

## CUSPE Policy Challenges Research on Models of Local Government after COVID-19

To: Strategy and Resources Committee

Meeting Date: 17th December 2021

From: Executive Director, Business Improvement and Development

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable

Outcome: The Committee is being asked to consider the research and recommendations from CUSPE on models of local government after COVID-19. The intended outcome is a decision as to whether and to what extent the research report's recommendations will be agreed to and implemented within the relevant Council services.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note and comment on the research undertaken by CUSPE on the wellbeing economy as a proposed model of local government decision-making after the emergence of COVID-19;
- b) Consider the recommendations made by CUSPE as set out in the full report at Appendix 1, pages 17-18; and
- c) Task officers to prepare a detailed strategy setting out the ways in which recommendations (if agreed) can be driven forward and delivered, either by the Council or in collaboration with our partners.

### Officer contact:

Name: Amanda Askham  
Post: Executive Director, Business Improvement and Development  
Email: [Amanda.askham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Amanda.askham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 703565

### Member contacts:

Names: Councillors Lucy Nethsingha and Elisa Meschini  
Post: Chair/Vice-Chair  
Email: [lucy.nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)/[elisa.meschini@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:elisa.meschini@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 706398

## 1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2016, Cambridgeshire County Council initiated an annual collaboration with the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange (CUSPE). The programme, known as the CUSPE Policy Challenges, brings teams of researchers from the University of Cambridge together alongside supporting members and officers to explore challenges the Council faces in the form of research questions.
- 1.2 In February 2021 it was decided that the 2021 round of the CUSPE Policy Challenges would be scaled down to a later start and shorter timeframe in light of the May 2021 elections, and that research topics would be limited to follow up questions based on previous CUSPE reports. In April 2021 Amanda Askham, Executive Director of Business Improvement and Development, proposed the topic of “Models of Local Government after COVID-19” as a follow up to the 2017 CUSPE report on “New Models for Transformation”.
- 1.3 The research project began in July 2021, with Amanda Askham as the officer supporting the researchers and Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Elisa Meschini, Deputy Leader of the Council, as the supporting members. The research report under consideration here is the outcome of the researchers’ development of and response to the topic of models of local government after COVID-19.

## 2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The main point of the CUSPE research report is that the Council should introduce a ‘wellbeing economy’ in Cambridgeshire as a model of local government appropriate to the recovery from COVID-19 and beyond. A wellbeing economy is a model of government decision-making that prioritises and aligns decisions around aspects of human wellbeing as measures of success, in contrast to models that prioritise conventional economic measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- 2.2 After a brief introduction, the report discusses the rationale for focusing on wellbeing in light of COVID-19 in Cambridgeshire. Here it is emphasised that the model of a wellbeing economy has been deemed effective in battling various forms of inequality, whilst COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities. Some Cambridgeshire and Peterborough specific statistics that corroborate this are highlighted, with sensitivity to the diversity of communities and outcomes within the area.
- 2.3 The report discusses examples of existing Council activity that move in the direction of a wellbeing economy – such as the measurement of environmental, economic, and health outcomes, the current interest in Doughnut Economics and community wealth building, and the Joint Administration Agreement – and proposes ways these can be further developed. It is also worth noting here that a wellbeing economy framework is relevant to recent Council work on social value in Procurement and the BID directorate, as wellbeing-enhancing initiatives for our communities could form part of a social value offer, and the framework could help connect social value to wider Council activity.
- 2.4 International case studies of governments that have adopted a wellbeing economy model are introduced and their local relevance proposed. Indications of potential movement in this direction at the national level in the UK are also mentioned. To illustrate how wellbeing priorities can be defined within the categories of financial, environmental, human, and social

wellbeing, elements of the Joint Administration's priorities are put alongside the wellbeing priorities of New Zealand and Wales. The benefits of a 'wellbeing assessment' for all policy decisions are also discussed here.

- 2.5 The report highlights the connection between sustainability and wellbeing, citing the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Liveable Cities project as support for the idea that reducing carbon emissions is integral to human wellbeing rather than a separate policy area.
- 2.6 The report discusses the implementation of a wellbeing economy measurement framework at the Council in terms of three core principles – the maintenance of human health, economic health, and environmental health – and two types of indicators – objective and subjective wellbeing. Data sources for measuring these indicators and ways of managing the measurement are suggested. A three-step process of implementation is recommended.
- 2.7 The report concludes with several policy recommendations deriving from the foregoing discussions, suggestions for the Council to conduct primary research that are beyond the scope of this research project but would enable a wellbeing economy framework to be more tailored to the County's needs, and 'future outlook' that supports the models of community wealth building and public-private partnerships as ways of overcoming the tension between the wellbeing benefits of sustainability to residents and the private sector's contribution to carbon emissions, as well as being key to implementing a wellbeing economy.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

- 3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do  
The report above sets out the implications for this priority in 2.2, 2.3, and 2.7.
- 3.2 A good quality of life for everyone  
The report above sets out the implications for this priority in 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6.
- 3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment  
The report above sets out the implications for this priority in 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7.
- 3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us  
There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4. Significant Implications

- 4.1 Resource Implications  
The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:
  - The research report recommends the Council create a Wellbeing Officer role

#### 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The research report recommends the adoption of a wellbeing economy framework as a means of tackling social and economic inequality in Cambridgeshire.

#### 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The research report advises the Council to conduct primary research to better understand what improvements in wellbeing mean to local residents.

#### 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The research report advises the Council to consider community wealth building as a means of implementing a wellbeing economy.

#### 4.7 Public Health Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The overall motivation of the research report is to propose a model of local government that is appropriate to the recovery from COVID-19.
- The overarching theme of the research report is that government decision making is improved by a central focus on resident wellbeing as a measure of success.
- It has the potential to address health inequalities.
- 2.6 above includes significant implications for this public health.

#### 4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

##### 4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: While several examples and case studies of climate action are discussed, the research report only recommends the Council establish a more general connection between environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

##### 4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: While several examples and case studies of climate action are discussed, the research report only recommends the Council establish a more general connection between environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

##### 4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: While several examples and case studies of climate action are discussed, the research report only recommends the Council establish a more general connection between environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: While several examples and case studies of climate action are discussed, the research report only recommends the Council establish a more general connection between environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral Status:

Explanation: While several examples and case studies of climate action are discussed, the research report only recommends the Council establish a more general connection between environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: While several examples and case studies of climate action are discussed, the research report only recommends the Council establish a more general connection between environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Positive Status:

Explanation: The research report recommends the Council establish a connection between environmental sustainability and wellbeing.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Stephen Howarth

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Henry Swan

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Amanda Askham

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Amanda Askham

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Val Thomas

## 5. Source documents

### 5.1 Source documents

“CUSPE Team 3 2021: Models of Local Government after Covid-19” (CUSPE research report)

### 5.2 Location

Attached as Appendix 1.