

## Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 16 October 2025

From: Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Executive Summary: For the committee to note the content of the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission and endorse a move to a phase of delivery of the proposed recommendations.

Recommendation: The committee is recommended to:

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

Officer contact:  
Name: Nikitta Vanterpool  
Post: Anti-Poverty Strategic Lead  
Email: [Nikitta.vanterpool@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Nikitta.vanterpool@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

# 1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

- 1.1 The recommendations of the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission support the Council's ambitions to address inequalities, tackle rural and digital exclusion and strengthen community resilience as set out in the refreshed Strategic Framework 2023–2028.
- 1.2 The Commission has been a key enabling project and is supported by a range of public and voluntary sector partners. Delivering on the recommendations of the Commission will help the Council deliver its vision of becoming a greener, fairer, more caring Cambridgeshire, owing to its alignment to the following ambitions:
- Ambition 3: Health inequalities are reduced. Poverty and poor health are closely linked; therefore the commission's recommendations will help to tackle the social determinants of health.
  - Ambition 5: People are helped out of poverty and income inequality. The Commission presents a series of recommendations for Cambridgeshire that work to tackle poverty.
  - Ambition 6: Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised. Many of the recommendations recognise the importance of local, community-based responses.
  - Ambition 7: Children and young people have opportunities to thrive. Children and young people growing up in low-income households are more likely to experience poor health, housing insecurity, and limited access to resources. Therefore, by supporting low-income households through the recommendations of the report, it creates more opportunities for children and young people.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission officially launched in October 2024. The independent commission was supported by a delivery group consisting of representatives from all five district and city councils, the County Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, health, police, the fire service, and Support Cambridgeshire representing the voluntary and community sector. Secretariat support to the Commission was provided by the Council's Policy, Insight and Change service. The core function of the delivery group was to ensure that any resulting strategy would be a collaborative piece of work with public and voluntary sector partners across the county. The delivery group agreed the design of the commission, recruited commissioners, and ensured the work of the commission was fed back through their organisations in a timely manner.
- 2.2 The 11 independent commissioners were tasked with identifying a set of realistic and practical recommendations for public and voluntary sector organisations to alleviate poverty in Cambridgeshire. A strong evidence base underpinned the commission's work, with a

focus on first-hand or lived experience of poverty, evidence from partner organisations and national best practice.

- 2.3 The report notes that over 37,000 residents are estimated to be living in negative budgets, with the highest rates found in Cambridge and Fenland – areas affected respectively by high housing costs and persistent rural deprivation (Citizens Advice, 2024) – with the number of people receiving Universal Credit in the county increasing by 30% over the last four years (Local Government Organisation, 2025).
- 2.4 The [final report](#) published by the Commission in May 2025 highlights both the depth of need across the County and the strength of collaborative approaches, and explores six focus areas:
- Income maximisation – recognising the importance of providing support for individuals and households to increase their financial stability by ensuring they are receiving all the income, benefits, and financial support they are entitled to.
  - Digital inclusion – recognising both that the link between poverty and digital exclusion is well established (Good Things Foundation, 2024) and that access to the internet and digital technology is critical to everyday life – from applying for jobs and claiming benefits to accessing healthcare, managing finances and engaging with public services.
  - Rural poverty – noting that transport, health and well-being, loneliness and isolation, and affordable housing were the most pressing issues for rural communities (Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), 2023).
  - Housing and homelessness – recognising that housing costs place a significant burden on households. For those experiencing homelessness, the report notes that access to support can depend on an individual's ability to navigate multiple, often fragmented and demanding service systems.
  - Children and families – noting with concern that children are at the most risk of the effects of poverty, and many families that were just about managing are at risk of crossing a line into poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2025).
  - Mental health – recognising that those living in poverty are more likely to experience mental health problems (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2024).
- 2.5 The report provides a comprehensive list of detailed general and thematic recommendations, providing practical examples of what commissioners believe would have an impact for residents in Cambridgeshire.

### 3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The work of the commissioners has now concluded following the publication of their final report in May 2025. Their recommendations are rooted in extensive research and firsthand experiences of poverty, aiming to foster collaboration among public and voluntary sector organisations. The final report offers a clear evidence base and provides a strong platform for the next stage.
- 3.2 The Anti-Poverty Strategic Lead within the Communities Service at the County Council will lead the delivery stage, coordinating actions specific to the County Council and also acting

as convener for the wider system, bringing together on at least a quarterly basis the countywide delivery group of partners nominated by the Public Service Board.

- 3.3 Work is already underway within the Council to deliver against a number of the commission's recommendations. In December 2024, the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee agreed to use a proportion of the Household Support Fund (HSF) allocation to fund Income Maximisation work delivered by Citizen's Advice. More recently, as the guidance around HSF has moved more towards developing resilience rather than purely responding to crisis, an element of this year's HSF allocation is being used to support the development of community food projects across the county and to provide additional funding for the network of 60+ warm and community hubs across the county.
- 3.4 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Service Board, comprising of the chief officers from the public sector partners who have been involved in this work, has re-affirmed its commitment to the shared ownership of this delivery stage and a commitment to developing a shared plan. Whilst the commission's work has ended, the individual commissioners and the wider system will remain involved through the Cambridgeshire Community Reference Group (CRG). This informal network of statutory and voluntary sector partners meets bi-monthly at a meeting convened by the Council's Communities Service.
- 3.5 Delivery Principles:
- **Place based and Collaborative:** Ensuring that actions are responding to local needs and priorities and encourages joined-up multi-agency responses to poverty.
  - **Lived Experience:** Ensuring the voices of residents with first-hand experience of poverty are central to the delivery stage of this work.
  - **Evaluation:** The action plan will be underpinned by an evaluation methodology that will ensure that learning is captured and informs the work.
- 3.6 The move into a phase of delivery will also be supported by the launch in April 2026 of the government's Crisis and Resilience Fund. Whilst guidance has not yet been received, it has been confirmed this will be a multi-year settlement, with a change in emphasis from the current Household Support Fund which will end this financial year. The new fund should present an opportunity to re-design a local offer for Cambridgeshire more closely aligned to the recommendations from the commission, and with input from the wider system and those with first-hand experience of poverty.
- 3.7 The Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee's Spokes will receive a quarterly update on the development and delivery of the Council's elements of the poverty action plan.
- 3.8 Members have attended an online workshop in September 2025, where further details were shared about the report, the recommendations and the proposed next steps were shared and member input was received.

## 4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission report provides a clear and valuable framework for tackling poverty across Cambridgeshire. It offers a strong foundation for coordinated action and effective decision-making. Moving from strategy to delivery is now essential to ensure meaningful progress, improved outcomes for residents, and addressing the root causes of poverty in our communities.

## 5. Significant Implications

### 5.1 Finance Implications

The delivery plan will be costed and delivered within the available budgets of all partners. For county council actions, spend will come from the anti-poverty budget, and where appropriate from the Household Support and Crisis and Resilience Funds and any other relevant and available resources.

### 5.2 Legal Implications

A commitment to addressing the impact of poverty supports the Council's responsibilities under the 2010 Equality Act and the delivery of the Public Sector Equalities Duties within that Act, as well as the related socio-economic duty which was adopted by the Council in March 2022.

### 5.3 Risk Implications

The detail of the Crisis and Resilience Fund has yet to be announced by the Department of Work and Pensions. Until this information is confirmed, planning will be based on assumptions and may delay some actions. Risks related to specific actions will be identified and managed as appropriate within the county council.

### 5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

None

## 6. Source Documents

- 6.1 ['A Call for a Strategic Approach to End Poverty Across Cambridgeshire'](#) - Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission's final report