

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: 16 October 2025

Time: 2.00 p.m. – 3.31 p.m.

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall

Present: Councillors Alison Whelan (Chair), Laurence Damary-Homan (Vice-Chair), Henry Batchelor, Alex Bulat, Sarah Caine, Yasmin Deter, Daniel Divine, Peter Fane, David Levien, Charlotte Lowe, Stefan Fisher, Tom Sanderson and Geoffrey Seeff

11. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Osborn (substituted by Councillor Fisher) and Councillor Hoy.

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Minutes – 5 June 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

While noting the Minutes Action Log, the Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships informed Members that the one action had been completed.

13. Public Questions and Petitions

No public questions or petitions were received.

14. Funding for the High Impact Use Operational Team

The Committee received a report regarding funding for the High Impact Use (HIU) Operational Team. The Council's Communities Service host the HIU Operational Team who supported residents with high attendance at hospital Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments. The report sought approval to enter into a new Section 256 Agreement with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to receive funding to continue hosting the team in the 2026-27 financial year.

The ICB's Programme Director for Strategic Commissioning discussed the interim evaluation of the pilot project and highlighted its success. A more comprehensive evaluation would be undertaken as the work continued.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Commended officers for the work to date.

- Inquired about options to secure long-term funding. It was noted that such funding was not available at the current time, but the initiative and evaluation would be key to initiating discussions regarding a sustainable delivery model. The future evaluations would capture the impact on wider systems and cost savings.
- Noted the reduction in A&E attendance and non-elective admissions by at least 40% and questioned whether this figure was limited by available resources. The Head of Communities explained that the initial cohort of patients, which were followed throughout the interim evaluation, had complex needs. The service focused on reducing attendance at A&E for non-medical needs. For the following cohort, visits dropped from 2,142 in the year prior to the service to 35. Some individuals still required medical attention but there was a reduction for attendance due to social, environmental and emotional needs.
- Questioned how the Council could secure the funding and service with the current changes to the ICBs. The ICB's Programme Director for Strategic Commissioning reassured Members that the ongoing evaluation of the service was fundamental and the merging of ICBs could allow the opportunity to expand the service across the wider ICB footprint.
- Asked for further data on service user outcomes and engagement with other agencies. Members learnt that regular updates would be provided in Spokes, and the evaluation results would be shared – **action required**.
- Requested a Member briefing on the HIU initiative and its evaluation findings – **action required**.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Authorise the Council to enter into a Section 256 Agreement with the Integrated Care Board for receipt of funding to host the HIU Operational Team.

15. Youth Guarantee Trailblazer Grant Funding Agreement

The Committee received a report to approve the receipt of a grant from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) for the delivery of services provided as part of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer. The Trailblazer formed part of the Government's 'Get Britain Working' programme. The objective of the funding was to reduce the number of young people aged 18 to 21 in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET), by providing targeted support and opportunities.

The funding was confirmed until the end of March 2026. There were indications that the funding could be extended in year two, before potentially being extended nationally in year three.

The grant supported the delivery of two projects. The first was the extension of the statutory tracking that the Council undertakes to cover those aged 19 to 21. This would enable comprehensive data to be collected to understand the barriers faced by young

people to reduce NEET. The second project was the Youth Impact Programme (YIP), building on the previous National Citizens Service.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Acknowledged that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was one of eight areas that received the funding which provided an opportunity to test a localised approach ahead of any national rollout of the programme.
- Learnt that YIP supported over 100 people, with targeted efforts in areas where there were higher concentrations of NEET. The tracking project aimed to ensure needs were met effectively, and the data would be shared with the CPCA.
- Noted that approximately £600,000 of the grant was allocated to the tracking service and £250,000 would be allocated to maintain the YIP. Members were informed that the tracking involved extensive work, including engagement with identified NEET individuals.
- Questioned how the Council identified economically inactive 19- to 21-year-olds. The Head of Cambridgeshire Skills explained that the tracking service would identify the individuals. It was acknowledged that there was a gap for young people moving into the area, but work was underway with partners, including district councils, to address this.
- Asked how success would be measured at the end of year two and whether feedback from young people was considered. Members learnt that the CPCA was engaging with young people to inform the project. The key measure of success would be a reduction of NEET young people. Work was being undertaken with colleges, youth clubs and the Citizens Hub in St Neots to reach those not engaging with traditional services.
- Queried how many young people would be supported by the funding. Members learnt that other partners would also support individuals identified in the Council's tracking service. Approximately 200 young people would be supported through YIP.
- Noted the Government announcement of the 'Youth Guarantee' programme on 29 September and asked if the same criteria would be used with the programme. Members learnt that no guidance had been received regarding how the announcement would relate to the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer programme.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the receipt of a £841,695 Youth Guarantee Trailblazer grant from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority; 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 sign the Grant Funding Agreement under seal.

16. Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission

The Committee received an update on the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission which was launched in October 2024. The Commission published the final report in May 2025. The report identified six focus areas: income maximisation, digital inclusion, rural poverty, housing and homelessness, children and families, and mental health.

