Think Communities Approach to Social Mobility, Anti-Poverty and Inequalities

To:	Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee
Meeting Date:	8 July 2021
From:	Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, Adrian Chapman
Electoral division(s):	All
Key decision:	No

Outcome:	The Committee is asked to consider this report setting out the proposed approach to addressing the causes and consequences of poverty and poor social mobility across the County, in order to set the direction for action in the coming months and years. The consequences of this will lead to reduced social immobility, reduced poverty and inequality, and improved outcome for our residents.
Recommendation:	The committee is recommended to:

a) Endorse the approach set out in this report;

b) Comment specifically on and endorse the suggested approach to the development of a Social Mobility Strategy for Cambridgeshire, and

c) Agree for that strategy to be presented to Committee for approval in September.

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1. Background

1.1 Our work to address social immobility has received a significant boost from the new leadership of the council, who have made the issue one of the most important aspects of its Joint Administration Agreement. In recognition of this, the Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee has been established to drive forward this work at pace.

1.2 This section provides background for our work on social mobility and our enhanced direction of travel. It begins by discussing poverty and the limitations inherent in using this term. Issues of income inequality are then explored and placed in the context of a wider complex social mobility system. An explanation of how the different elements of the social mobility system were used to develop a Framework for Action is given. Finally, the importance of action across the whole system is emphasised throughout.

1.3 Poverty

1.3.1 There is no single, universally accepted definition of poverty. Many definitions describe relative rather than absolute poverty, comparing households with the lowest incomes against the rest of the population. In this way, the UK Government often defines those falling below 60% of the national median income as suffering poverty. Furthermore, poverty measures can be based on disposable income before or after housing costs. Poverty levels based on income measured after housing costs are generally higher, because poorer households tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on housing.

1.3.2 While defining poverty based on an income threshold can be useful, the thresholds set are essentially arbitrary. Rather than using income as a proxy for poverty, the Index of Income Deprivation is an official measure that measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income.

1.3.3 The most recent (May 2021) data release from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) uses 2019 data to map income deprivation down into small geographic areas known as Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs have an average population of 1500 people or 650 households. This data can then be aggregated to map and explore income deprivation both between and within local authority areas in England. Maps of income deprivation for each Cambridgeshire district can be found in Appendix 1. The data can be explored easily and interactively on the ONS website at https://tinyurl.com/yxnpdf8p.

Table 1: Income Deprivation Across Cambridgeshire

	Percentage of population that are income deprived	Income Deprivation Ranking (Out of 316 English local authorities, where 1 is the most deprived)	Percentage of people who are income deprived in the least deprived[*] LSOA	Percentage of people who are income deprived in the most deprived LSOA
Cambridge City	7.7	248	0.6	23.6
East Cambs	7.0	267	2.1	15.6
Fenland	14.0	93	6.2	30.2
Huntingdonshire	7.4	253	1.5	22.2

South Cambs	5.6	301	1.7	17.3

* The method by which overall levels of deprivation are calculated for each LSOA is described at Section 1.4.2 of this report.

1.3.4 Table 1 shows that that Cambridgeshire contains some of the least income deprived local authority areas in England. In Fenland however, 14% of the population are income deprived. Furthermore, there are areas of significant income deprivation at LSOA level. In the most deprived LSOA in Fenland, almost 1 in 3 people may be considered income deprived. Even in South Cambridgeshire, which is one of the lowest ranking local authorities in England for income deprivation overall, 17% of people in the most deprived LSOA are income deprived.

1.4   Social Mobility

1.4.1 The Social Mobility Commission (an independent advisory non-departmental public body) defines social mobility as as the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents.

1.4.2 As we will explore in greater depth later, the causes and impacts of poor social mobility are complex. They also vary significantly geographically. What is clear is that for many in society, the place in which they grow up has a lasting impact on their earnings in adulthood. This is not just an issue of a pay gap between those who have grown up in disadvantaged and more affluent families. In areas with the highest social mobility, disadvantaged individuals aged around 28 earn more than twice as much as their counterparts in the areas of lowest mobility.

