

## Communities and Partnership Committee Minutes

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Time: 10:00am to 11:40am

Present: Councillors S Criswell (Chairman), L Nieto (Vice-Chairwoman), B Ashwood, H Batchelor, A Costello, L Every, J French, E Meschini and D Wells (substituting for Councillor M Smith)

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Smith.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 340. a) Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### b) Communities and Partnership Committee Action Log

The Committee noted the Action Log.

### 341. Petitions and Public Questions

There were no petitions or public questions.

### 342. Recommissioning of Cambridgeshire's Local Assistance Scheme

The Committee received a report on the recommissioning and procurement of Cambridgeshire's Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS), a contracted service providing a front-line safety net to individuals and families facing unexpected financial difficulties and hardship. It was noted that although demand for such support had increased significantly as a result of Covid-19, and was expected to remain high for some time, CLAS had been estimated to have delivered at least £1.4m of costs avoided to the County Council and £3m to the wider public purse. The current contract was due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and a new service would be procured over the next year. The £1.5m contract would be for three years, with an option to extend for a further two-year period, and the specifications would be informed by

consultations with local charities, district councils, housing needs teams, Think Communities Place Coordinators, and people with lived experience.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Acknowledged the importance of the service, especially during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
- Observed that paragraph 1.1 of the report indicated that only £132k of the CLAS's annual £300k budget was distributed in the form of grants and sought clarification on how the remaining £168k was spent. The Children and Families Commissioning Manager informed members that just under 10% of the budget was spent on administrative costs, while there was a subcontract arrangement with Citizens Advice and CLAS Champions also received honorariums, although she noted that Champions often relinquished their right to honorariums so that the resources could instead be used to directly support families.
- Clarified that the final decision to award the contract at the end of the procurement process would be delegated to the Executive Director: People and Communities and carried out within the confines of the decisions set by the Committee.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree the recommissioning and procurement of Cambridgeshire's Local Assistance Scheme; and
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director: People and Communities to commit funding at the time of the award of the contract.

### 343. Report of the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships

The Committee received a report from the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships which provided an overview of strategic activity relevant to the Committee, relating to both the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and work the Committee and its service directorate had responsibility for. As Cambridgeshire Local continued to become embedded across the area, it had been agreed to extend the deadline for submissions for procurement of the new voluntary sector infrastructure support contract until April 2021, due to the impacts of the pandemic. It was also noted that Covid-19 had led to some delays to Community Capital Fund projects, which would be reported in a paper at a forthcoming Committee meeting. Members were informed that although the Domestic Abuse Bill continued to make its way through Parliament, funding worth £1.1m had provisionally been allocated to the Council, with a primary focus of ensuring suitable and safe accommodation was available for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Meanwhile, an increase to staffing levels within the Regulatory Services would help overcome backlogs that had emerged as a result of the pandemic.

The Service Director confirmed that since the report had been published, a second list of additional Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) residents had been received, bringing the total number of CEV residents in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to over 54,000, all of whom had been contacted by both the NHS and the Covid-19 Coordination and Response Hub, which was providing assistance whenever needed. Members were informed that the National Self-Isolation Support Scheme had also been extended until the end of June 2021, while a further £500k had been provided to the Council as part of an extension to the Winter Support Grant Scheme until mid-April 2021.

