

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: 5 December 2024

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:35 p.m.

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall

Present: Councillors Tom Sanderson (Chair), Alex Bulat (Vice-Chair), David Ambrose Smith, Steve Criswell, Claire Daunton, Ian Gardener, Bryony Goodliffe, John Gowing, Ros Hathorn, Geoff Seeff, Philippa Slatter and Susan van de Ven

183. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Henry Batchelor, Ken Billington, Adela Costello (substituted by Councillor Gowing) and Lucy Nethsingha (substituted by Councillor Van de Ven).

There were no declarations of interest.

184. Minutes – 17 October 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

While discussing the Minutes Action Log, individual Members:

- Queried whether the draft toolkit on available support from the Council to assist with organising Remembrance events (Minute 179 - Road Closures for Remembrance Events) had been circulated to parish councils for feedback prior to its publication. Members were informed that some amendments had been made to the draft version following a review by the Armed Forces Covenant Board and it was confirmed that feedback would be sought from parish councils during December 2024 prior to its publication in January 2025.
- Expressed concern that the response to Members' query about the Coroner service providing advice to widows or widowers on how to resolve potential problems with joint bank accounts following their partner's death (Minute 180 – Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 1 2024/25) did not propose the provision of such advice. Members were informed that there was a wide range of information that could potentially be shared by the Coroner service with widows and widowers at such a time, but due to the limited amount of time in such appointments and the need to prioritise statutory responsibilities, a signposting approach was adopted instead. It was therefore not possible to provide such information without a wider restructure of the service provided by the Coroner service.

- Sought clarification on whether grant funding for allergen labelling had covered labelling for non-packaged food (Minute 176 - Minutes - 11 July 2024). It was confirmed that the Council had been working on allergen labelling for non-packaged food and that it remained a priority moving forwards, as there was still evidence of non-compliance in that area.

The Committee noted the Minutes Action Log.

185. Public Questions and Petitions

No public questions or petitions were received.

186. Citizens Advice Bureau Grant

The Committee received a report proposing a grant of £800,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver income maximisation and support to residents experiencing financial hardship across Cambridgeshire for the period April 2025 to March 2027.

While discussing the report, individual Members:

- Welcomed the proposed support that would be provided by Citizens Advice but highlighted the importance of ensuring it was part of a wider, holistic support package, drawing attention to the multi-agency approach that had been successfully developed during the Covid-19 pandemic and was now being further investigated by the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission. It was emphasised that the proposed grant was supported by the Public Health team and was indeed part of a much wider package of support, although it was acknowledged that further information on this could have been included in the report. Members were also informed that the grant could include conditions requiring the Citizens Advice Bureaux to take account of any recommendations from the Commission.
- Confirmed that the proposed grant would be for Cambridgeshire's two Citizens Advice Bureaux and that although the national Citizens Advice service had changed its name from Citizen Advice Bureau in 2015, the local Cambridgeshire bureaux maintained their previous names officially. Members were assured that the Council worked with partner authorities and the Integrated Care Board to align its support for the voluntary and community sector.
- Drew attention to the longstanding support provided to the Citizens Advice by both the County Council and district councils, and queried how much collaboration there was between the various local authorities in relation to the organisation and surrounding work. Members requested that update reports provided to officers by Citizens Advice Bureaux also be circulated to County councillors. **Action required**
- Highlighted the importance of identifying how accessible the services provided by Citizens Advice were to different communities, and whether work could be undertaken to advise and encourage communities that were less likely to access the

support. It was confirmed that the Council could refine the reporting requested from the Citizens Advice Bureaux to include such information, while the Quality of Life survey recently held by the Council could also provide helpful data. It was acknowledged that access to the rural service was more of a challenge, and Members were informed that alongside the surgeries and drop-in centres that were held in libraries, parish council offices and other community buildings around the county, the service provided a telephone and digital offer.

- Noted the specialist nature of income maximisation support and expressed concern that a grant for only two years could jeopardise the ability to retain highly-trained and experienced staff, and it was acknowledged that the ambition for the Citizens Advice Bureaux would be to secure longer term funding for the service.
- Clarified that it was proposed for the funding for the first year of the contract to come from the 2025/26 Household Support Fund and the funding for the second year of the contract to come from the Council's anti-poverty budget. Members were informed that while the Citizens Advice Bureaux received some money nationally for certain aspects of their work, most of their resources came from local authorities. The income maximisation workstream in particular was initiated in 2022 and had supported over 5500 people. It was agreed to inform Members about the level of support provided by the different local authorities in the area. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve a grant of £800,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver income maximisation across Cambridgeshire for the period April 2025 to March 2027.

187. Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy Service

The Committee received a report on the procurement of a domestic abuse mobile advocacy outreach service across Cambridgeshire, which would provide support to those being subjected to domestic abuse, regardless of the level of risk, their sex or gender. The contract would commence on 1 October 2025 and would last for 3.5-years with two one-year extension periods.

