

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 27 June 2024
6.00 - 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors Nestor (Vice-Chair), Ashton, Divkovic, Glasberg, Griffin, Hauk, Payne and Swift

Executive Councillors: Carling (Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services), Davey (Leader of the Council) and Holloway (Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing)

Officers:

Assistant Chief Executive, Chief Executive's Office: Andrew Limb

Director, Communities Group: Sam Scharf

Community Funding and Voluntary Sector Manager: Julie Cornwell

Community, Sport & Recreation Manager: Ian Ross

Technical & Specialist Services Manager: John Richards

Urban Growth Project Manager: Tim Wetherfield

Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer: Helen Crowther

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

24/27/EnC Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Pounds, Councillor Griffin attended as her Alternate.

24/28/EnC Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

24/29/EnC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March and 23 May 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24/30/EnC Public Questions

Public Questions - Pesticide Free Cambridge

1. During the most recent Herbicide-Reduction Working Group in March 2024 (1), it was agreed that working group meetings would continue on a regular basis. Since March we had been trying repeatedly to schedule a follow-up meeting, to no avail. Could the council confirm please whether there were still plans to continue the Working Group and when the next meeting would be held? There were a number of action points from the last meeting which remain stalled, and on which we would like an update please.
2. It was agreed that the City Council would launch an effective communications plan to inform residents about the dangers of personal use of pesticides, how this might conflict with current policy; how residents and businesses should not, for instance, be using pesticides on the pavement or road outside private properties (not only does this compromise the Herbicide Reduction Plan (HRP), it was also, in our understanding, illegal); and to share information about non-synthetic alternatives. The comms plan also included plans for signage/information boards on selected unsprayed verges to explain and celebrate the HRP, so as to avoid potential negative feedback of the kind that led to the reversal of the County Council's own herbicide-free policy earlier this year. Could the council clarify what was happening with the Comms plan and whether Pesticide-Free Cambridge would, as agreed, be offered the opportunity to collaborate on this?
3. Further to what was agreed at the March meeting, had the City Council communicated with other stakeholders such as the County Council, the County Highways Green Team, University of Cambridge Colleges, and contractors from energy firms and so on? We contacted you several times earlier in the Spring to report on evidence that herbicide was still being used in various locations around the city in complete contradiction to the city council's policy, and we were concerned not to have received a response from you.
4. In March, the City Council announced that they had approved the budget for the purchase of new machinery with which to better manage vegetation on roads and pavements in a range of environments (2). Had this equipment been purchased and was it now in use around the city? In this regard, it was notable that there were large quantities of vegetation, including some big plants, that had built up on roads (e.g. in Trumpington) which does little to inspire confidence in the HRP.
5. We would greatly appreciate clarification as to following the roll out of herbicide-free methods across the city in March 2024, whether City

Council housing ~~out~~with the original four trial wards was now also being managed in a herbicide-free way or if, as was stated in spring 2023, they continue to be treated twice-yearly with herbicides. It would seem completely anomalous, not to mention a wasted opportunity, should they not be subsumed within the herbicide-free management programme.

References:

1. <https://www.pesticidefreecambridge.org/post/record-of-our-meetings-with-councillors-schools-and-partners-groups>
2. <https://www.pesticidefreecambridge.org/post/press-release-following-cambs-county-council-return-to-use-of-herbicides>

The Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services responded:

- i. The last meeting with stakeholders was in March 2024. Due to the pre-election period before May and July elections, it had not been possible to timetable meetings since. The intention was to timetable Herbicide Working Groups on a quarterly basis.
- ii. The City Council had an active communications plan to inform residents about being herbicide free and this was the priority. Was happy to liaise about this outside of the meeting.
- iii. The County Council had left the city off the list of areas where herbicide would be used. The City Council would manage this area instead according to its own policies.
- iv. The budget for new machinery had been approved, and the City Council were in the process of procuring equipment. Understood the importance of effective vegetation management and were expediting this process. Some of the new machinery was operational and had been used in a variety of locations such as Anstey Way and Lovell Road. It was being used in a programmed schedule of streets, ward by ward.
- v. Following the roll-out of herbicide-free methods citywide in March 2024, the Council had assessed the inclusion of City Council housing beyond the initial four trial wards in this program. It was agreed in March that expanding herbicide-free management to all housing was a valuable opportunity.

24/31/EnC To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment

24/31/EnCa Material Recycling Facility (MRF) Contract 2024

The decision was noted.

Councillor Ashton recognised the need for out of cycle decisions for operational reasons. He asked, that where possible, decisions should be brought to committee for scrutiny in future.

