

Anti-Poverty and Social Mobility

To:	Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee
Meeting Date:	10 March 2022
From:	Head of Think Communities, Matt Oliver
Electoral division(s):	All
Key decision:	No
Outcome:	That the approach to address social immobility and tackle poverty is reviewed and scrutinised, and that it delivers sustainably improved outcomes for our residents.
Recommendation:	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Note and comment on the key themes discussed in the report;b) Endorse the proposals to take forward a whole Council approach to social mobility, anti-poverty, and Community Wealth Building;c) Recommend to Strategy and Resources Committee a joint workstream to take forward the roadmap described in Section 2.5 of this report to take forward social mobility and community wealth building as organisational priorities, with this approach supported and mirrored by officers;d) Comment on the options set out in section 2.6.12 of this report, to amend the way the current Household Support Fund wider scheme operates, and to identify further ways of achieving maximum value for money and impact; ande) Delegate the approval of the final design of the new Household Support Fund wider scheme to the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, in order that the scheme can launch from April 2022.

Officer contact:

Name: Paul Fox
Post: Social Mobility Manager
Email: paul.fox@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01733 863887

Member contacts:

Names: Councillor Tom Sanderson and Councillor Hilary Cox Condron

Post: Chair/Vice-Chair

Email: tom.sanderson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
hilary.coxcondron@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01223 706398

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's Strategic Framework 2022-23 was agreed by Full Council on 8th February 2022. The 'Places and Communities' section of the Corporate Priorities set out within that document includes the commitment that the Council will "Establish the principles and practice of Community Wealth Building to enable the economic system to build wealth and prosperity for everyone". This builds upon the intentions set out in the Joint Administration Agreement to improve social mobility, to eradicate poverty, and to ensure equality and inclusion are at the heart of our services and organisation.
- 1.2 In its 2020 report, 'Monitoring Social Mobility 2013-2020', the Social Mobility Commission indicated that progress on social mobility requires a coherent strategic approach, a central dedicated team to coordinate action, and a simple but robust mechanism to coordinate policy and action. While these reflections related to the national government, the underpinning rationale is applicable at a more local level.
- 1.3 A report to this Committee in December 2021 presented a range of practical actions being undertaken to address inequality and the consequences of poverty. This paper considers how such positive practical actions may be enhanced to tackle the embedded issues of social immobility that are the root causes of such poverty and inequality.

2. Main Issues

2.1 The Social Mobility System

- 2.1.1 As presented to the Committee in July 2021, the causes and consequences of social immobility, inequality and poverty are complex and inter-related.
- 2.1.2 The kind of practical initiatives, such as those reported to the Committee in December 2021 (e.g. food poverty work and the provision of direct financial support to individuals), offer vital and practical support to those in need or in a crisis. However, such approaches do not address the complex root causes of social mobility and poverty. Figure 1 uses a simplified version of the social mobility systems map to illustrate this point.
- 2.1.3 Similarly, the breadth and interconnectedness of the social mobility system tend to limit the impact of approaches that are based on a single issue or theme (e.g. educational attainment) or taking a certain approach (e.g. grant funding streams for small projects).
- 2.1.4 To impact on social mobility and the causes of poverty, approaches to practical support, together with other tools at our disposal (and those of our partners), need to be part of a wider strategic approach.

