

## Communities Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Minutes

Date: Thursday 2nd December 2021

Time: 2:00pm – 4:45pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Tom Sanderson (Chair), Hilary Cox Condron (Vice-Chair), Henry Batchelor, Adela Costello, Steve Criswell, Claire Daunton, Douglas Dew, Ian Gardener, Bryony Goodliffe, John Gowing, Simon King, Philippa Slatter, Mandy Smith, Firouz Thompson and Susan van de Ven

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

Apologies were received from Councillor Ken Billington (substituted by Councillor Mandy Smith), Councillor Jan French (substituted by Councillor Ian Gardener), Councillor Ros Hathorn (substituted by Councillor Susan van de Ven), Councillor Lucy Nethsingha (substituted by Councillor Claire Daunton), Councillor Keith Prentice (substituted by Councillor John Gowing), and Councillor Dan Schumann (substituted by Councillor Simon King).

There were no declarations of interest.

### 32. Minutes – 11th November 2021 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Committee's Minutes Action Log was noted.

### 33. Petitions and Public Questions

There were no petitions or public questions.

### 34. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards Annual Report

The Committee received an annual report on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards service, which provided an update on the main challenges of the previous year, including the impacts of Covid-19, the Avian Influenza disease, and withdrawal from the European Union. The key work streams for the forthcoming year would include supporting the economy, providing business support, protecting consumers and developing the service.

Highlighting the success of the collaboration between Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and Peterborough City Council (PCC) since it had commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, the Head of Operations for Trading Standards noted that CCC had previously only had the capacity to provide the statutory minimum service, and the collaboration had increased the level of available resources and therefore led to better service provision. It was proposed to continue with the current agreement beyond its expiry date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, with a draft service level agreement included as Appendix 2 to the report. It was confirmed that the Council would retain the ability to withdraw from the arrangement with one year's notice.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to the service provided by Trading Standards and supported the continuation of the current arrangements.
- Sought clarification on whether the service provided by PCC included both district-level responsibilities as well as County-level responsibilities, and whether PCC was therefore receiving additional financial support to the other districts within Cambridgeshire. Confirming that the service held the same responsibilities across the County, the Head of Operations acknowledged that there were some overlaps between the work carried out by Trading Standards and other district-level services, such as on food standards and environmental health. Information and intelligence were shared among those services and Members were assured that the Trading Standards worked extensively with district councils, with a district-level liaison group ensuring this connectivity.
- Queried whether the service worked with Community Safety Partnerships, particularly in relation to scams. The Head of Operations confirmed that Trading Standards worked closely with the community protection team at CCC, whose role included educating communities on scam protection, such as rogue trading. The service therefore equipped the community with knowledge and advice, while also benefitting from the sharing of information on scams and trends that had been identified at a local level.
- Established that there were around 24 people in the Trading Standards team, including administrative staff carrying out data collection and analysis.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the performance of the service over the previous period and the priorities for the service looking forwards;
- b) Comment on and approve in principle the draft Service Level Agreement that sets out the arrangements for the continuation of Trading Standards services for Cambridgeshire County Council being delivered by Peterborough City Council; and
- c) Authorise the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, to approve the final version of the Service Level Agreement.

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

The Committee received a report from the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships which summarised information, opportunities and challenges relating to the cross-cutting work within the remit of the Committee and the service directorate, including its ongoing role in supporting the Covid-19 response. Attention was drawn to an update on the Council's progress on decentralisation and the development of proposals for the introduction of Joint Area Committees, set out in sections 2.1.5 to 2.1.9 of the report. The Service Director also highlighted an informal request from South Cambridgeshire District Council for short-term financial support for a temporary solution to allow the provision of various services to residents of Northstowe while the Civic Hub was still under construction, and he clarified that if agreed, a formal proposal would be presented to the Committee at a later date. Section 2.4 of the report outlined the Council's development of a new strategy and performance framework, which would include a revision of the Committee's previous Key Performance Indicators, for which performance updates were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Observed that the Council's progress on decentralisation coincided with an important moment in the development of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), providing an opportunity to connect the services to people in a way that was not previously possible. The Service Director argued that decentralisation should be seen as a bridging of the gap between residents and those services that were previously considered difficult to access by some. He also noted the importance in the Council approaching ICS partners to develop the relationship and demonstrate how it could help connect their services to communities.
- Expressed concern about how the hundreds of parish and town councils across the County would be represented or involved with the proposed Joint Area Committees, suggesting that some parish councils would not have the resources or inclination to become involved, and arguing that it would be impractical to have

a representative from each one. It was emphasised that the proposals were still under development and a more detailed report would be presented to the Committee at its meeting in March 2022, which would follow discussions with parish councils and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC).