The Head of Think Communities provided the Committee with an update on volunteers to the ever-expanding vaccination programme, which was being supported by a strategy that focussed on overcoming vaccine hesitancy. Although requests for volunteer support in non-clinical roles at vaccination centres had been low, the Council had sought to organise a mechanism to overcome the irregular and ad hoc nature of the requests, although this had proven difficult as they were subject to unpredictable variables, such as the availability of vaccines or the location of their use. Requests for assistance were currently being coordinated through the Hub with the involvement of Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), with the assistance of Support Cambridgeshire enabling the PCNs to be self-sustainable. The Hub and Support Cambridgeshire were developing a 12-month pilot for a single volunteer portal across Cambridgeshire, which would enable an efficient and targeted response to arising needs, allowing volunteers to combine their efforts while maintaining the independence of individual organisations.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the extension to the Winter Support Grant Scheme and requested clarification on how the additional £500k funding would be spent, with particular concern over whether it would be sufficient to provide free school meals over the forthcoming Easter holiday period. The Service Director informed Members that the funding had just been announced and the method of its distribution was still under consideration in order to maximise its impact. He acknowledged that issuing vouchers for free school meals was not a quick or straightforward process and that there was therefore an urgency to resolve the issue. Confirming that he would be speaking with the Director of Education following the meeting and noting that the Children and Young People Committee would make the final decision, he undertook to provide Members with an update. **Action required**
- Suggested using data collected as part of the allocation of funds from the Winter Support Grant Scheme to inform the Council's work on diversity and poverty. The Service Director agreed with the suggestion and noted that a significant amount of additional data had been gathered over the previous year, which would also be used to inform the working and business of the Council and its partners. He also informed the Committee that this would be aided by two data specialists that were joining the Cambridgeshire Local team. Analysis would be carried out on those who applied for grants and their individual needs, along with how they requested help and what they asked for, among other aspects of the scheme.

- Requested information on progress that had been made in the distribution of laptops to children, as mentioned in paragraph 2.3.14 of the report. The Library Support Manager informed Members that 200 laptops had been donated by one NHS trust, 150 of which had been dropped off at libraries and rebuilt by volunteers. He also noted that financial contributions had been higher than expected, allowing for the distribution of further items, such as data dongles.
- Considered how the forthcoming relaxations to lockdown rules could impact on service delivery, noting that infection rates varied significantly across the County, with Fenland and Peterborough recording some of the highest rates in the country. The Service Director acknowledged the variances, which were exacerbated by people traveling between different areas, both within and outside the County. While welcoming the effects that the relaxations, including a reopening of schools, would have on the wellbeing of residents and workers, he cautioned that the reproduction number of the virus was likely to rise again and would be closely monitored. He observed that the Council had been one of the first in the country to clear its services' backlogs following the first national lockdown in 2020 and he assured Members that the services were again prepared to commence as soon as the regulations permitted them to reopen.
- Argued that residents should have greater involvement in deciding how the Council supported them, through mechanisms such as consultations or surveys, in order to identify what kind of support the Council needed to provide, particularly during the process of recovery from the pandemic. The Service Director acknowledged the suggestion and agreed that the Council would not be able to identify all the different kinds of support that would be required on its own. Noting that the Council had been in touch with thousands of residents throughout the pandemic, he emphasised the personalised and targeted approach of Cambridgeshire Local, which identified different issues in different areas. It was agreed to develop a detailed and creative method for engaging with citizens to establish their needs and aspirations. Noting that it would need to reach communities that did not regularly engage with the Council, he suggested that it should be built into the recovery plan. **Action required**
- Confirmed that there had not been a shortage of volunteers for the vaccination programme, but rather there had not been a requirement for a large number of volunteers.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the key themes discussed in this report; and
- b) Identify and consider further opportunities to provide support to Cambridgeshire's residents affected by the pandemic.

### 344. Improving Social Mobility

The Committee received its first report on progress that had been made in delivering the Council's social mobility priorities, which had been established at a Committee