1.4.3 While Cambridge was named as a social mobility cold spot in 2016, it has recently been identified (Social Mobility Commission, 2020) as one of the ten English local authorities outside of London with the smallest pay gaps between the sons of the most and least deprived. In the same report the Commission combined several indicators to produce a table of *'the best and worst social mobility areas in England'*. https://tinyurl.com/bbyvhrzu. The list of 24 local authority areas identified as the least socially mobile includes Fenland. The list of the 15 most socially mobile areas in England includes both South and East Cambridgeshire.

1.5   The Relationship Between Income Deprivation, Multiple Deprivation and Social Mobility

1.5.1 While poverty/income deprivation is important, impactful, and immediate, it is only one of a set of deprivations that come together to shape the lives and futures of those in our communities.

1.5.2 The different aspects of deprivation come together to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation known as the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The individual domains of the IMD are:

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation

- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation

1.5.3   The various indices of deprivation form a set of conditions that create good or poor social mobility. Action on social mobility must therefore cut across the range of inter-relating factors that form the IMD. Such an approach will necessarily address poverty/income inequality, but not exclusively so. Action on income inequality should therefore be part of a wider approach to issues of social mobility.

1.5.4   A shift in focus from poverty to income inequality to social mobility not only follows from the analysis above, but it also mirrors statutory and national developments in this area. The 2016 Welfare Reform and Work Act (which replaced the Child Poverty Act 2010) established a Child Poverty Commission which later became the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. That body is now simply the Social Mobility Commission.

1.6   The next part of this report therefore describes a more detailed analysis of the social mobility system that has led us to develop a Framework for Action for Social Mobility. It has been developed to try and improve the life experience and life chances of those in our most disadvantaged communities.

2   Main Issues

2.1   Social mobility is a product of the inter-relationships of a complex system. A systems map for social mobility is shown at Figure 1.
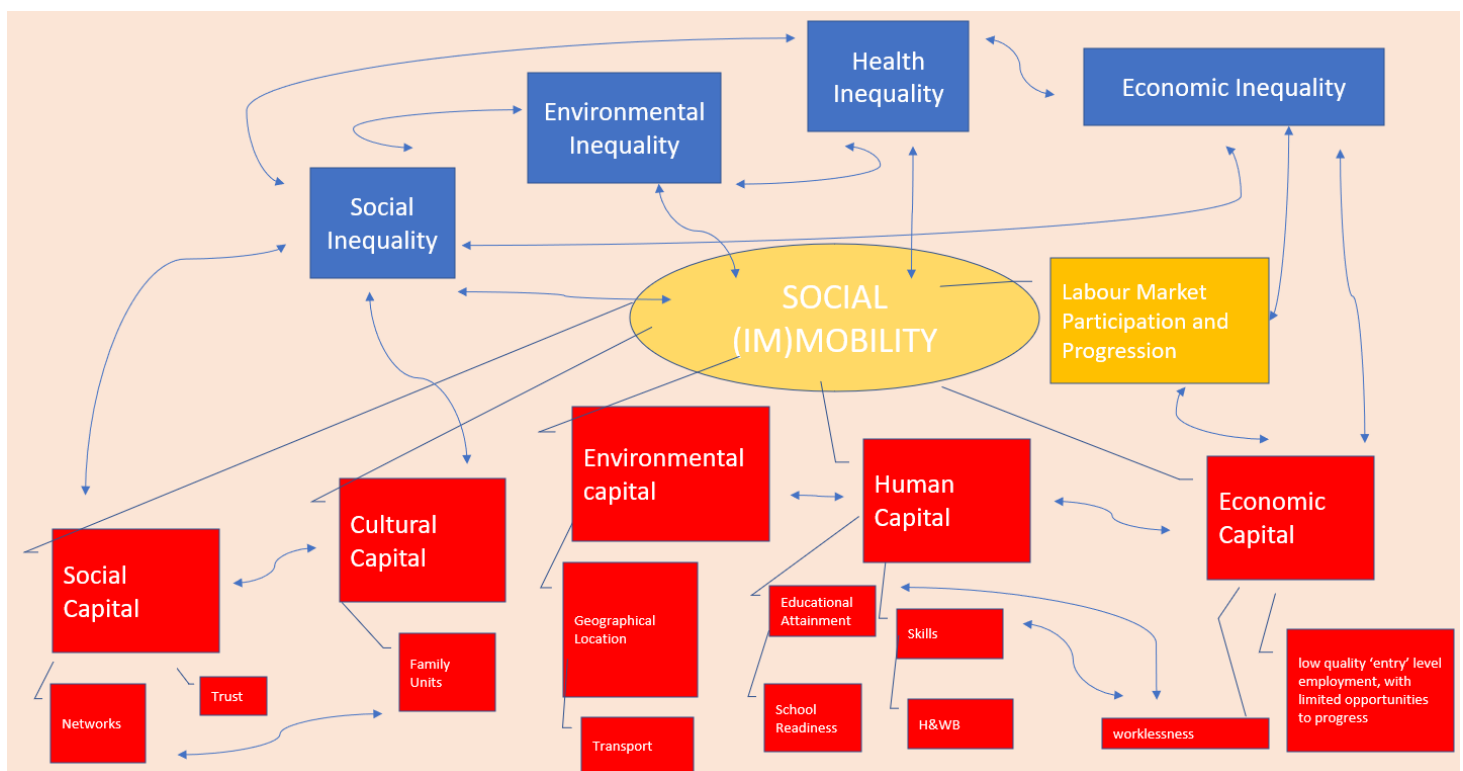