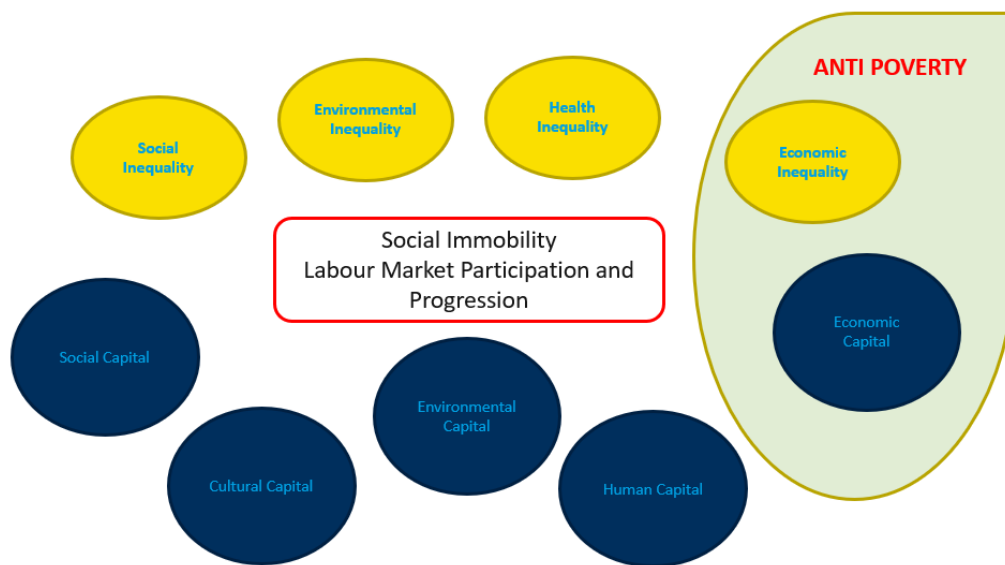


Figure 1: Simplified Social Mobility System Map, highlighting anti-poverty activity

2.1.5 One of the local challenges with adopting what the Social Mobility Commission call a 'coherent strategic approach' to tackling poor social mobility (paragraph 1.2), is that the actions that need to be taken cut across both service delivery structures and Committee responsibilities. For example, issues relating to educational attainment, use of green space, climate emergency, supporting families and many more are all highly relevant to social mobility, but are already subject to strategies and action plans that are owned and delivered outside of those Council functions covered by the remit of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

2.2 Community Wealth Building

2.2.1 Section 2.4 of December's Committee report on anti-poverty and social mobility defined the principles and practices of Community Wealth Building (CWB). Broadly, CWB encompasses a breadth of approaches that aim to make the wealth of a local area 'stick' in that area.

2.2.2 CWB is consistent with the Joint Administration's move towards decentralisation and devolution. For example, Locality (the national network of community organisations) and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) have five key principles for devolution to people and communities. One of these is 'creating an economy that works for the people in it, strengthening communities and prioritising social justice'.

2.2.3 While CWB has been described as 'a mindset not a toolset', there are several themes which can be used to characterise the approach. These are:

- Progressive Procurement
- Socially Productive Use of Land & Property
- Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets
- New Forms of Financial Power
- Plural and Democratic Ownership of the Economy

2.2.4 These themes map more broadly across the social mobility system (Figure 1) than approaches to addressing the consequences of poverty and income inequality. Consequently, as with approaches required to tackle social immobility set out in paragraph 2.1.5, the actions that take forward Community Wealth Building cut across committee boundaries and organisational delivery structures alike

2.3 Anti-Poverty, Social Mobility and Think Communities

2.3.1 The Think Communities model was established prior to the pandemic as a means of fostering more effective and equal relationships with our district and city council partners. It is based on the principles of place-based working responding to a shared set of priorities with delivery carried out by the most appropriate organisation.

2.3.2 That model has evolved during the pandemic and Think Communities teams now work closely and alongside district and city council colleagues, parish and town councils, the broader public sector and voluntary, community and faith sector partners, to create shared plans and to implement ways of working that reflect the needs and capacity of local communities.

2.3.3 Additionally, the Think Communities service administers the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, which provides small grants to community groups to deliver transformational projects that contribute to the Council's overall priorities and deliver a return or help reduce demand.

2.3.4 Paragraph 2.1.4 suggests that valuable approaches such as direct financial aid and grant schemes will be enhanced by making them part of a wider strategic approach to social mobility. The approach undertaken by the Think Communities service already does this to the extent that it takes a more holistic view of anti-poverty and social mobility through its demand-driven work with statutory and non-statutory stakeholders. However, its decentralised and 'bottom-up' nature (while being one of its strengths), means that this approach alone will lack the capacity or capability to engender systemic change.