Following the publication of the final report, work was undertaken to implement the Commission's recommendations. Place-based and collaboration, lived experience, and evaluation were central delivery principles. A countywide delivery group was established. The delivery would also be supported by Cambridgeshire Community Reference Group (CRG). The next phase of delivery would be supported by the Government's Crisis and Resilience Fund, which was scheduled to be launched in April 2026.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Emphasised the importance of cross-agency collaboration and placed-based approach to effectively address poverty.
- Highlighted that the announcement of the Crisis and Resilience Fund was a positive step, as there was a need for funding that supported preventative work. Officers explained it would be launched in April 2026 and would be three years of funding. The fund would replace the Household Support Fund and recognised the importance of investment in resilience. It was estimated that the amount would be similar to the Household Support Fund but expected further clarification soon.
- Stated that approximately 4 million children in the UK lived in poverty, with one-third being migrant children.
- Queried the main findings for child poverty in Cambridgeshire, and what actions were needed to ensure that Government received this message. Members were informed that the statistics of English indices of deprivation were due to be released at the end of the month and would be analysed. Further evidence gathering would occur which would be fed back into the delivery group.
- Reaffirmed commitment to addressing poverty and acknowledged that funding remained a challenge.
- Recognised the difficulties and complexities of the work and thanked officers for the report.
- Queried whether Cambridgeshire experienced more absolute or relative poverty. Members learnt that it was difficult to determine due to changing definitions and difficulties collecting data. It was noted that relative poverty would be further explored with deprivation statistics. The stigma associated with poverty prevented individuals from seeking help, and the role of the delivery group was emphasised.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the recommendations of the Poverty Commission; and
- b) Endorse the move to a delivery phase of the Council.

17. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Action Plan Update

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the progress of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy Action Plan. The strategy was approved by Full Council in 2023, and the action plan was approved by the Committee in January 2024. The full action plan was attached in Appendix 1.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Requested further information on staff satisfaction and the link to retention and recruitment. Members learnt that an independent staff survey had recently concluded. The analysis would help understand the feedback and satisfaction levels within the workforce. Members would be updated on the findings. The Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships highlighted the importance of the Council's participation in the Government's Disability Confident Scheme and the way staff networks provided feedback to the Council. It was noted that there was a reduction in reliance on agency staff within the children's workforce and uptake in recruitment and retention. It was agreed that colleagues in Human Resources (HR) would circulate further information on recruitment and retention – **action required.**
- Noted that a recent recruitment exercise, which used an EDI template and policy, had resulted in an increase in candidate applications.
- Welcomed the guaranteed interview scheme for care experienced candidates and asked whether there had been an increase in applicants and recruitment from care experienced candidates. If so, what specific roles or sectors had care experienced candidates been recruited to. The Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships agreed to circulate information on the impact of the initiative and provide further information regarding specific roles and sectors to Committee – **action required.**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Review the progress of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Action Plan.

18. Corporate Performance Report – Quarter 1 (2025-26)

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the performance monitoring information for Quarter 1 2025-26, covering 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025. There were two amber Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and six green KPIs. Details for each indicator were outlined in Appendix 1.

One amber KPI related to the number of visitors to libraries, which had been affected by temporary closures for refurbishment. The second amber KPI related to death

registrations, which had been impacted by reduced staffing and appointments due to bank holidays.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Requested an update on section 3.4 of the report, which detailed the pathway to green for 'CoSMIC 009: Registration – All deaths registered within 5 days.' Members were informed that changes implemented had positively impacted Quarter 2, which was at 91%. This improvement was linked to diary management and prioritisation of registrations that needed to be achieved within shorter time periods, such as death registrations.
- Sought further information on 'CoSMIC 006: The percentage of clients engaging with Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service' noting that the KPI was outside of the Council's control. The Service Director: Communities, Libraries and Skills emphasised the importance of tracking the engagement rates of individuals experiencing domestic abuse. Members were informed that delays in referral processes could affect engagement, and quicker referrals enabled earlier conversations which increased the likelihood of engagement. Members acknowledged that individuals experiencing domestic abuse were often high risk and that trauma could impact their engagement with support services. It usually took multiple contact attempts before individuals engaged.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Scrutinise and comment on the performance information presented.

19. Finance Monitoring Report – August 2025-26

The Committee received a report which presented the financial position to the end of August 2025 of the services within the remit of the Committee. The report included revenue and capital budget.

At the end of August 2025, the revenue budgets within the remit of this Committee forecasted an underspend of £434,000.

The report to the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 23 October 2025 stated that the Council was reporting an overspend of £12.3 million.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Questioned the risk of the current underspend turning into an overspend. The Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships explained that the underspend could be delivered by holding vacancies during recruitment, providing there was no risk or detriment to the delivery of services. There was detailed financial monitoring and overspends were closely monitored and managed.
- Understood that the underspend was due to an increase in Government grants and queried whether this could be relied on next year. Members learnt that the Homes for Ukraine funding was based on the number of individuals arriving. It was expected

that the number would decrease but it had remained constant. The grant was split between district councils and the Council to contribute to services provided. The scheme's continuation was dependent on central government and the number of arrivals into the county.

- Sought information in relation to the Home for Ukraine scheme and to what extent the Council was able to predict the demand on services. The Service Director: Communities, Libraries and Skills informed Members that when the scheme started, the Committee agreed to invest and budget for the next three years for the role of Migration Policy and Partnership Manager. This supported work with new communities and the Council's sanctuary status work. This funding was from the Home to Ukraine reserves and programmed in until 2028. The Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships stated that it was difficult to predict demand.

It was resolved unanimously to note the content of the report.

20. Agenda Plan and Appointments

While noting the agenda plan, Members were encouraged to request briefings regarding the poverty strategy. The Service Director: Communities, Libraries and Skills highlighted the release of the indices of deprivation data, and the Chair suggested that training would be useful to understand the data – **action required**.

Councillor Damary-Homan was nominated as the Council's representative to the National Youth Agency Lead Members Peer Network. There were no objections or further nominations.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note its agenda plan attached at Appendix 1 to this report;
- b) Appoint Councillor Damary-Homan as the Council's representative to the National Youth Agency Lead Members Peer Network.

Chair