24/31/EnCb Redevelopment of Silver Street Public Toilets – Construction

The decision was noted.

24/32/EnC SOS Funding Round - Streets & Open Spaces

Matter for Decision

The Council helped to mitigate the impact of housing development on local facilities and amenities using S106 contributions from developers. The Executive Councillor oversaw the use of S106 funds secured under the contribution types relating to informal open spaces, play provision for children and teenagers and public realm improvements.

The March 2024 S106 report to this Committee highlighted the need to develop a future programme of S106-funded projects in consultation with local councillors. The aim was to make effective and timely use of remaining generic S106 funds alongside newer specific contributions related to particular locations. The intention had been to present the proposed programme (particularly in relation to the Council's outdoor play areas) in June. However, as this meeting now coincides with the General Election run-up period, it would be more appropriate to report this to the Committee in September instead.

In the meantime, this June 2024 report focused on those generic S106 contributions across the informal open spaces, play provision and public realm contribution types that need to be spent or contractually committed to relevant projects within the next year or so. It also considered, in the case of play provision, how the use of relevant specific S106 contributions could support the use of these time-limited S106 funds. Allocating these S106 funds to projects now would provide more time for project planning, consultation and procurement.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services

- i. Agreed to allocate at least £55,000 of generic informal open spaces S106 funds to supplement the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's grant for a strategic biodiversity improvement project at Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve (East Chesterton

- ward), subject to business case approval (see section 4 of the Officer's report);
- ii. Agreed to allocate £13,054 of play provision S106 funding for improvements to Lichfield Road play area in Coleridge ward (based on £3,987 of generic contributions and £9,067 of specific contributions), subject to local consultation and business case approval (see section 5 of the Officer's report);
 - iii. Agreed to allocate £37,941 of play provision S106 funding for improvements to King George V Recreation Ground in Trumpington ward (based on £21,671 of generic contributions and £16,270 of specific contributions), subject to local consultation and business case approval (see section 5 of the Officer's report); and
 - iv. Agreed to allocate £69,018 of public realm S106 funds from a development in Harvest Way (Abbey ward) towards public realm improvements in the vicinity of that development, subject to business case approval (see Section 6 of the Officer's report).

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Technical & Specialist Services Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The intention was to make all new play provision inclusive for all users. Different items of equipment would be provided for people with different/particular needs. Details were listed in the Equalities Impact Assessment in Appendix C of the Officer's report.
- ii. Officers recommended allocating funding to projects scheduled to be delivered soonest to make the most effective use of funds. Short timescales for delivery meant that consultation with residents/councillors must be appropriate/proportionate for delivery time.
- iii. Officers were keen to engage local councillors on how best to use funding (as much as possible). Updates on scheme delivery were published on City Council webpages.
- iv. Officers were aware of, and reviewing, various play provision accessibility issues such as surface of play areas and joints between materials.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

24/33/EnC 2024/25 S106 Allocations for Community and Sports Facility Improvements - Part 3

Matter for Decision

In 2023/24, officers presented a range of projects submitted through two previous S106 funding rounds for investment in local community and sports facilities. These rounds had identified 30 projects with allocations of over £500,000 of S106 contributions that were approved by the (then) Executive Councillors for improving equipment and/or storage at a range of sports venues or community facilities across Cambridge.

Many of these projects had now been completed or are in the process of being delivered. This latest follow-up round (also being referred to as the 'third phase') drew on on-going dialogue with community groups and sports clubs, schools and other partner organisations. It picked up some sports projects that were not quite ready or developed enough for submission before now. The report also recommends S106 funding for strategic sports projects and investment in the light of further assessments of City Council facilities and new community and sports facilities coming on board this coming year.

The Officer's report recommended allocating £360,000 of S106 funds to fourteen proposals relating to the community facilities, outdoor/indoor sports and swimming pool facilities contribution types. This was mostly about making timely use of those remaining generic S106 contributions that need to be contractually committed or spent, particularly within the next year. Officers envisaged that the projects proposed in this report could be delivered within six months, albeit that the implementation start dates may need to be phased.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing

- i. Noted that £73,276 of outdoor sports S106 funds and £28,935 of community facilities S106 funds had been deallocated from projects to which they were previously assigned and were now available for

allocating to relevant new projects (see paragraph 3.7 of the Officer's report); and

- ii. Allocated generic S106 funding from the relevant S106 contribution types, subject to business case approval and community use agreements (as appropriate), to the following project proposals (see Section 4 of the Officer's report and the Appendix):