2.4 Summary/Analysis

2.4.1 Given the analysis above it is suggested that:

2.4.2 Approaches that provide practical support to deal with the impact of economic inequality are vital lifelines for those in crisis but need to be part of a wider approach that addresses the causes of that inequality – that is, social mobility.

2.4.3 The complexity of the social mobility system must define our organisational approach to it.

2.4.4 Community wealth building provides a core around which we can build a coherent strategic approach to social mobility and therefore anti-poverty. Our Think Communities approach and service, as well as resources such as the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, can then be 'wrapped around' this strategic approach in a way that will enhance the impact of both those services and our approach to social mobility (see Figure 2).

2.4.5 Social mobility and community wealth building approaches align well with concepts such as decentralisation and Doughnut Economics and a well-being economy.

2.4.6 Issues that cut across organisational and departmental boundaries require coordinated action, not stand-alone responses.

2.4.7 The leadership and ownership of such cross-cutting issues does not sit neatly within service-defined organisational structures or committees.

2.5 A Road Map for Action

2.5.1 The analysis above is a compelling argument for a clear, cohesive, organisation-wide approach to social mobility and anti-poverty. That is not the same as an argument for an extensive process of strategy development within the current organisational and committee structures and responsibilities.

2.5.2 It is recommended that the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee recommends to the Strategy and Resources Committee that a joint workstream be developed to agree a clear joint understanding of the structures, responsibility, capacity, and capabilities needed to take forward the Council's approach to social mobility, community wealth building and anti-poverty.

2.5.3 That workstream should begin with a joint meeting or workshop of this Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee, which should:

- i. Endorse a whole-Council approach to social mobility and community wealth building adopting the principles set out in Section 2.4. Such a whole-Council approach should be endorsed by a clear organisational commitment that is central to the Council's strategic plan.
- ii. Endorse the adoption of Community Wealth Building, recognising this requires a whole-organisation approach with drive and 'buy-in' from the top and centre of the organisation, supported by dedicated capacity and an approach to culture change. These are key features of successful CWB approaches elsewhere.
- iii. Consider the relationship between the two (and other) committees and develop a clear sense of their relative responsibilities for social mobility and community wealth building.
- iv. Be mirrored and supported by officers undertaking work on how the distinct parts of the organisation come together to take forward the social mobility, community wealth building and anti-poverty agendas as a corporate approach.
- v. Recognise that such an approach needs to connect social mobility and community wealth building with Think Communities approaches, the Innovate & Cultivate Fund, wider Council activity and other new initiatives into the social mobility and the CWB agenda. Bringing these approaches together is not in conflict with a devolutionary agenda, but may be seen as recognising the need to 'centralise to more effectively decentralise'

2.5.4 As these issues are being addressed, a wider approach to community wealth building should be developed, seeking early engagement and alignment with partners who will

ideally be part of this approach and may be developing complimentary approaches (e.g. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Growth Ambition).

