CUSPE Policy Challenges Research – How Can We Best Align Partners and Community Assets to Ensure Whole Communities Can Access Opportunities to Enhance Social Mobility?

To:	Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee
Meeting Date:	10 March 2022
From:	Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, Adrian Chapman
Electoral division(s):	All
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	Not applicable
Outcome:	The Committee is being asked to consider the research and recommendations of the CUSPE report. The intended eventual outcome is a decision as to whether and to what extent the research report's recommendations will be agreed to and implemented within the relevant Council services.
Recommendation:	The Committee is asked to:

a) Note and comment on the research undertaken by CUSPE aligning partners and community assets to ensure whole communities can access opportunities to enhance social mobility;

b) Consider the recommendations made by CUSPE, as set out in Section 7 of the CUSPE report; and

c) Task officers to consider which of the CUSPE recommendations, if supported by the Committee, can and should be driven forward and delivered, either by the Council or in collaboration with its partners.

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1. Background

1.1 In October 2016, Cambridgeshire County Council initiated an annual collaboration with the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange (CUSPE). The programme, known as the CUSPE Policy Challenges, brings teams of researchers from the University of Cambridge together alongside supporting Members and officers to explore challenges the Council faces in the form of research questions.

1.2 In February 2021, it was decided that the 2021 round of the CUSPE Policy Challenges would be scaled down to a later start and shorter timeframe in light of the May 2021 elections, and that research topics would be limited to follow up questions based on previous CUSPE reports. In April 2021, the Service Director for Communities and Partnership proposed the question "How Can We Best Align Partners and Community Assets to Ensure Whole Communities Can Access Opportunities to Enhance Social Mobility?"

1.3 The research project began in July 2021, with the Social Mobility Manager and a Senior Transformation Advisor as the officers supporting the researchers, and Councillor Tom Sanderson, Chair of the Communities Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, as the supporting Member. The research report under consideration here is the outcome of the researchers' development of and response to the research question.

1.4 The researchers adopted a mixed methods approach, with extensive literature reviews supplemented by structured interviews with several relevant stakeholders.

2. Main Issues

2.1 The main point of the CUSPE research report is the consideration of the potential of a digital platform to address specific issues with regards to cooperation, collaboration and networking among community groups. This approach has previously been recommended for consideration by the joint Price Waterhouse Cooper / County Councils Network paper on 'The Future of Local Government' (July 2021).

2.2 The introductory section discusses the improvement of social mobility through the concept of capitals. This reinforces the conceptual framework for social mobility and inequality previously presented to the Committee at its meeting in July 2021. It also frames the research question by discussing the complexity of the social mobility system. This leads to the conclusion that collaboration within and between organisations is required to tackle the issues of poor social mobility. How to best align these partners and community assets is therefore a key issue for action on social mobility and inequality.

2.3 The report considers connections and capital at both individual, organisational and system level. In particular it highlights and how tightly bound, clearly defined communities, teams and organisations can become inward-looking and lead to silos. While this can be valuable in terms of focus and forming cohesive work units, silos lead to 'structural holes' that predicate against flows of information and effective joint working between departments or organisations. Efforts bring together groups that otherwise might be subject to silo working are considered to build 'bridging' social capital. Building such bridges is the concept that

underpins the Council's Think Communities approach and service. This 'bridge-building' approach is commonly delivered through the establishment and support of networks – approaches with which the Council supports through bodies such as Cambridgeshire Food Poverty Alliance and Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership.

2.4   The report then sets out the benefits of 'joining up' in order to "eliminate contradictions and tensions between different policies", "to make better use of resources, through the elimination of duplication and/or contradiction between different programmes", and to "to improve the flow of good ideas". The CUSPE team have focussed on one possible way of working towards this goal – the use of digital platforms.

2.5   Section 4 of the CUSPE report then focusses on both the promise and problems of the use of digital platforms and their applicability to this purpose, A suggested digital platform with a defined purpose and a suite of potential features was envisaged and put to stakeholder interviewees for comment.

2.6   Based on the broadly negative responses to this proposition, the research team reconsidered and considered alternative approaches that might enhance horizontal communication in the community and voluntary sector. These encompassed volunteer management, improving awareness of opportunities and effective relationship building. These considerations led to the recommendations that are set out in Section 7 of the CUSPE report.

3.   Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1   Communities at the heart of everything we do
        The CUSPE report seeks to examine how collaboration between partners and community assets can be best aligned to improve our approach to social mobility.

3.2   A good quality of life for everyone
        The links between social mobility, inequality and quality of life are well established. Enhancement of social mobility will improve the live and life chances of those most in need.

3.3   Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full
        There are no specific implications for this priority aside from those benefits that come from a more socially mobile society.

3.4   Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment
        The report considers how individuals and organisations may best be connected to help promote the capitals that promote social mobility, Environmental capital is a key part of such an approach.

3.5   Protecting and caring for those who need us
        The links between social mobility, inequality and quality of life are well established. Enhancement of social mobility will improve the live and life chances of those most in need.

4.   Significant Implications

4.1   Resource Implications
There are no significant resource implications at this stage, though should specific recommendations be taken forward this would likely be the case. Such implications would be identified in any further scoping.]/feasibility work on the recommendations.

4.2   Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications
There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3   Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications
There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4   Equality and Diversity Implications
The research report recommends 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
The research report advises the Council to conduct primary research to better understand what improvements in wellbeing mean to local residents.

4.6   Localism and Local Member Involvement
Implications would vary depending on which recommendations (if any) were taken forward, but given the nature of the recommendations significant voluntary and community sector engagement would be required to take them forward/co-produce them

4.7   Public Health Implications
The overarching theme of the research report is the improvement of upward to social mobility and our approach to this aim. There is significant overlap here with a 'wider determinants of health' approach to health improvement and health inequality.

4.8   Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1   Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.
While there is a general connection between environmental capital and social mobility there are no specific implications arising from the recommendations in this report as currently drafted.

4.8.2   Implication 2: Low carbon transport.
Neutral Status: As 4.8.1

4.8.3   Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.
Neutral Status: As 4.8.1

4.8.4   Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.
Neutral Status: As 4.8.1

4.8.5   Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:
    5   Neutral Status: As 4.8.1

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5.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.
Neutral Status: As 4.8.1

5.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable
people to cope with climate change.
Positive Status:
Explanation: The research report recommends actions to improve social mobility, which in
turn increases the ability to individual to economic, environmental and other challenges.

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

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been
cleared by the Head of Procurement? Yes
Name of Officer: Martin Wade

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: Bethan Griffiths

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?
Name of Officer: No

5.   Appendices

5.1   Appendix 1 – CUSPE Report

6.   Source documents

6.1   The Future of Local Government – Joint Paper from Price Waterhouse Cooper and the
County Councils Network

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