Figure 1: A systems map for social mobility

2.2   While this systems map is highly illustrative (for example not all the potential interactions between the elements are shown), it shows several important points. These are:

- Social mobility is the product of a number of important elements that interact in a complex system.

- Poor social mobility results from a lack of social, cultural, human, environmental, and economic capital (the assets that a person has to tap into which support them or their family to improve their economic status). These 'causes' of social immobility are shown in red in the systems map. Definitions and examples of each of these capitals is given in Table 2.

- Poor social mobility results in entrenched inter-generational inequalities in income, health, and other domains. For the most disadvantaged, these inequalities (shown in blue on the systems map) present as poverty, poor life expectancy and a range of other limiting issues and experiences. Examples of these 'symptoms' of poor social mobility are given in Table 2.

- The interdependency between elements of the system means that some of the symptoms of poor social mobility can further constrain the possibility of future social mobility, the symptom in effect becoming a cause. For example, a lack of income might translate into an inability to access a car or pay for public transport, therefore limiting access to the jobs market which means the prospect of social mobility and reducing income inequality are both further limited.

- The main driver of social mobility is good quality participation and progression in the labour market.

- Many of the policy levers and services that might address social mobility and income inequality issues lie with others at local, regional, and national levels.

Table 2: Inequalities and Capitals in the Social Mobility System: Definitions and Examples

Social Inequality	Environmental Inequality	Health Inequality	Economic Inequality
Presents as:	Presents as:	Presents as:	Presents as:
Loneliness	Noise	Smoking rates	Income inequality
Poor social networks (real world and online)	Pollution	Obesity rates	Housing quality and insecurity
Poor perception of safety	Crime and ASB	Life expectancy	Food poverty
Poor sense of community or	Access to green space and the natural environment	Breastfeeding levels	Access to credit
		Access to treatment	

belonging in community Poor sense of people around/neighbours willing to help Low levels of trust in others.	Motor vehicle injury Chemical exposure	Late presentation to support services	'Penalty of Poverty' factors (e.g. poor tariffs for utilities)

Social Capital	Cultural Capital	Human Capital	Environmental Capital	Economic Capital
Social capital is a term used to describe the extent and nature of our connections with others and the collective attitudes and behaviours between people that support a well-functioning, close-knit society. Networks Trust Volunteering Participation Membership Support from others Aspiration Positive role models	Cultural capital represents symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences. It is the knowledge, behaviours, and skills that a person can tap into to demonstrate one's cultural competence and social status. Wide range of experiences 'Sense of awe and wonder'	Human capital is the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic wellbeing. Educational Attainment Skills School readiness Health & Wellbeing	Environmental capital is generated from our interaction with place and the world around us. Location Environment (Home, Learning, Workplace, Leisure) Transport Built Environment Access to and use of green space	Economic capital represents access to economic resources such as cash, credit, and other material assets. Labour market participation and progression Good quality work Opportunities to progress Inherited wealth