workshop on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and which would be reported at each Committee meeting in the future. Arguing that it was the most fundamental challenge faced by the Council, given its widespread and systemic nature, he emphasised the necessity to confront it before the effects of the pandemic widened current inequalities even further. In acknowledgment of this importance, additional capacity was being given to the directorate through the recruitment of a designated programme manager. Noting that slides from the February workshop had been attached as an appendix to the report, he highlighted those on pages 64-68 as best demonstrating what was being developed. He also drew attention to the fact that the Committee was being asked to end the Tackling Social Mobility working group in favour of the Committee collectively leading on the work in a more prominent way.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Suggested that it would be helpful to establish what forms of help were currently available to families in order to identify gaps in provision and areas that needed further attention. It was argued that an initial starting point needed to be established which summarised current data, laid out proposals for future action, identified what funding would be available and established a broad delivery plan. The Service Director indicated that the directorate was preparing a list of priorities and resources in order to facilitate Members' engagement with residents prior to the forthcoming local election and acknowledged its importance in developing the social mobility programme. **Action required**
- Observed that the Tackling Social Mobility working group included Members that were not on the Communities and Partnership Committee and argued that they would still need to participate and that the work should be carried out in a cross-party, cross-committee approach. The Service Director acknowledged the concern and committed to contacting such Members, while also developing a mechanism to ensure that they were able to continue to engage with the agenda. Noting that the work incorporated the whole Council and would therefore receive support from all the directorates and committees, he suggested that a form of communication should be developed to allow Members to be informed while also providing a way to provide input. **Action required**
- 

It was resolved unanimously 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.

## 345. Cambridgeshire Libraries – Review and Future Priorities

The Committee received an update on the New Libraries Model, including information on how its development and implementation had been affected by Covid-19. Highlighting the role that the library service had played in supporting residents during the pandemic, the Assistant Director of Employment and Skills emphasised the value of libraries to local communities and the Council's social mobility agenda. Although its normal services had been severely limited, the temporary redeployment of 80% of library staff to the Covid-19 Co-ordination and Response Hub had allowed for a greater understanding of the Think Communities philosophy and agenda, while also breaking down barriers between teams. The Library Support Manager highlighted the extensive training that library staff had undertaken in order to provide the wide range of services and activities they were now involved in, and attention was also drawn to a programme run through the Business and Intellectual Property Centre to help businesses overcome the impacts of the pandemic.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to the library staff for its work throughout the pandemic and in consolidating a fundamental role for the service in the long-term recovery, noting how residents embraced libraries as being at the heart of their communities.
- Suggested that library users receiving Universal Credit should be exempt from the fee charged to request or reserve specific books. The Library Support Manager clarified that the charge had been introduced because of the significant increase in requests being made and subsequent need to move books between libraries around the County. He confirmed that the fee was only applied to requests were for particularly popular books, in order to allow the service to purchase additional copies.
- Considered how the pandemic had affected the library stock and resources. The Library Support Manager informed Members that the main challenge had been in pre-ordering books and calculating yearly financial payments with the publishing industry, with many book delivery dates being delayed or postponed. At the same time, funding from Arts Council England had allowed for greater investment in the increasingly popular digital stock, particularly children's books.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree to continue to use the New Libraries Model as the key vision for public libraries in Cambridgeshire;
- b) Note and comment on the progress made against the previously agreed New Libraries Model; and
- c) Consider additional inputs the service can make to support both the Cambridgeshire Local delivery model and the Social Mobility theme.

The Committee received the January 2021 Finance Monitoring Report for the People and Communities directorate, which covered the period to the end of January 2021. A slight reduction from £2.25m to £2.18m was identified in the expected overspend of services overseen by the Committee, and it was noted that the overspend largely resulted from impacts of the pandemic. The Senior Finance Business Partner informed Members that funding received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was being shown across the Council as underspend through additional income, whereas additional expenditure related to Covid-19 was being indicated as overspend within individual service areas, and that the overall balance across the Council should reach an equilibrium. It was also noted that although the cost of redeploying staff to assist at the Covid-19 Coordination and Distribution Hub had been shown as a spend for Think Communities, this was offset by the underspends shown in the other areas of the Council from where the staff had been redeployed.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Review and comment on the report.