2.5.6 The essence of these recommendations is represented diagrammatically below:

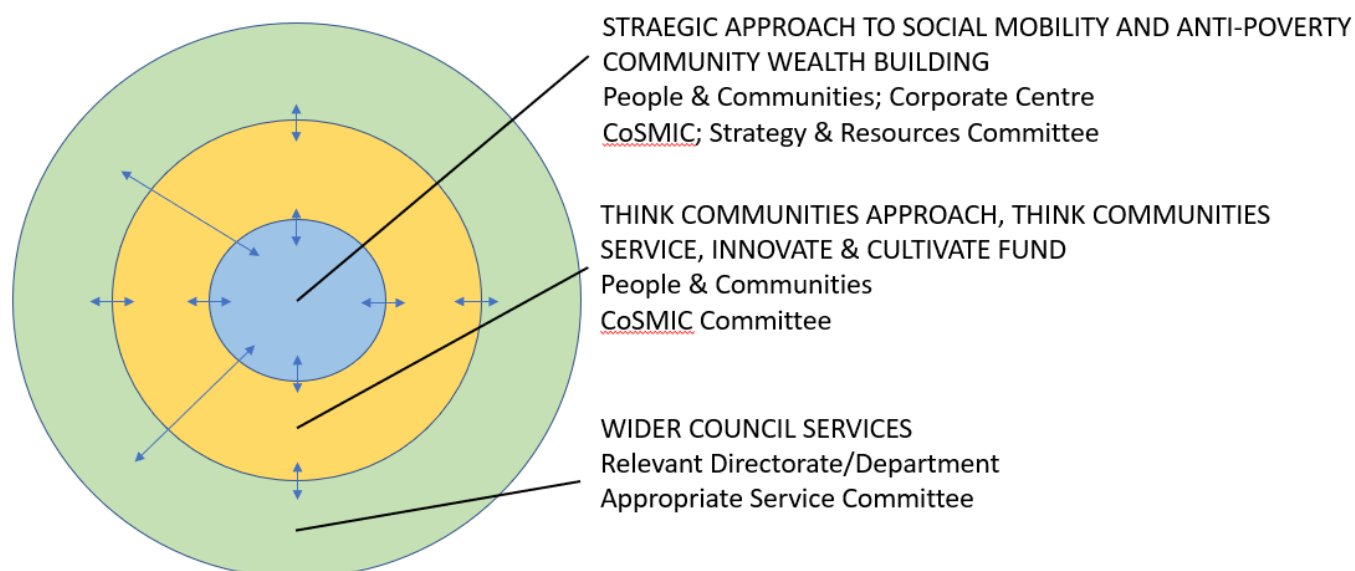


Figure 2: Proposed organisational approach to Social Mobility, using Community Wealth Building as a core

2.6 Household Support Fund

2.6.1 It is timely to provide Members with an update on the work of the Household Support Fund.

2.6.2 The Government launched the Household Support Fund to run from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, with a £3,581,424 allocation for Cambridgeshire. The purpose of the fund is to support those experiencing immediate financial hardship.

2.6.3 The Children and Young People Committee agreed in October 2021 to allocate £1,124,266 to a Direct Voucher Scheme for eligible families over the October half-term, Christmas school holiday, and February half-term periods. This funding has been fully committed.

2.6.4 The Fund balance of £2,457,158 was made available for a wider support fund, the principles of which the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee agreed to in November 2021.

2.6.5 At the time of writing, there have been 16,289 applications to the wider support fund, with, on average, around 350 applications received per day (the highest in a single day was 673). Since the scheme launched in November, we have experienced significant fluctuations in demand week on week, but the primary reasons are thought to include:

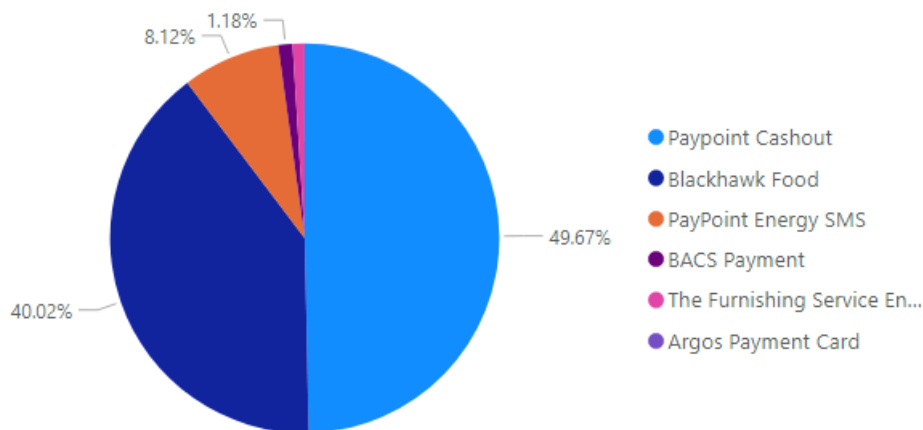
- Growing awareness of a 'new' scheme
- A long Christmas holiday period