- Suggested that the proposed Joint Area Committee meetings could be held virtually, in order to maximise public participation and involvement.
- Confirmed that the proposed Joint Area Committees would have financial resources at their disposal, with appropriate governance processes in place to manage how it was spent.
- Expressed concern that the proposed Joint Area Committees would add an additional layer of bureaucracy to local government in Cambridgeshire, and argued that local communities and parish councils could be engaged through alternative means. It was further argued that the Joint Area Committees could potentially side-line parish councils, rather than embrace and empower them.
- Queried how the Council identified groups, particularly those working with young people, that had not necessarily accessed safeguarding training, and how the Council promoted the delivery of such training across the County. The Service Director informed Members that the need for training that had been delivered in Fenland had been identified through the Love Wisbech programme, in which volunteers sought to engage with young people and the Council's safeguarding board team were able to provide the training at no cost. Observing that it was a good example of how a place-based approach could identify such gaps in provision, and given how important it was to the strength of any group that wanted to work with young people, he undertook to investigate whether a universal offer of such training could be developed. **Action required**
- Noted that the Youth and Community Connector had been working with South Cambridgeshire District Council to help support communities to access funding from the residual area partnership fund, and requested further information on the fund and how it worked. Noting that the Council held a delegated grant funding budget in the youth services, the Service Director informed Members that it was a localised funding arrangement designed to allow small groups like parish councils or voluntary organisations to come forward with ideas around local youth engagement activities. Noting that the team in South Cambridgeshire had been working with the district council's teams to help identify projects suitable for the locality, he agreed to provide Members with some details of the projects that had received funding. **Action required**
- Welcomed that the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership had delivered awareness sessions to all library staff across Cambridgeshire ahead of a safe space scheme being implemented.
- Expressed concern about the wording used in the third paragraph on page 51 of the agenda, arguing that the last sentence appeared to imply that it was the responsibility of women to approach certain situations differently. The Service

Director acknowledged the concern and apologised for the wording that had been used, while emphasising that almost all attacks on women were carried out by men and it was therefore changing the behaviour of men that should receive the most attention. It was also noted that interactive self-defence did not always provide sufficient protection for women.

- Requested further information on the unsuccessful Changing Futures bid. Noting that the application had been for funding from the government to expand the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) model, which was based on working with and supporting people with the most complex needs, the Service Director informed Members that it had been developed in collaboration with partners across the County, including all the district councils and a wide range of voluntary and community sector organisations. Despite the unsuccessful bid, all the participants had agreed to maintain the collaboration and effectively mainstream the approach themselves, albeit without the funding that would have been available.
- Requested an update on any additional measures that would be taken in response to the Omicron variant, which had emerged since the report had been published. Noting that the hub had received an increase in requests for information and advice since the variant had been identified, the Service Director informed Members that the Council was in the process of seeking approval to extend the Enhanced Response Area status that had been awarded one month earlier. An extension would run to Christmas and would allow the Council to provide additional advice and guidance to residents. The vaccine programme was also being significantly enhanced to ensure that everyone had access to a clinic and a vaccine.
- Clarified that a report from the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange related to the Food Poverty Alliance would be presented at the Committee meeting in March 2022.
- Noted that the Cambridgeshire Local Council Annual Conference would be held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the key themes discussed in this report;
- b) Agree to hold a workshop to identify and agree new key performance indicators, as referenced in section 2.4.13 of the report;
- c) Agree that the Service Director should discuss with relevant colleagues the request to financially support temporary community facilities for the Northstowe community, as outlined in section 2.3.1 of the report.

