

Council 26 May 2022 Written Questions

1. Councillor Copley

To Councillor Thornburrow the Executive Councillor for Planning and Infrastructure

Despite being globally renowned for excellence in music, Cambridge lacks any large-capacity concert halls. The Cambridge Corn Exchange (at 1400) is the city's largest capacity venue, but was intended to cater for the population as it stood in the 1980s - about 75% of the current number. The Local Plan's 'First Conversations' published last year include an aim to provide "a range of accessible services that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being". A larger concert hall would help to meet this objective and would improve access to music for Cambridge residents.

Question: what are the plans and updates for Cambridge to have a purpose built concert hall in keeping with the size of the city?

Response:

For a city of its size, Cambridge is very well equipped with concert halls. The Corn Exchange with a standing capacity of nearly 1700 (1697) and a seated capacity in the region of 1400, is one of the largest venues of its type in the East of England. The venue serves an area far greater than Cambridge itself, with audiences travelling considerable distances to attend events with 25% of audiences travelling in more than 50 miles.

The curated programme at the Corn Exchange is dependent on the supply of touring artists capable of filling a venue of that capacity, and although the venue is busy, with in the region of 200 shows per year, this leaves plenty of scope to increase. The majority of shows that come to the Corn Exchange run at between 60 and 90% of seating capacity, again indicating that the venue is still very much the right size for its catchment. For a few artists, the option of running two shows is taken, which is a very effective way of increasing capacity for the small number of events able to sell sufficient tickets to make that worthwhile.

Moving on to the wider question: there is a thriving ecology of live music in Cambridge, with the Corn Exchange the largest, but only one of a large number of music and performance venues across the city.

Cambridge Junction caters for artists up to a 1000 capacity space in its J1 venue, and for more intimate music and theatre performances in J2. The Portland Arms runs a very successful smaller scale dedicated music venue, and there are a myriad of city venues that put on small scale music and performance events. There are also the publicly accessible University venues including West Road Concert Hall, which provide a significant additional music programme for the city.

We know from national data collected as part of the Active Lives Survey that cultural engagement in the city is very high compared to the national average: the data published in January 2018 showed the national average for attending an event, performance or festival involving creative, artistic, dance, theatrical or music activity at 52.22% of the adult population, in Cambridge the figure was 70.69%. The Cultural team within Community Services, as well as directly operating the Corn Exchange, Cambridge Folk Festival, and the very popular free Music in the Parks concerts, works with a wide range of cultural and community organisations to further build engagement, in particular with communities and individuals less likely to participate.

This does not mean we can be complacent: In order to ensure that the city's cultural life continues to thrive as it grows, the Council is developing an evidence based cultural infrastructure strategy, and a number of completed studies to support this work are already published on our website.

2. Councillor Howard

To Councillor Bird the Executive Councillor for Housing

Thermal imagers are handheld cameras that can be used to find insulation and damp problems. We know they can be used to find 'easy wins' when optimising spend on insulation, maximising the cost and energy savings, and therefore reducing emissions from all our homes. It is my understanding that the city council has paid for a second camera for Cambridge Carbon Footprint to lend to residents and South Cambs Council has lent 3 cameras. The cameras are a great tool for making homes cheaper to heat. This is particularly important for elderly and physically disabled residents who may need to keep their home warmer than other residents. However, the residents who most need this help are missing out on the scheme, either because they are digitally excluded or are unable to use the cameras due to disability or infirmity or both.

Will the council consider training some members of the housing repair team to use thermal cameras for simple heat leak surveys as a matter of course during all social housing repair inspections, acting on any easy wins found as a matter of priority?

Response:

Cambridge Carbon Footprint (CCF) made 2 successful applications to the [Sustainable City Grant](#) in 2021-22, one of which was to run their annual Open Eco Homes Tours (10 homes involved), deliver 5 talks on energy efficiency and run their thermal imaging programme (4 training sessions and a lending scheme). CCF reported that they purchased an additional camera in 2021-22 to meet increased demand. The council has not purchased a thermal imaging camera but have funded CCF to deliver their thermal imaging programme in the city.