### 347. Community Champions Oral Updates

The Committee noted oral updates provided by the following Community Champions:

- Councillor Costello (Huntingdonshire), who welcomed the donation and distribution of over 1000 items donated to the Winter Warmers project and thanked volunteers and the library service for their support. She also expressed enthusiasm for local engagements that would take place with the new Huntingdonshire Place-Based Co-ordinator over the coming weeks. A written update was also provided and attached as Appendix 1 to the minutes.
- Councillor Every (East Cambridgeshire), who informed Members of a skills networking forum that was being developed alongside the current structure in East Cambridgeshire, which would bring the various stakeholders together to focus on the challenge of helping young people get themselves into the workplace, alongside those who had been made redundant after many years of experience. She also paid tribute to the new East Cambridgeshire Place-Based Co-ordinator and noted the benefits that the role would bring. A written update was also provided and attached as Appendix 2 to the minutes.
- Councillor French (Fenland), who informed Members of a scheme to encourage people to eat fresh produce, as well as some other initiatives that were aiming to obtain funding, including a new BMX track in March. She drew attention to ongoing work in areas affected by flooding and highlighted the need for additional financial support.
- Councillor Meschini (Cambridge), who welcomed the working relationship with the new Cambridge Place-Based Co-ordinator.

## 348. Communities and Partnership Committee Agenda Plan

Acknowledging that the reserve meeting date for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 would probably be used for a training workshop, the Committee noted its Agenda Plan.

Chairman  
27<sup>th</sup> May 2021



## Community Champion of Community Activity Update

Community Champion: Cllr Adela Costello

Place: Huntingdonshire

Date: 4 March 2021

Update	
<p><b>A good quality of life for everyone.</b> Gain a deep understanding at a District/City level through discussion with officers and local members where appropriate, of key issues which impact on demand for County Council Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Essentials by Sue and Winter Warmers reduces the impact on County Council Services by accepting donations of items and distributing them to the most vulnerable within the local community. Although Essentials by Sue is on hold during the various forms of lockdown, we are still able to collect and distribute winter warmers under strict Covid 19 safety arrangements. During the whole process over 1000 probably nearer 1500 items were donated, a wonderful example of how communities will support each other and others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The best start for Cambridgeshire's Children.</b> Focussing on relevant issues for the District/City, report back to Committee and the Communities Network on areas of strength and areas for improvement which would strengthen impact on outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with Officers to help deliver engagement meetings throughout Huntingdonshire, 4 are arranged for later this month and will on this occasion be virtual. These are being led by Officers from both HDC and CCC. Further events will be planned for the summer months on a more local basis. Met with the new Place Co-ordinator for Huntingdonshire and looking forward to working with Sophie and her team when they start.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Thriving place for people to live</b> Engaging and working with communities and other elected representatives for relevant Divisions as needed across the District so people's voices are heard and self-sustaining communities are encouraged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children having access to suitable warm clothing during the winter months in particular those in fuel poverty. This is being distributed by various organisations including Cornerstone, Children and Family Centres and P3.</li> <li>Older children having opportunities to collect necessary toiletries to enhance their daily lives, which is on hold at present as schools/youth clubs and community centres are closed again.</li> <li>Supporting opportunities for early years children to access play and learn social activities, again on hold.</li> <li>Taking responsibility as a Corporate Parent for our Children in Care and working with the Virtual School to improve outcomes including continued audits of PEPs.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging and working with local organisations throughout Huntingdonshire to provide for district communities to enable them to be self-sustaining and have a voice. This is particularly important for the DADS group in St. Neots who are working towards becoming a Dementia Friendly Community but equally to enable all people with disabilities to access local shops/businesses and facilities. This is a project that should be instigated throughout the District once lockdown conditions are rescinded.</li> <li>• Meetings are taking place to consider the development of the four towns in the district to become Market Towns with improved central infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability of initiatives and activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of the Market Town Strategy is the development of cycle ways throughout the areas to link local communities. Inspire parish employment opportunities reducing the need to travel using carbon fuelled vehicles plus promoting the use of electric cars.</li> <li>• Work with local parishes to bring tree planting in community green areas which will enhance the environment and will help to improve air quality with successful management of trees and woodlands.</li> <li>• Virtual meetings will continue to reduce carbon emissions as people work from home.</li> <li>• Local parish councils to offer opportunities for allotment tenants to grow organically.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Good Practice</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint working between Officers and Members of HDC and CCC plus local parishes and organisations such as Hunts Forum within this difficult time of continuing lockdowns. Liaising with the libraries to deliver local opportunities and their own projects such as the Library Presents Christmas Window at Ramsey Library promoting local artists, both professional and amateur. I was involved in a video which I have now seen, it is available on YouTube.</li> <li>• Linking with groups who provide support for the most vulnerable in our local communities, for instance, Ramsey Neighbourhoods Trust, the W.I. and U3A plus others. I was pleased to nominate Ramsey Neighbourhoods Trust for the Commendation from the Chairman of the County Council for their work during the first and consequent lockdowns plus the relief offered for the flood victims in December. The Chairman has awarded this.</li> <li>• Ensuring that members of the public have access to all necessary and vital information through local media sites.</li> </ul>	