- A 'January effect' (demand for Citizens' Advice services for debt is always highest in January)
- The impact of various communications activities
- The enhancement of the scheme to offer everyone on Universal Credit £20

2.6.6 The average amount awarded per supported application is £117 (this is not an amount per application, as many applicants are not eligible, may have submitted multiple applications etc). Our primary provider of support is Family Fund, and Figure 3 below show the proportion of Family Fund activity by category:

Figure 3:

Family Fund Items



2.6.7 Figures 4a, 4b and 4c below shows the primary pressures that applicants are facing, when responded to in our application process.

Figure 4a: Are you having difficulty feeding your family?

Are people having difficulty feeding ...

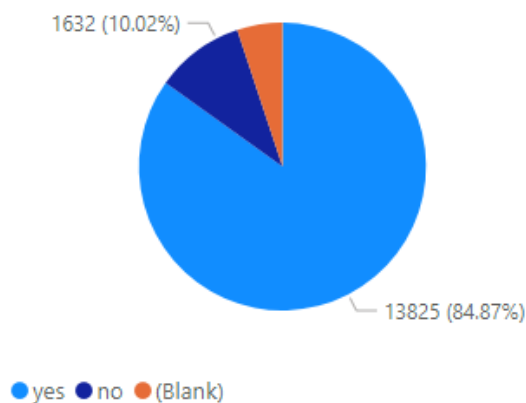


Figure 4b: Are you having difficulty paying household bills?

Are people having difficulty paying...

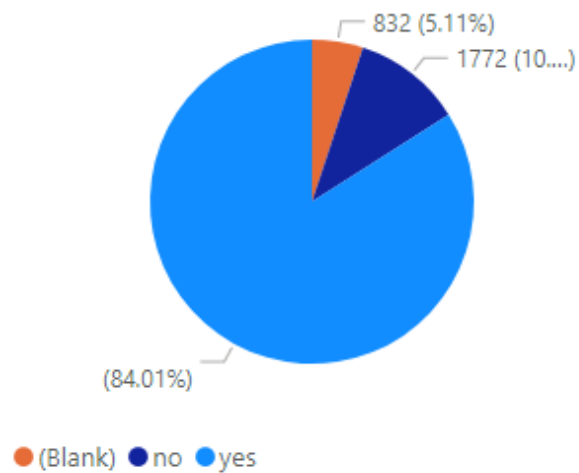
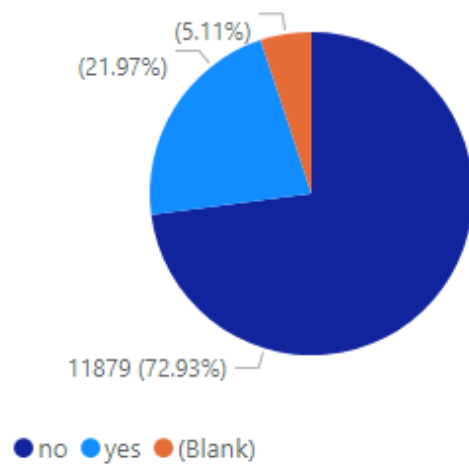


Figure 4c: Do you need other forms of support?