The Council repairs team have recently invested in data logging devices to assist with dealing with damp and condensation issues and regularly use our specialist contractors who have borescopes to enable an inspection of cavity walls to assist with our inspections and surveys. We are currently looking at ways we can improve our in house skills and continue to look at equipment and devices that can assist us with these types of inspections. This is a matter of priority during the next few months to enable us to deal with an anticipated increase of enquiries due to the energy bills increases everyone is facing before next winter. The Energy and Repairs Teams within the Estates and Facilities team will consider the benefit of investing in a thermal imaging camera and consult with Cambridge Carbon Footprint should it proceed to purchase a camera with regard to training for staff.

3. Councillor Copley

To Councillor Healy the Executive Councillor for Equalities, Anti-poverty and Wellbeing

- i. Following Royal Ascent of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (now the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022), what specific steps will the City Council take to counteract, and prevent contributing to, the systemic racism that this act represents?
- ii. Since the seven evictions of the Traveller community between July 2021, and March 2022, have there been any further

- evictions of encampments carried out by the City Council, and if so how many?
- iii. What ways will the City Council support / promote Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month in June 2022?

Response:

The City Council has recently reviewed its unauthorised Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) encampment protocol (November 2021) whilst the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill was being debated.

This protocol has been developed to help the council manage unauthorised encampments in an efficient and effective way, taking account of the potential level of impact for residents and the rights and responsibilities of occupiers of unauthorised encampments in the context of the NEW act.

The protocol aims to:

- To establish effective communication between the council and occupiers of unauthorised encampments;
- To help strike an appropriate balance between the needs and legitimate expectations of members, residents, local businesses, landowners, and occupiers of unauthorised encampments;
- To set out recommended courses of action which the council should follow to provide an effective and consistent approach to unauthorised encampments; and
- To improve records of unauthorised encampments.

We do sometimes have to take enforcement action after all things are considered, including land ownership, scale of the encampment and potential local impacts, the welfare needs those in the encampment and after consultation with the Police and other authorities as necessary.

We continue to work on the Gypsy and Travellers Housing Needs Assessment (GTANA) and Officers are now reviewing the first draft. The GTANA is a significant tool to help with responding in an informed way to help reduce the impacts of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. We need to review the draft GTANA and give feedback, but this document will aide us in understanding need and how best to respond to it.

We will also continue to support the Cambridgeshire Police as they develop their policies and procedures in response to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act.

On the question around numbers of evictions, we have undertaken four enforcement action on 2 family Groups since March 2022. As part of this action, we have completed welfare assessments and then decided on whether enforcement is reasonable and proportionate. The nature of the sites occupied by the 2 family Groups meant that the encampments had a significant community impact.

The work to support GRT communities is not limited to a four-week calendar period the work must mainstreamed and happen throughout the year.

We have an ongoing heritage project with local museums, Cambridge University, and County Council to trace lineage of traveller families. This has started in Wisbech but is planned to engage with GRT communities across the whole of Cambridgeshire. Further training is to be provided including designing, presenting, and curating to support the creation of an exhibition for local museums. Development of the work is however dependent on funding bid.

We are working the Showmen's Guild to make sure this year's Midsummer Fair is a success. The Community Development team will have a presence at Midsummer Fair focusing on engagement with the GRT community, offering Karaoke, heritage and craft activities.

We intend to include in Holocaust Memorial Day 2023, the persecution of Roma/Sinti communities in Nazi Germany, and this will be part of the work in schools for January 2023.

We are exploring opportunities for sessions in schools on GRT history using materials provided by the Roma Support Group and this will be trialled in Cambridge Schools. This is partially dependent on the outcome of Heritage Lottery Funding bid by the Roma Support group, a London based organisation interested in providing Traveller education in schools. And the Council has committed additional resource for a GRT event to be hosted at the Corn Exchange.

I have set out several GRT projects that the Council is working on, most of which are over a period of time (not just June), or in the case of the Corn Exchange event will be happening later in the year. Officers have started discussions with colleagues from the Traveller Health Team, and have a meeting booked with County Council Equalities staff. We will of

course consult with communities with regards the events contents and what they would like included.