and
- b) Agree that the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund be strategically aligned with the Care Together Programme, as set out in section 2.9.5 of the report.

95. Governance Arrangements for Cambridgeshire Skills

The Committee received a report proposing that the Cambridgeshire Skills service be reintegrated into the governance structures of the Council, following its integration to the new Strategy and Partnerships directorate. The Council would assume sole responsibility for the governance and management of all aspects of the service, and an Advisory Board would replace the current Board of Governors, with a proposed terms of reference attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

While discussing the report, members:

- Highlighted the importance of ensuring learning opportunities were in place for all ages, and welcomed the proposal for the Council to reassume the governance and management of the Cambridgeshire Skills service, although it was queried whether the Council would subsequently lose the opportunity to obtain specific funding for arm's length organisations. Members were informed that the Council had not obtained such funding previously, and although it could potentially be available in the future, no such opportunities had been identified and therefore the risk was minimal.
- Clarified that Cambridgeshire Skills was predominantly funded by an annual grant of just over £2m from the Combined Authority through the Adult Education Budget. The Combined Authority's Skills Committee included members from all the district and city councils in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, and it was suggested that replacing the current Board of Governors with a new Advisory Board would help minimise any duplication between the Council and the Combined Authority. Members noted the benefits of an officer from the Combined Authority sitting on the current Board of Governors, and it was confirmed that this would continue with the proposed Advisory Board.
- Noted the current high levels of migration and highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient provision of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Members were informed that due to the beneficial funding arrangement with the Combined Authority, ESOL provision had been significantly increased over the past twelve months.
- Expressed concern that courses were less accessible for people that lived in rural areas with less public transport provision, although it was acknowledged that Cambridgeshire Skills used facilities in local communities, such as schools, libraries and village halls to try and minimise such an impact. Members were also informed that a limited amount of funding was available to support learners with travel and childcare costs, and it was confirmed that Cambridgeshire Skills worked on skills provision with the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- Argued that the values promoted by the service were not uniquely British, as suggested in the report, although it was acknowledged that the phrase "promoting British values" was used by Ofsted and the Department for Education.

Following the discussion, it was proposed by the Vice-Chair, seconded by Councillor Criswell and agreed unanimously to nominate the Chair, Councillor Sanderson, as a representative on the new Cambridgeshire Skills Advisory Board.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Amend the current governance arrangements for the Cambridgeshire Skills service to reflect its status as a delivery service within the Council;
- b) Create an Advisory Board to replace the current Board of Governors, and approve the Terms of Reference, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- c) Appoint Councillor Tom Sanderson as a representative on the Cambridgeshire Skills Advisory Board.

96. Cambridgeshire Registration Service Annual Report

The Committee received an annual report on the work of the Registration service, which highlighted the service's performance and developments over the past year, including the successful completion of the relocation of the Cambridgeshire Register Office to its new site on Ascham Road.

While discussing the report, members:

- Paid tribute to the specialised work required of officers in the Registration service, noting that they worked with people at particularly significant moments of their lives, including births, deaths, marriages and the awarding of British citizenship.
- Highlighted that the statutory fees for services provided by the Registration service, which were set by the Government, had not increased for a number of years.
- Emphasised the importance of person-to-person interaction with the service, in order to identify potential cases of issues such as forced marriage and isolation, and queried how this would be achieved through an increased use of telephone interaction between residents and the Council. It was acknowledged that it was harder to identify such issues in telephone conversations, and members were assured that the service would work to improve its ability to recognise signs and learn prompts to encourage people to speak in a safe way.
- Clarified that the relocation of the Cambridgeshire Register Office had no impact on the Archives service based in Ely, which served as a dual use site for the Registration service. One member suggested that this arrangement sometimes restricted use of the facilities for archive purposes, and it was agreed that the Archives service would be consulted on the matter and for a briefing note to subsequently be circulated to members. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the updates from the Registration service.

97. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards Annual Report

The Committee received an annual report on the Trading Standards service, which highlighted the work carried out over the past year as a Primary Authority in providing advice to businesses, tackling crime and clawing back proceeds of crime, responding to the Bird Flu, and ensuring product and food safety, among other areas.

While discussing the report, members:

- Welcomed the support and advice that had been provided by the service in response to the ongoing Bird Flu outbreak, noting how it had helped reduce the spread of the disease while alleviating concerns. It was clarified that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, along with the Animal and Plant Health Agency, dealt with members of the public reporting on non-compliance with current restrictions.
- Clarified that members were only informed of investigations in their divisions once they had been concluded, due to the importance of intelligence control. Nonetheless, it was confirmed that local members were regularly consulted on matters in their area that were unrelated to criminal investigations and would be of interest to them, in order to support the dissemination of information and advice.
- Welcomed that some of the funds recovered from proceeds of crime could potentially be used for apprenticeships to improve the team's development and resilience.
- Suggested that food guidance packs produced by the service could also include information on other cross-cutting issues, such as the Council's environmental objectives. It was also suggested that it would be helpful for the Council's website to include an interactive tool for members of the public to report fly-tipping.
- Established that the response to reported scams was coordinated on a national basis before being dealt with by the relevant local authorities.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the performance of the Trading Standards service over the previous year; and
- b) Comment on the priorities for the service looking forwards.