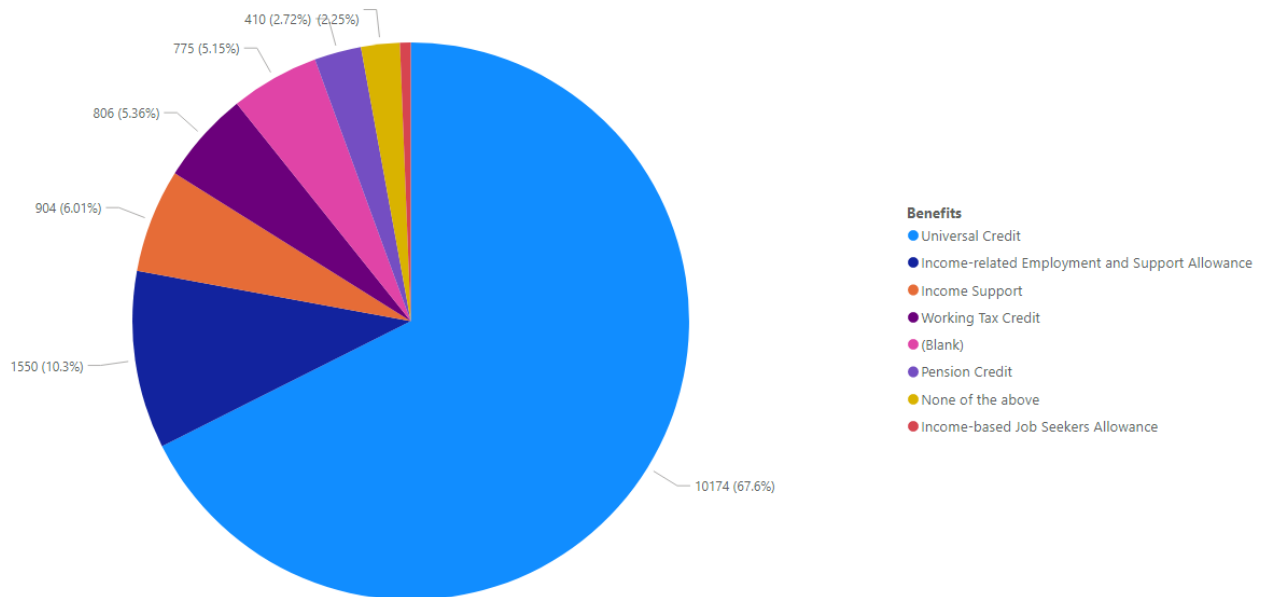
Do people need other support?



2.6.8 Finally, the diagram at figure 5 shows the type of welfare benefit applicants are in receipt of:

Figure 5

Proportion of Applications made by people in receipt of certain benefits



2.6.9 Based on the current levels of spend as a result of the demand, the wider support fund will use the budget allocation set out in paragraph 2.6.4 by around the end of February 2022. A package of measures to allow the scheme to continue has therefore been implemented. These measures comprise the use of one-off underspend, the refocussing of the fund to its core purpose to support food and energy costs and limiting the fund to one application per individual. Members were notified of these changes by way of a briefing note on 21st February.

2.6.10 The measures set out above will enable the fund to continue to support those with the most immediate and urgent needs until it is replaced by a council funded scheme for 22/23. Full Council has now approved an allocation of £1m for a Household Support Fund wider scheme, alongside an investment of £3.6m to fund the direct award voucher scheme throughout 2022/23, in the event that government funding is discontinued. At the current run rate of £25,000 per day this amount would fund the scheme in its current form for just 40 days. It is clear therefore that the scheme cannot continue in its current form in 2022/23.

2.6.11 There are many different approaches that might be taken to targeting support to those most in need. A few of these are listed as bullet points below. In order to ensure continuity between the government funded HSF 21/22 and the local fund for 22/23, design work on the new scheme has commenced and will need to be agreed as soon as possible. That said, it should be noted that late government announcement of the 2021/22 Household Support Fund meant that consultation with partners on the design and operation of the fund was limited. To meet our own principles of decentralisation and partnership, the design of the 2022/23 scheme should seek to rectify this, however we should recognise the inherent

tension between this aspiration and the timescale for designing and launching a 'new' scheme.