## Community Champion of Community Activity Update

Community Champion: Cllr Lis Every

Place: East Cambridgeshire

Date: 4 March 2021

Update	
<p><b>A good quality of life for everyone</b> Gain a deep understanding at a District/City level through discussion with officers and local members where appropriate, of key issues which impact on demand for County Council Services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Two Cambridgeshire Local presentations completed (3.3.21)</b></li> <li>• <b>Collaborative working with VCAEC and CCVS to deliver training. New project plans for development of the Volunteers Centre.</b></li> <li>• Continuation of the review of how the problem solving and delivery groups support the CSP; set up steering group for Safer Streets initiative;</li> <li>• Working with ECDC on their Leisure and outdoor activity Covid-strategy;</li> <li>• Asked to set up Fund Raising steering group to support new community football pitch at Soham Village College</li> <li>• New theme of CSP: domestic violence and child exploitation.</li> <li>• Joined the PCN North Drugs and Alcohol Group</li> <li>• Working with Place Based Co-ordinator next stages for Cambridgeshire Live events.</li> <li>• Working with Ely Covid-19 Mutual as volunteer (focus Ely) Undertaking research on resident consultation for newly proposed Community Hub for North Ely.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The best start for Cambridgeshire's Children.</b> Focussing on relevant issues for the District/City, report back to Committee and the Communities Network on areas of strength and areas for improvement which would strengthen impact on outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Working with the Combined Authority and other agencies (with Fenland DC) to start a Skills Network Forum in East Cambs and Fenland.</b></li> <li>• Working with the Youth Advisory Board starting 20.1.21.</li> <li>• Input into meetings on the feasibility of the Splash Pad and Skate park initiative;</li> <li>• Next stage working with the ECDC Youth strategy.</li> <li>• Working on widening the young people in care voices to members through the Children in Care Council – looking at CSP role with care leavers, wider than just housing</li> <li>• Working to set up Skills Forum with ECDC and Fenland.</li> <li>• Part of the newly formed Steering Group for the proposed Local Education Partnership for East Cambridgeshire now undertaking research.</li> <li>• Working with Littleport Parish councillors on their bid to the Cultivate Fund for a Youth Worker</li> </ul>

<p><b>Thriving place for people to live</b> Engaging and working with communities and other elected representatives for relevant Divisions as needed across the District so people's voices are heard and self-sustaining communities are encouraged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus Review Working Party representative for ECDC.</li> <li>• Work continues with Library Presents, Ely Museum, Cambridgeshire Music, Chamber of Commerce – refocus for Learning and Skills sector.</li> <li>• Implementing the new Friends of the Sessions House in Ely promoting it as an arts, heritage and community centre for the wider area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with ECDC and the City of Ely Council's on implementation of their policies (member of both the relevant committees) on Climate change.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability of initiatives and activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering case studies together of good practice, working on sustainable structures for continuity, supporting Cambridgeshire Live initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Good Practice</b></p>	
<p>All the projects above have been based on research and as a result of collaboration, facilitation, partnership alignment and community engagement in order to leave a legacy of strengthened local partnerships and developing community assets.</p>	

**New activities in bold** – all other work in progress