While discussing the report, individual Members:

- Drew attention to the role that financial pressures and economic abuse could play in domestic abuse and queried whether the outreach service collaborated with Citizens Advice on such matters. It was acknowledged that many victims of domestic abuse required financial support, and Members were informed that the service worked with Citizens Advice along with other organisations, such as a national charity called Surviving Economic Abuse, to provide support for financial hardship, while the Council's Safe Accommodation Strategy also allowed for additional support through a limited pot of funding.
- Clarified that the service was available for all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of their gender or economic status.

- Sought clarification on why the report’s executive summary said the service was expected to receive approximately 500 referrals per year, whereas paragraph 3.2 of the report said the service aimed to support 800 people per year. It was clarified that some victims received support for longer periods of time, often crossing from one financial year into another, which is why the number of people receiving support would be higher than the number of referrals each year.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the procurement of a Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy service; 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 award and execute a contract for the provision of Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy, for a 3.5-years contract commencing on 1 October 2025, with two one-year extension periods.

188. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Coroner Service Annual Report

The Committee received an annual report on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Coroner service, which included information on trends, legislative reform, collaborative arrangements, performance, finance, and statutory duties and responsibilities.

While discussing the report, individual Members:

- Sought clarification on how information was stored by the service and whether it would be available for research purposes in the future. Members were informed that whereas records were previously limited to what was contained in inquest papers, records were now stored electronically. The service was required to store the records, with the coroners managing who could access them, although it was emphasised that there was a general approach to share information wherever appropriate, and particularly for the purpose of helping to prevent future deaths.
- Highlighted the importance and potential impacts of Prevention of Future Death (PFD) Reports and sought clarification on the Council’s role in their production, as well as how it responded to their recommendations. Members were informed that although on a national level local authorities were the least responsive to such reports, there was a 100% response rate within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough coronial jurisdiction. Senior officers were always involved, with action plans and monitoring put in place to ensure that any necessary interventions or improvements were put in place. However, it was emphasised that neither the coroners or the Council could compel other organisations or individuals to respond or take action, which it was argued detracted from the potential impact of such investigations and reports. Notwithstanding, it was suggested that widespread circulation and publicity of the reports increased their impact due to the potential negative reputational impact of ignoring them.

- Paid tribute to the service for its successful preparation for the major death certification reforms that became effective in September 2024, welcoming the partnership working that was organised prior to their implementation to ensure that potential problems were identified in advance and overcome in a collaborative manner by all those involved.
- Queried how the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill would impact the service if it became law, and it was agreed to provide Members with a briefing note on the issue. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the contents of the report.

189. Finance Monitoring Report – October 2024

The Committee received the Finance Monitoring Report to the end of October 2024 for the services within its remit, with a forecast revenue overspend of £96k and one significant capital variance related to the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund.

While discussing the report, Members requested an update on the Fenstanton Village Hall project. Members were informed that regular meetings had been held with the project organisers and draft grant agreements were being prepared, with a meeting scheduled during December 2024. Quotes were being sought for the work and requested documents had been provided to Council. It was anticipated that the grant agreement would stipulate a start date in February 2025, and it was confirmed that the Council would continue to monitor the project closely.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the content of the report.

190. Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 2 2024/25

The Committee received a report providing an update on the performance of services within its remit over Quarter 2 of the 2024/25 financial year, with one key performance indicator (KPI) rated as red, nine KPIs rated as green, and ten KPIs rated as contextual. A refreshed Performance Management Framework, approved by the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 31 October 2024, meant that future performance reports would include an updated set of KPIs.

While discussing the report, individual Members:

- Clarified that the warm hub offer referred to in the 'Path to Green' section of Indicator 37 (Number of visits made to library sites reported quarterly) was a Council-led initiative promoting the use of libraries as warm hubs. Members requested a further breakdown of the various reasons for the visits recorded and

queried whether the data also included visits to mobile libraries. It was noted that the metrics recorded for the KPI could not provide a more detailed breakdown of the reasons for visits, although the annual report on the Library service, to be presented to the Committee at its meeting in January 2025, would include additional information on both library visits and the mobile service.

- Noted that many organisations were reluctant to accept volunteers that were under 18-years-old due to safeguarding requirements and concerns, and queried whether the Council provided support and guidance to either young people or organisations on the issue. Members were informed that the Council had worked with Support Cambridgeshire on supporting young people to find volunteering opportunities, and alongside the portal that had been developed for local groups and organisations to advertise such opportunities, a group was being developed to specifically work for young people. It was agreed to provide Members with a briefing note on progress.
Action required

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note performance information and act, as necessary.

191. Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Agenda Plan

While discussing the Committee's agenda plan, individual Members:

- Suggested that it could be beneficial for the committee to receive a report on the various aspects of community safety, as well as a report on how the Council supported care leavers, although it was acknowledged that such matters were in the remit of the Children and Young People Committee. It was also suggested that a report on the findings of the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission could be presented to the committee at its meeting in February 2025, if its work was completed in sufficient time. It was agreed for the committee's Spokes to discuss these suggestions with the Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships. **Action required**
- Suggested there would be wider interest in the Closer to Communities report scheduled to be presented to the committee in January 2025, noting that the projects involved work from across the Council and other committees, and it was agreed to notify all Members of the report and its recommendations following its publication. **Action required**

The Committee noted its agenda plan.

Chair
16 January 2025