	Project proposals	Amount	S106 type
A	Grant to Chesterton Indoor Bowls Club: Indoor sports equipment	£7,000	Indoor Sports
B	Grant to Cambridge Gymnastics Academy for new gym training equipment	£20,000	Indoor Sports
C	Abbey Leisure Complex: sports changing room upgrades	£20,000	Indoor Sports
D	Grant to Kelsey Kerridge Sports Centre: new gym equipment	£35,000	Indoor Sports
E	Grant to CamSkate for indoor skate equipment at RailPen sites at Newmarket Road Retail Park	£45,000	Indoor Sports
F	Pickleball markings at tennis courts in South, East & West/Central areas	£10,000	Outdoor Sports
G	Nightingale Recreation Ground: upgrade tennis courts	£65,000	Outdoor Sports
H	Nightingale Recreation Ground: playing pitch improvements	£30,000	Outdoor Sports
I	Abbey Astro turf pitch: new benches and team shelters around the new 3G pitch	£20,000	Outdoor Sports
J	Coldham's Common: new Gaelic football posts	£3,000	Outdoor Sports
K	Additional tables and chairs at four Bowls Clubs within Cambridge	£10,000	Outdoor Sports
L	Jesus Green skate park: flood lighting and	£20,000	Outdoor

	Project proposals	Amount	S106 type
	CCTV coverage		Sports
M	New community meeting room at Abbey Leisure Complex (related to a joint project funding with NHS England for mental health space)	£50,000	Community Facilities
N	Kings Hedges Learner Pool: light & sound equipment for pool users	£25,000	Swimming Pool

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Community, Sport & Recreation Manager.

The Community, Sport & Recreation Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Officers evaluated the community benefit of projects. If funding went to 'closed clubs' then community access agreements would be put in places so facilities were available to all.
- ii. Jesus Green Association and local councillors were consulted on the CCTV and lighting installed at Jesus Green.
- iii. Undertook to update Councillor Swift about Donkey Common skate ramps after the meeting.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

24/34/EnC Annual Report on the Council's Key Strategic Partnerships (E&C)

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report provided an annual report on the work of the key strategic partnerships that the Council was involved in; and covers the recent decisions on the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Health and Community Safety

- i. Agreed to work more closely with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Partnership and its sub-system (as detailed in paragraphs 3.42 – 3.46 of the Officer's report) to ensure that the City Council's role in prevention and wellbeing working in partnership with other public agencies could address the health needs and concerns of Cambridge residents.
- ii. Agreed to continue to work with partners within the framework of the Cambridge Community Safety Partnership (as detailed in paragraphs 3.47 – 3.53 of the Officer's report), identifying local priorities and taking action that would make a positive difference to the safety of communities in the city.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive.

In response to the report Councillors asked for details about partnerships covered by sections of the report to be discussed by Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee 1 July. The Assistant Chief Executive and Leader of the Council undertook to respond to questions at Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee 1 July.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

24/35/EnC Community Funding Programme 2025/26

Matter for Decision

The Community Grants scheme priorities were reviewed periodically to ensure they remained relevant and align with the Councils Corporate Plan and wider objectives. Similarly, the grant procedures were reviewed annually as part of a continuous improvement process, considering feedback from applicants and the experience of the Grants Team.

In addition to this, a full community grants review was started in 2022 with the introduction of a 'light touch' small grants application process for awards of up to £2,000. There was also agreement to begin the broader work required which would be developed alongside the 'Our Cambridge Transformation Programme'. This included exploring the introduction of longer-term funding arrangements for organisations delivering ongoing essential services and infrastructure support to the voluntary sector; considering the challenges presented by the Area Committee grants process; and the potential to move to a digital grants platform.

The Community Grants Review was not driven by the need to make financial savings, but instead recognised the issues that were facing the voluntary and community sector (VCS). It reflected Officer's understanding of the challenges the sector faced in responding to inequalities and prolonged financial hardship and how the Council could better work alongside VCS partners to deliver positive change for our communities.

Discussions were currently underway within Cambridgeshire about the potential to agree a set of shared principles across all public sector partners which would foster collaboration. Although these conversations were in the early stages, the community grants review provided an opportunity to embed these principles now.

There were three strands to the proposed new approach to community funding set out in section 4 of the Officer's report. Running alongside this Officers were exploring with statutory partners whether funding schemes could align more closely together, both in terms of grant making and grant monitoring.