- 2.6.12 Some of the ways in which a new scheme could operate in order to ensure the County Council investment achieves the greatest impact include (in alphabetical order):
- Delegation of funds to Districts, to be distributed via locally developed arrangements
 - Delegation of funds to Trusted Partner organisations
 - Delegation of funds to voluntary, community and faith sector groups
 - Driving funding through the countywide Digital Partnership
 - Driving funding through Food Poverty Alliance for a 'money first approach'
 - Enhancement of the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme
 - Investment in Citizens' Advice and/or other advice services
 - Investment in income maximisation services
 - Reduction of Council Tax Arrears for certain cohorts
 - Scaled down version of the current scheme along the lines of options set out for the current scheme
 - Target funds to energy bills by linking payments to signing up with switching schemes

2.6.13 Members are asked to comment on these options, and to identify further ways of achieving maximum value for money and impact. Given the time pressures set out in 2.6.12 and the fact that continuation of the scheme in its current form is not aligned with the budgetary allocation for 22/23, members are then recommended to approve the final design of the scheme be delegated to the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, in order that the scheme can launch in April 2022.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

This report describes progress and plans to ensure the needs and aspirations of our communities are at the core of the Committee's work. The advancement of social mobility is a key strategic approach to this.

3.2 A good quality of life for everyone

The Committee's areas of responsibility offer opportunity for all, and ensures no community is excluded or disadvantaged. The links between social mobility, inequality and quality of life are well established. Enhancement of social mobility will improve the quality of life for all and the life chances of those most in need.

3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

All of the workstreams set out in this report directly or indirectly affect all residents, regardless of age. Moreover, building communities that are vibrant and have opportunity, and enhancing the social mobility of families, will directly and positively create the best possible start for our children.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

Fundamental to our work to support communities to thrive, and alongside working closely with our local partners to decentralise our approaches, is the need to ensure the environment within which they live and work is safe and clean with opportunities to connect to one another.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

For citizens to be confident, healthy, safe, and secure, they need to live in communities that mirror those attributes, and where there is a strong sense of local identity and cohesion. The workstreams set out in this report seek to support the development of a strong local identity, helping to create thriving places for people to live in.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no immediate resource implications arising from the recommendations of this report. However, taking forward a community wealth building approach will require dedicated capacity and potentially some financial resource.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no immediate resource implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Any purchases to support work will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Ensuring and achieving equality of opportunity to all of our residents is central to the work of the Committee and its service directorate. the adoption of recommendations which may impact work on poor social mobility in Cambridgeshire and so tackling social and economic inequality geographically and between a range of communities and groups.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are and will be a number of communications and engagement aspects to the further development of the work of this Committee that our Communications team are aware of, and they are working closely and proactively with relevant officers where appropriate. The further development of a community wealth building approach will need to be built into this.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Local Members remain at the heart of our work and are vital in their role as community leaders in helping make sure we identify challenges, risks, and opportunities early and that we deliver a real and lasting change for our residents.

4.7 Public Health Implications

The approaches to poor social mobility and poverty set out in this report are akin to the 'wider determinants of health' model used by public health to consider and tackle health inequalities. The approaches set out in this paper will therefore require close working with public health to maximise impact and avoid potential areas of duplication. The fundamental drive of this paper is to promote for 'cross-cutting' working, not just with public health but across the Council.

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, potential for positive

Explanation: There is potential in this area as several approaches to community wealth building seek to develop and support projects and (social) businesses in this field.

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

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

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive.

Explanation: Item on Food Poverty Alliance sets out a framework that includes 'Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste'.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral, potential for positive.

Explanation: Community Wealth building approaches often include actions to localise provision of goods and services throughout the supply chain.

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

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

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 Head of Procurement? Yes
Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

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: Matt Oliver

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes
Name of Officer: Amanda Rose

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

5. Source documents guidance

- 5.1 [Monitoring Social Mobility 2013-2020](#) (Report from the Social Mobility Commission)
- 5.2 [Anti-Poverty and Social Mobility](#) (Committee report from December 2021)
- 5.3 [Think Communities Approach to Social Mobility, Anti-Poverty and Inequalities](#) (Committee report from July 2021)
- 5.4 [Devolution for People and Communities](#) (Report from Locality and NAVCA)