98. Library Service Annual Report

The Committee received an annual report on the activities and performance of the Library service throughout 2022. The main focus of the year had been on recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and it was recommended that the current member working group continue to examine the issues, challenges and opportunities facing the service during this recovery. Due to the financial impacts of the pandemic on the service, an

action plan for income generation had been developed and was attached at Appendix 2 of the report. Following the securing of funding from Arts Council England until 2026 for The Library Presents, the service had developed a future development plan for the programme, as set out in section 3.5 of the report.

While discussing the report, members:

- Paid tribute to the enthusiasm displayed by Library service staff, and highlighted the popularity of the service among residents. Members also emphasised the importance of volunteer libraries and their links into the Library service.
- Welcomed the future funding for The Library Presents, drawing attention to how the programme enabled culture, diversity, representation, story-telling and reflection in local communities.
- Argued that mechanisms should be in place to ensure that potential commercial partners of the Library service aligned to the Council's objectives and triple bottom line approach, noting the increased prevalence of banks offering services from libraries following branch closures.
- Sought clarification on whether the Combined Authority would provide some funding for the service's digital inclusion and skills work. Members were informed that there was a gap in the market for the informal provision of digital skills, which led to digital exclusion for some people, and the Library service helped users when they could. Discussions were ongoing with the Combined Authority for a funding proposal.
- Welcomed recent improvements that had been made to Arbury Court Library as one of the County's busiest libraries, but acknowledged that it was part of ongoing discussions about wider development of the surrounding area.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Support the continuance of the Cross-Party Working Group;
- b) Endorse The Library Presents - future delivery plan; and
- c) Endorse the Libraries Income Generation Action Plan.

99. Innovate and Cultivate Fund Annual Evaluation Report 2021-2022

The Committee received the 2021-22 annual evaluation report on the Innovate and Cultivate Fund (ICF). As the ICF had been relaunched as the Cultivate Cambs Fund in July 2022, only one round of ICF applications had taken place during 2021-2022. There continued to be a broadly equal geographical spread of funded projects across the County, with information on projects' estimated return of investment set out in Appendix 1 of the report. Further appendices detailed the new partnerships that had been established between the Council and other organisations as a result of the fund, and provided case studies and feedbacks on some of the projects.

While discussing the report, members:

- Paid tribute to the work of officers and members of the former Communities and Partnership Committee in establishing and managing the fund, drawing attention to the savings that it had provided for Council services, alongside the social, cultural, health and environmental impacts that local communities had experienced as a result of the funded applications.
- Expressed disappointment that the current budget setting process had not included a further allocation of funding for the Cultivate Cambs Fund, although it was acknowledged that the partnerships that had already developed would continue.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note and comment on the report.

100. Cultivate Cambs - Endorsement of Recommendations

The Committee received a report recommending seventeen grant applications for funding through the Cultivate Cambs fund, following a meeting of the Recommendation Panel on 22 November 2022. It was confirmed that if funding was approved for all the applications, approximately £180k would remain available for allocation.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Agree to fund the 17 grant applications listed in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

101. Supporting the Rollout of Repair Cafes, Upcycling and Recycling and Reuse Initiatives

The Committee received a report in response to a motion agreed by Full Council on 15th March 2022, which requested that the Committee consider how the Council could support the rollout of new repair cafes, as well as similar reuse and recycling initiatives, and offer any necessary support to repair cafes that were already operating. Following discussions between officers and local organisations, Cambridgeshire Carbon Footprint had submitted a proposal for a grant from the Council, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, to employ a Repair Café Outreach Officer for 1.5 days a week for 12 months.

While discussing the report, members:

- Welcomed the proposal from Cambridgeshire Carbon Footprint and emphasised the importance of encouraging and supporting behavioural change in order to reduce levels of waste by repairing, upcycling, recycling and reusing. Attention was drawn to the Council's Annual Carbon Footprint Report, which had been presented to the Environment and Green Investment Committee on 1st December 2022, and which provided further information on the levels of waste across the region and the approaches being taken by the Council and partners to reduce them.

- Sought clarification on whether the proposed job role would receive payment above the UK Living Wage, noting that the reduced level of hours would result in a significant workload given the various areas in which the outreach officer would work. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Agree to fund, by way of a grant, the proposal from Cambridge Carbon Footprint, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

102. Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 2 (2022/23)

The Committee received a report providing an update on the performance of services within its remit over Quarter 2 of the 2022/23 financial year. Following the Council's recent organisational restructure, these services were now split across the Strategy and Partnerships directorate and the Place and Sustainability directorate.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the contents of the report.

103. Finance Monitoring Report – October 2022

The Committee received the Finance Monitoring Report to the end of October 2022 for the services within its remit.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Review and comment on the report.

104. Community, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Agenda Plan

The Committee noted its agenda plan. Observing that the Interim Deputy Director for Communities, Employment and Skills would leave the Council before the next meeting, members thanked him for his support and paid tribute to his work, particularly on the Household Support Fund, the Communities Capital Fund, and the wider community wealth building agenda.

Chair
23rd March 2023