## 36. Anti-Poverty and Social Mobility

The Committee received a report detailing the Council's progress on addressing social mobility and tackling poverty in order to deliver sustainably improved outcomes for residents. Ten specific actions had been agreed by the Committee in September 2021 and these were being taken forward in a holistic approach, with updates provided in section 2 of the report. Attention was drawn to the personalised support pilot roles and responsibilities, detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which had been designed to embed more personalised support across the whole system.

The Committee was informed that the Food Poverty Alliance steering group had met for the first time on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021, at which participants had been widely supportive of developing a countywide alliance, which would build on work that had already begun to have an impact in various parts of the County. It was emphasised that food alliances were about more than emergency food provision, and that they sought to tackle the root causes of food poverty at the same time. The Food Poverty Alliance therefore needed to be integrated across the whole support system in the County.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Highlighted the problems associated with digital poverty, particularly regarding access to GPs and online consultations. The Head of Think Communities assured Members that there was a significant amount of work being undertaken to tackle digital inequalities, and drew attention to the Digital Buddy model that was being developed with Age UK to provide assistance to vulnerable elderly adults recently discharged from hospital by assisting in accessing online shopping, communicating with friends and family online, and staying safe online. He highlighted that libraries provided free digital access points, while the Council had funded the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership, which was a network set up to improve digital inclusion across the County. It was nonetheless acknowledged that it would be beneficial to coordinate individual projects into a cohesive plan, where equipment, connectivity and skills were considered alongside one another.
- Welcomed the support being provided to work that was already underway on tackling food poverty and emphasised the importance of learning from what worked successfully on a local level and implementing it across the County.
- Paid tribute to the work of officers in tackling poverty in Wisbech through the local foodbank, which it was argued was a pilot that provided a model for helping people out of systemic poverty, and thus reducing the need for foodbanks.
- Expressed concern about fuel poverty and noted the success of the Winter Warmers scheme in Huntingdonshire the previous winter. The Service Director for Communities and Partnerships noted that the Household Support Fund would help identify the extent and scale of fuel poverty across the County. The Social Mobility Manager also informed Members that applicants to the fund who were experiencing problems heating their homes were being connected to the Warm Homes project, which benefitted from further access to support grants.

- Noted that over 500 applications to the Household Support Fund had been received, although it was anticipated that tens of thousands more would be received following further promotion of the fund. It was highlighted that the Household Support Fund was time-limited and therefore applicants were also being connected to organisations that could provide more long-term assistance.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the key themes discussed in the report; and
- b) Endorse the approaches being taken, and the specific actions proposed, against each of the main themes described in section 2 of the report.

### 37. Cambridgeshire Registration Service Annual Report

The Committee received a report which detailed the work of the Registration Service, highlighting service performance and developments over the past year, as well as suggestions for future service development. While providing an update on the conversion of the council's Roger Ascham site to become the service's main office, the Assistant Director for Regulatory Services sought Members' opinion on renaming the building as the Cambridgeshire Register Office. Noting that the registration services of many local authorities around the country continued to experience backlogs due to the impacts of Covid-19, he paid tribute to officers for overcoming the Council's backlog and bringing registrations up to date, while also providing assistance to venues around the County that hosted ceremonies. Work was being undertaken with the Transformation team to identify further opportunities to improve service provision and access, and he noted the importance in engaging with local communities as part of this process in order to maximise the level of support that could be provided and help address inequalities.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to the work of officers in maintaining service provision during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Suggested that it was a good time to assess new opportunities for income generation and supporting local businesses in the marriage sector as the pandemic receded.
- Expressed concern about hosting citizenship ceremonies in New Shire Hall due to its location and lack of public transport services, and suggested prioritising alternative venues around the County. Acknowledging the concerns, the Assistant Director assured Members that the service would identify alternative venues around the County and begin to use them to ensure accessibility if that was required.