Decision of Leader

- i. Approved the introduction of a twice-yearly Small Community Grants scheme replacing the previous Small Community Grants scheme and

Area Committee Grants scheme, for applications with a value of £5,000 or less.

- ii. Approved the continuation of the annual Main Community Grants scheme, for applications with a value over £5,000.
- iii. Approved the introduction of multi-year funding agreements for specific provision within the City.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Community Funding and Voluntary Sector Manager.

The Community Funding and Voluntary Sector Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. There were sufficient staff resources in place to process the bi-annual grant cycle assessments.
- ii. Moving to a digital grants platform would free up staff resources that could be reallocated to administration as required.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Leader approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

24/36/EnC The Council's Future Approach to Grant Fund Management

Matter for Decision

Grant funding to community groups was a core component of the council's approach to community wealth building, with funding of approximately £2m available annually to support the community and voluntary sector.

The Council Grants Team managed most of these grants and had a reputation for providing an exemplary service to community groups across the city.

The current grant management approach relied heavily on manual data entry systems, and there were fragmented grant streams available across the council, with different systems and processes for applicants to navigate to be able to access funding.

There were some risks and constraints with the current management approach for the council and applicants, and a comprehensive options appraisal had been completed to assess alternative approaches the council could consider.

Having assessed the strengths, weaknesses, and risks for a range of options detailed at Appendix 1 of the Officer's report, the appraisal recommended that the council considered implementing a digital grant management platform. This would help to minimise risk, maximise efficiency and improve the applicant experience.

The appraisal further recommends completing an end-to-end systems audit and considered managing all community and voluntary grant funding streams included in the matrix at Appendix 2 of the Officer's report, via a digital grant's platform, which would effectively become the new Grants Gateway.

Decision of Leader

- i. Agreed to implement a digital grant platform.
- ii. Agreed to delegate responsibility to the Director of Communities to oversee the procurement of a digital grant's platform and a smooth transition to implementation.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Community Funding and Voluntary Sector Manager.

The Community Funding and Voluntary Sector Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Measurements on the impact of grants had to be proportionate to the amount of funding awarded such as fewer measures for smaller grants.

There was no one size fits all approach. Officers could look at different types of measures such as pictures not just written records.

- ii. The expected timeframe was to undertake procurement in the autumn then make a decision in spring 2025 on the successful digital platform candidate.
- iii. Two meetings had been held, one with the Digital Lead, and one with the Procurement Officer regarding the procurement process. They agreed the timescales were reasonable and offered advice on how to undertake the procurement.
- iv. Grant Officers would offer support to grant applicants online and in person to help them with the application process and ensure funding goes to appropriate recipients.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Leader approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Leader.

24/37/EnC Single Equality Scheme Annual Report 2023/24

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report gave an annual update on the Council's Single Equality Scheme, which covered the period from 2021 to 2024 and set five objectives to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion. The report provided an update on the delivery of key actions during 2023/24 set against the objectives. It also set out the activities that were new for 2024/25 and details of how larger ongoing projects would progress in 2024/25.

Additionally, the report included a recommendation to extend the end date for the current Single Equality Scheme for a further year, to March 2025.

Decision of Leader

- i. Noted the progress in actions promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion during 2023/24.
- ii. Approved new actions proposed for delivery during 2024/25.
- iii. Agreed to extend the end date of the existing Single Equality Scheme from March 2024 to March 2025.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer.

The Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Equality Impact Assessments were undertaken on parks and open spaces. Offered to liaise with Councillor Hauk after committee regarding concerns that vegetation over growing paths and open spaces could be an obstruction.
- ii. The Equality in Employment Report going to Equalities Panel 2 July set out statistics on BME members in the City Council workforce. The Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer suggested interested parties could attend to ask for further details there. Circa 20% of the city population were BME so the City Council aimed to recruit 20% of its work force from the same community in future to reflect this.
- iii. Training had been commissioned for school staff to engage young people on their needs. Officers would engage with schools and the community/voluntary sector who engage with schools.
- iv. Equality Impact Assessments were undertaken by departments/services. They sought advice from the Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer as required. She would liaise with City Services to ask if they had undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment on Voi Scooters and the process for approval of location sites; also if Local Councillors had been consulted.

The Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing agreed with concerns that Voi Scooters could sometime block the pavement when parked. People could contact Voi to request removal of scooters. Responsibility for the Equality Impact Assessment may rest with the Combined Authority as they provided the scooters.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Leader approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Leader.

24/38/EnC To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Chief Executive

24/38/EnCa Appointment of Councillor representatives to the Conservators of the River Cam

The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

CHAIR