2.3   Taking the systems map in conjunction with the definitions and examples shown above we may conclude that:

- The consequences of poor social mobility and inequality tend to present clearly (even when clustered as multiple need) and need more immediate action. Addressing symptoms of social mobility such as income inequality is clearly important. It ameliorates hardship and helps prevent 'downward spiral'. Many of the service offers of public bodies and others are designed around the presentation of these needs.

- Action to support the capitals that are needed to improve social mobility can take longer to achieve impact. As good participation in the labour market is the engine which drives social mobility, the opportunities to support some of these capitals decreases with age. Early intervention, prevention and Best Start in Life approaches are therefore key, though not exclusively so.

2.4   It is vital therefore that action on social mobility needs to address both its causes (capitals) and symptoms (inequalities). This 'broader than services' approach, which will need to be delivered in partnership, is central to the Think Communities approach adopted by the Council. Further, the role the county council can play across our whole partnership landscape, fuelled by the priorities placed upon this agenda by the new leadership, is significant.

2.5   Developing a Framework for Action

2.5.1   Historically, public services to support those in need were designed around the delivery a range of individual services. More recently, it has been recognised that many of the problems faced by individuals and families are inter-related and that service delivery in silos has severe limitations. This has led to moves towards multi-agency partnerships and working, co-location of services and 'lead professionals' to coordinate service delivery. This approach assesses need more holistically and delivers a more personalised approach to providing services and support. These principles underpin the Think Communities approach.

2.5.2   This approach is increasingly common for those in the greatest need and who meet certain thresholds for support. Their need is therefore translated into a demand for services.

2.5.3   Yet need still exists below these various service thresholds. Individuals may interact with a range of public and voluntary services, yet this may be on a transactional or single-issue basis where the totality of their need will neither be visible nor sought. For example, individuals may fall into Council Tax arrears or begin Food Bank use without triggering offers of support. Where such support is offered it may be limited to referring or 'signposting' to other services. In these circumstances we are 'blind' to the needs of a significant cohort of the population, even when interacting with them.

2.5.4   Others may be seldom seen or heard by statutory services, but again that does not mean they are not in need. Indeed, they may be accessing such support informally or on an ad-hoc basis. But this may be limited in some way (e.g. time, scope) and they may benefit from a more holistic support offer.

2.5.5   The groups of people described in paragraphs 2.5.3 and 2.5.4 represent missed opportunities for early intervention and better outcomes that prevent the escalation of need.

2.5.6   In order to address these issues, we will continue to develop the 'No Wrong Door' and 'Making Every Contact Count' approaches, where the first interactions with statutory (and voluntary) services generate the most appropriate support offer needed, not just an offer related to the point of contact.

2.5.7   The analysis above has been reinforced by our learning from providing the COVID Support Hub and the Winter Support Grant. This found that the best way to understand how to support people was to explore their needs on a 1:1 basis.

2.5.8   In summary, our Framework for Action is characterised by:

- A 'broader than services' approach directed by the inequalities and capitals frameworks of the social mobility system.

- Support to individuals approach characterised by:

    o 'Personalisation at scale' (both in delivery and assessment of need).
    o Support in navigating 'the system'.
    o 'No Wrong Door' and 'Making Every Contact Count'.
    o Prevention and early intervention.
    o Universal or 'near universal' offers that can easily be provided across the county, supplemented by
    o Targeted activity based on geography or cohorts of need.
    o Delivery in partnership, recognising the existing offers of others as well as our own.

- An asset based, Think Communities approach.

- An increased focus on the use of evidence and robust assessment and prioritisation of proposed new activity.

2.5.9   In the last few weeks, the Framework for Action has led to the development of two new proposals:

- We are in advanced discussions with one of the finalists from the 'NESTA Rapid Recovery Challenge' to offer income maximisation, debt management and budgeting support to a massive cohort of people across the County. Further details can be found at Appendix 2.