- Suggested that it would be beneficial to carry out an engagement survey with local communities, including issues such as access and inclusion.
- Suggested that a focus group involving officers and external stakeholders would provide commercial value and help improve service provision. Noting that a similar proposal had been made recently, the Assistant Director undertook to consider how it could be arranged. **Action required**
- Drew attention to an issue that had been raised about an incorrect gender being recorded on a certificate, and sought confirmation that certificate templates and adequate training for staff were in place to reflect the Council's inclusive policies. The Assistant Director provided assurances that such cases were always followed up on, with additional training provided when appropriate, and he acknowledged the importance in ensuring such issues were avoided.
- Expressed concern that the service did not have sufficient registrars, noting that some residents had been told they would need to visit offices in other parts of the County to where they lived. Noting that there was an annual recruitment campaign for registrars, the Assistant Director informed Members that the campaigns were targeted to areas where particular demand for increased capacity had been identified. He also confirmed that there was a mix of full-time and part-time registrars across the County according to seasonal demand.
- Supported the renaming of the Roger Ascham site to the Cambridgeshire Register Office.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the overall performance of the service; and
- b) Comment on the suggested future service development set out in section 2.7.3 of the report, and identify further opportunities for service development, diversification or improvements.

## 38. Cambridgeshire Libraries Service Review

The Committee received a report as part of a full review of the Library service which contained a performance profile for each library across the County, a profile of the communities and their needs, and proposals for a new approach to assessing library performance through the development of a new performance framework that included qualitative indicators for assessing service impacts alongside the current suite of quantitative indicators. Attention was drawn to the service's financial challenges, which had been exacerbated by the impacts of the pandemic and plans for the development of four new libraries, leading to a forecast of a £350k loss for 2021/22, and proposals for generating further income were set out in sections 2.12 and 2.13 of the report. It was suggested that three new quantitative measures could be introduced as part of the performance framework to capture the impact of the library service on a quarterly basis, including the number of active library users, the



number of visits made to library sites, and total digital engagements. It was also proposed to form a cross-party Members working group to develop options and suggestions for the service, including the mobile library service.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the proposal for a working group, and suggested that it would benefit from the involvement of librarians, given their experience and the level of feedback that they received from members of the public. It was agreed that the Spokes would participate in the working group, along with Councillor Slatter, while the Conservative group would consider including a further Member. **Action required**
- Highlighted the value of the mobile library service in rural areas, and noted the scope for its development with technological advances. It was suggested that the service could tie in with local events to increase its usage.
- Paid tribute to the work of the County Advisory Group on Archives and Local Studies in bringing together a diverse group of people, including archivists and librarians.
- Observed that the South Cambridgeshire Service Profile on page 166 of the agenda omitted Fulbourn from the list of volunteer-led libraries. It was noted that the Council supported non-statutory library access points across the County through the provision of books, IT and training, and Members were informed that the Service Level Agreements for the partnerships would be reviewed and renewed throughout 2022.
- Clarified that TSB would provide once a week in person banking access to Ramsey after the last branch closed, as opposed to Barclays, as written in section 2.13 of the report.
- Established that while libraries were often considered a form of sanctuary for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, local authorities were also able to apply for a specific designation called ‘Library as a Sanctuary’, which could be achieved on the basis of support provided, for example, to asylum seekers. Noting that the service’s libraries already had most of the requirements in place, the Head of Libraries, Archives and Culture undertook to establish whether the Council could apply for the designation. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the performance, scope and reach of the service as evidence of the contribution of the service to supporting community needs;
- b) Endorse the Library Improvement Fund application as a pilot for new use and co-management of library space;

- c) Agree to pursue a framework to capture qualitative as well as quantitative data on the impact of the library service going forward, as set out in the report; and
- d) Agree to create a time-limited cross-party working group to discuss and agree recommendations for future service design based on the information contained in the report.

### 39. Cambridgeshire Skills Six Month Review

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the progress made by Cambridgeshire Skills towards its delivery plan up to the end of the 2020/21 academic year, as well as proposed future improvements. Noting that the majority of the curriculum had been provided remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Head of Adult Learning and Skills informed Members that the service was working to reinstate face-to-face learning wherever possible, although she acknowledged that many learners remained apprehensive about this, and the ongoing complications surrounding venue availability and subsequent costs also made this difficult. Nonetheless, it was highlighted that the service had reached all its financial thresholds, which meant that there had been no clawback from the main funders, and it was emphasised that this had been achieved without compromising the service's underlying values. The general shift to online provision had resulted in a slight postcode change in terms of socio-economic disadvantage, with 67% delivered in priority postcodes, including just over 20% in South Cambridgeshire, which had not traditionally been considered an area of deprivation or low skills.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to the service for successfully continuing to ensure provision during the pandemic.
- Noted that jobs clubs had been set up in Huntingdonshire in Brampton and Yaxley, with work underway to establish a further club in St Neots in the next two or three months, as well as in St Ives and Huntingdon.
- Expressed concern about the difficulty faced by some learners in rural areas travelling to face-to-face classes, suggesting that it would be useful to identify areas where help was particularly needed. It was further suggested that Demand Responsive Transport, such as the service being piloted in Huntingdonshire and Uber Buses, could provide a cheap and efficient way of overcoming such issues. The Head of Adult Learning and Skills acknowledged the concern and observed that the issue concerned both the cost and availability of transport. She informed Members that there was a learner support fund that had been established to support travel costs, and emphasised the importance in re-establishing place-based venues around the County to ensure that there was provision in smaller communities.
- Confirmed that the service made use of library space and resources.

- Expressed concern about the increase in higher take-up in South Cambridgeshire and sought further explanation on the reasons behind this. The Head of Adult Learning and Skills observed that residents in that district had succumbed to the same effects of the pandemic as other areas, including unemployment or furlough, loneliness and other mental health issues, and that the increase in remote provision had opened the service up to a wider base than before.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the 6-month progress of the Service operating as Cambridgeshire Skills; and
- b) Identify other priority areas of focus to support the council's overall priorities.

#### 40. Innovate and Cultivate Fund Annual Review 2021

The Committee received the 2021 annual report on the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, which included the findings of a 2020-2021 evaluation that focused on the applications that had been received and the projects that had been awarded funding. While a slightly higher number of projects had been funded in Cambridge City and East Cambridgeshire, the spread had been fairly even around the County. The Chief Executive of the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, who managed and monitored aspects of the fund and application process on behalf of the Council, drew attention to the feedback that had been obtained from applicants, set out in section 2.12 of the report, and also the case studies included in Appendix 5 of the report.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Clarified that seven Members from the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee participated in the Recommendation Panel that assessed and scored all applications.
- Supported the proposal to involve all the Spokes in the Steering Group, which held responsibility for the wider strategy and operational delivery of the Fund.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the annual review; and
- b) Approve the proposals for the future of the fund, as outlined in section 2.14.2 of the report.

#### 41. Review of Draft Revenue Business Planning Proposals for 2022-27

The Committee received a report which detailed the current business and budgetary planning position and estimates for 2022-2027, including the principal risks, contingencies and implications facing the Committee and the Council's resources, as well as the process and next steps for the Council agreeing a business plan and budget for future years. The table in section 3.5 of the report detailed the Council's budget gap, which had been reduced from £22m to £19.5m through the identification of savings since the previous update had been presented to the Committee in November 2021. Attention was drawn to section 6 of the report, which provided an overview of the savings and income proposals specifically within the remit of the Committee. Two specific savings targets had been identified, including one of £250k through efficiencies across the Communities and Partnerships directorate, and another of £200k via increased income through the Registration service.

While discussing the report, Members welcomed that the Council was considering a further round of funding for the Communities Capital Fund.

The following amendment to recommendation 'b' was proposed by Councillor Criswell, seconded by Councillor King and agreed unanimously (removal in strikethrough):

- b) Comment on ~~and endorse~~ the budget and savings proposals that are within the remit of the Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan; and

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the progress made to date and next steps required to develop the business plan for 2022-2027;
- b) Comment on the budget and savings proposals that are within the remit of the Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan; and
- c) Note the updates to the fees and charges for 2022-23.

#### 42. Finance Monitoring Report – October 2021

The Committee received the Finance Monitoring Report for People and Communities, as well as Public Health, covering the period to the end of October 2021. The Communities and Partnerships directorate had a forecast overspend of £488k, which mainly resulted from reduced levels of income through the Library service as a result of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and additional costs for the Coroners service, which were also related to the pandemic.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- Review and comment on the report.

#### 43. Communities Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Agenda Plan

The Service Director for Communities and Partnerships confirmed that there would be a Committee workshop on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022, instead of a Committee meeting, with the next scheduled meeting to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

It was resolved to:

Note the Committee Agenda Plan.

Chair  
10<sup>th</sup> March 2022