- We are using the evidence from the evaluation of the Winter Support Grant, our learning from the operation of the COVID support hub, and the feedback presented to us by our partners, to explore how the COVID support might be repurposed to provide support to those with ongoing needs as we move towards COVID recovery and beyond. An early trial will look at how this personalised assessment, support and 'system navigation' (helping and doing, rather than referring and signposting) might be delivered by this model.

2.6   A Social Mobility Strategy

2.6.1   It is important to recognise and learn from repeated failures of policy to address income inequality (ONS data shows no progress on reducing income inequality of over last 10 years, with slight increases since 2017) or social mobility (more difficult to measure but broadly accepted to have stagnated or declined in the post-war period).

2.6.2   By considering the complexity and interrelatedness of the social mobility system, we can better understand why trends in social mobility are remarkably resistant to policy interventions. This is especially the case for policies, programmes and projects that target a single issue. For example, significant action on social mobility has focussed on improving educational attainment in the most deprived areas. However, the Social Mobility Commission reported in 2020 that in the most unequal areas – those with the largest pay gap and the poorest social mobility – up to a third of the earnings gap is driven by family background and local labour markets, over and above educational achievement.

2.6.3   The Social Mobility Commission recognised this in its 2020 report *'Monitoring Social Mobility 2013-2020.'* https://tinyurl.com/4xtr4u4v. It indicated that lack of progress was due in large part to a lack of coherent cross government strategy, a lack of a central dedicated team to coordinate action, and a simple but robust mechanism to coordinate policy and action. Their message is clear. Issues that cut across organisational and departmental silos require coordinated action, not stand-alone solutions. While this is often recognised, such coordination is less regularly achieved at the level of service delivery and support to individuals.

2.6.4   While it clear that complex systems require systemic approaches, in practice both strategy and action regularly fail to achieve this. As such, learning from previous attempts to address complex systems issues should be paramount in our approach. An example of this is the previous Health Action Zones (HAZs) programme. In summary, HAZs set out to focus on community and area-based initiatives to reduce the effects of persistent disadvantages in neighbourhoods blighted by generations of poverty and neglect. The evaluation of the programme eventually found:

- Too many overly ambitious and aspirational targets

- The debilitating nature of pressure to produce 'early wins'

- The shifting nature of policy that relegated HAZs as a priority

- The lack of suitable support, space, time, and trust that is required to make sustainable change possible

- The production of simple descriptions of activity without adequate discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of what is being presented.

2.6.5   The complexity of the social mobility system and the repeated and ongoing failure of policy to address the causes and consequences of poor social mobility are important points to recognise but cannot be taken as an argument to do nothing in this space. However,

neither should they lead to a cycle of action that restates the problems of inequality (for the Nth time) and then generates a list of ongoing activity across the system, supplemented by some new approaches and projects.

2.6.6 Based on the analysis above, it has previously been agreed that the previous social mobility action plan be set aside, and the approaches set out in this paper developed in its stead. That is not to devalue the projects, services or initiatives that formed the action plan. Rather it recognised that the collation of these in a spreadsheet added little value in terms of understanding the impact of existing activity and designing and targeting new interventions. A new action plan based on a 12-month cycle of 'Learn, Design, Act, Review' cycle has been produced in its place.

2.6.7 To generate a 'new' social mobility strategy and action plan predicated on the previous approach would therefore represent doing the same thing again and hoping for a different result. Indeed, it is likely to represent unhelpful diversionary activity given the amounts of resource usually required to generate such strategies and action plans.

2.6.8 Moreover, this is already a crowded strategy space. There are multiple pre-existing strategies that significantly (and necessarily) overlap with the social mobility agenda. These are 'owned' at all levels from the national to the very local.

2.6.9 Any Social Mobility Strategy for Cambridgeshire should therefore focus almost exclusively on developing a process by which the range of activities set out in the whole spectrum of relevant individual strategies may be best coordinated and delivered. The simplicity of this statement should not disguise the magnitude of its ambition. It is a significant endeavour of whole systems change that reflects the cross-cutting nature of social mobility across Departments, organisations, and communities.

2.6.10 The need to develop a systems-wide/systems change approach does not mean ignore the significant activity that might impact on social mobility that is already taking place in both the statutory and voluntary sector. Not developing a 'traditional' strategy for social mobility will not stop this work.   Neither will it predicate against new developments, services, trials, or approaches. Rather, these can be undertaken simultaneously with the development of a system-wide approach to social mobility.

2.6.11 However, the development of the capitals and inequalities framework will allow us to assess existing and proposed services to try and ensure our activity (especially proposed new activity which may be limited by resource availability) is not too concentrated on one aspect of the social mobility system.

2.7   Summary

2.7.1 A twin track approach has therefore been outlined:

- A Framework for Action has been developed which will guide our approach to the delivery of services and support to those in need. The Framework has already been used successfully to develop the proposals for new services described in paragraph 2.5.8. Part of the Framework approach is to use the inequalities and capitals model of social mobility to seek to ensure our activity does not ignore important causes or consequences of poor social mobility. However, the co-ordination of service delivery

will remain ad-hoc without the development of a whole systems approach to social mobility.

- 'Strategic' work in this area should therefore be characterised by coordination of pre-existing strategies and subsequent coordination and consolidation of service delivery in order to provide a personalised 'offer' to those in need. This work will require significant systems change, partnership work and overall organisational support.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do
This report outlines for committee the work undertaken to understand the association between poverty, inequality and social mobility and makes recommendations for a framework for action that aligns well with all of the corporate priorities. The recommendations seek to build a universal and holistic offer for residents in the communities in which they live, seek to address inequality to ensure a good quality of life for everyone, by nature of the capitals framework will seek to support learning in early years, development, environmental wellbeing and supporting those who need support at the earliest possible point.

3.2 A good quality of life for everyone
See wording under 3.1 above.

3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full
See wording under 3.1 above.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment
See wording under 3.1 above.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us
See wording under 3.1 above.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications
There are no significant implications at this point, although further work will be undertaken if the recommendations are endorsed.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications
No Implications

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications
No implications.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications
This report suggests a framework for action which would address inequalities within our communities, taking a data and evidence-based approach – therefore if endorsed this

approach would be a further support to embed equality and diversity across the councils work.

4.5   Engagement and Communications Implications
If endorsed the framework suggested would see increased engagement with residents in need, there will be a need to undertake clear communications work with residents, staff, and members which we would implement through the Think Communities service Communications Officer and Place Teams.

4.6   Localism and Local Member Involvement
No Implications at this point, although further work will be undertaken if the recommendations are endorsed as the role of elected councillors to support local action will be key.

4.7   Public Health Implications
If endorsed the framework for action supports underlying health inequalities and therefore will have a positive effect on public health.

4.8   Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas:

4.8.1   Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral
Explanation:

4.8.2   Implication 2: Low carbon transport.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral
Explanation:

4.8.3   Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats, and land management.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral
Explanation:

4.8.4   Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral
Explanation:

4.8.5   Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral
Explanation:

4.8.6   Implication 6: Air Pollution.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral
Explanation:

4.8.7   Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive
Explanation: The Framework for action recommends activity supporting environmental capital within communities and individuals, and although not specifically mentioned it can be envisioned that if individuals or communities were impacted by issues relating to climate

change (flooding for example) we would use the framework to support their resilience in this area in order not to disadvantage them in terms of social mobility.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?   Yes
Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS 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 McMillen

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?
Yes
Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

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: Adrian Chapman

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?
Yes
Name of Officer: Val Thomas

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?
Yes
Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5.   Source documents

5.1   Source documents

Cambridge & Peterborough Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Core Dataset 2020

The Long Shadow of Deprivation, Differences in Opportunities Across England. Social Mobility Commission (2020)

Social Mobility: A Literature Review. Department for Education Business and Skills (2011)

Social Mobility 2013-2020: Is the Government acting on our recommendations (June 2020)

Learning from Policy Failure? Health Action Zones in England   European Journal of Public Health Volume 16, Issue 4 Aug 2006