

ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY 2022/23 ANNUAL REPORT

**To:**

Councillor Mairead Healy, Executive Councillor for Communities
Environment & Community Scrutiny Committee 29/06/2023

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Non-Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on delivery of key actions in the Council's third Anti-Poverty Strategy, which covers the period 2020-2024.
- 1.2 During 2022/23 the Council has delivered a range of planned actions to help address issues associated with poverty, including low pay, debt, food poverty, fuel poverty, digital inclusion, skills, employment, housing affordability, homelessness, and poor health outcomes. The report also provides an update on a range of activities that the Council delivered and helped facilitate to support residents with the rising cost of living.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

1. Note the progress in delivering actions to reduce poverty in Cambridge during 2022/23 (as set out at 4.1 in this report and in the full APS annual report at Appendix A)
2. Note the activities that were delivered during 2022/23 to support residents with the rising cost of living (as set out at 4.2 in this report and in the full APS annual report at Appendix A)

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has produced two previous Anti-Poverty Strategies covering the periods from 2014-2017 and 2017-2020. The Council produced a revised and updated Anti-Poverty Strategy for the period from April 2020 to March 2023, which was approved by the Executive Councillor for Communities on 3 July 2020.
- 3.2 The Executive Councillor for Equalities, Anti-Poverty and Wellbeing agreed to extend the end date of the strategy to 31 March 2024 at the Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee meeting on 30 June 2022. This allowed officers to focus on new challenges that have emerged since the strategy was first approved in July 2020, including responding to increases in the cost of living and the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Cambridge.
- 3.3 It will also ensure that the new strategy is informed by a number of wider changes to the Council's ways of working, including:
 - the Our Cambridge transformation programme
 - work to develop the Council's approach to Community Wealth Building
 - access to new sources of data, such as the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) system, the progressive publication of Census 2021 data by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) from summer 2022 onwards, and the development of the City Portrait.
- 3.4 The current Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out an evolution of the Council's broad strategic approach to tackling poverty. It sets out three underpinning themes for the Council's future approach:

1. Combining our ongoing efforts to address the effects of poverty, with a further focus on preventative work (often in partnership with other organisations) to address some of the root causes of poverty.
2. Balancing direct Council service delivery, with partnership-working and influencing and lobbying activity where this will have greater impact.
3. Building the capacity and resilience of residents and communities and facilitating community action.

3.5 These three themes set are woven through the five strategic objectives for the Anti-Poverty Strategy 2020-2023, which are:

1. Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs
2. Strengthening families and communities, including supporting groups of people that are more likely to experience poverty
3. Promoting an inclusive economy, by raising skills and improving access to a range of employment opportunities for people on low incomes
4. Addressing the high cost of housing, improving housing conditions, and reducing homelessness
5. Improving health outcomes for people on low incomes

4. Anti-poverty and cost of living actions delivered in 2022/23

- 4.1 The Anti-Poverty Strategy includes an action plan, which sets out 58 key activities that the Council currently plans to undertake to help achieve the above objectives. The action plan is intended to be a 'living document' that will be regularly reviewed and updated. It is anticipated that new activities may be identified over the course of the strategy period to respond to emerging issues relating to poverty in the city.
- 4.2 Full updates on activity carried out during 2022/23 to deliver these actions are provided in the APS annual report in Appendix A, but key actions included:

- Continuing to pay all directly employed Council staff at least the Real Living Wage, continuing to pay all agency workers at least the Real Living Wage after 4 weeks, and continuing to promote Living Wage accreditation to local employers.
- Allocating just over £1m worth of Community Grants to 65 organisations to deliver projects aiming to reduce social and economic deprivation in Cambridge.
- Supporting benefits claimants to receive a total of £27.4m in Housing Benefit and £158,737 in Discretionary Housing Payments, and providing £8.2m in Council Tax Support to 6,800 households.
- Organising a food justice event in May 2022 to bring together local partners to discuss opportunities to collaborate and progressing the food distribution and community kitchen project. The project has relocated from Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre to new accommodation at Barnwell Drive.
- Continuing to partner with Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) to provide tailored energy advice and grant support to residents.
- Working with Cambridge Online to support Council tenants to access the internet and use digital technology: awarding a £40,000 grant to Cambridge Online to provide a range of outreach digital inclusion support during 2023/24: and working with the Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership, which brings together local voluntary and community groups providing support to digitally excluded households.
- Promoting volunteering by continuing to fund the Tempo 'time-credit' scheme, which provides incentives for volunteering, and funding Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) to support people to volunteer and to build the capacity of local organisations to work with volunteers.
- Working with a range of partner organisations to recruit 521 young people to take part in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 'Region of Learning' project, which will promote learning pathways, evidence formal and informal learning and skills through digital badges, and link to live labour market opportunities.
- Working with members of the My Cambridge local cultural

partnership and the national charity Social Mobility Business Partnership (SMBP) to deliver a Work Skills and Insight Week in July 2022, which introduced 30 young people from low-income backgrounds in years 11 and 12 to local creative industries.

- Completing 208 new Council homes to rent, starting on site with a further 144 new homes and approving 137 more homes to be built as part of the Council's affordable housing programme.
- Approving the Greater Cambridge Affordable Rents policy in June 2022. The policy is not enforceable, but it sets an expectation that affordable rents will be set at or below 60% of the medium market rents or the current Local Housing Allowance rate, whichever is lower.
- Improving energy efficiency in existing Council homes. This has included installing external wall insulation and solar PV to 96 existing Council homes and launching a £5m pilot project to retrofit up to 50 Council homes to net zero carbon emission standards.
- Working in partnership with all the Cambridgeshire local authorities through the Action on Energy Partnership, to use a total of £2.4m in Government funding to retrofit energy efficiency measures in 271 privately-owned homes across Cambridgeshire, with 101 of these in Cambridge.
- Continuing to provide 50% reductions on memberships at our leisure centres for people receiving Means Tested Benefits, leading to 56,878 discounted entries during 2022/23.
- Supporting an exercise referral scheme, under which health professionals referred 251 people for subsidised 12-week exercise programmes at local gyms and sports centres.

4.3 During 2022/23, increases in energy costs, food prices, fuel prices and other costs had a significant impact on household budgets in Cambridge and across the UK, particularly for residents on low incomes.

4.4 The Anti-Poverty Strategy already includes a number of actions that will help address the rising cost of living by supporting residents to maximise their incomes and reduce their outgoings. We also took a number of additional steps over the past year to help address the cost

of living for local residents on low incomes. We worked closely with a range of partner organisations in the city to deliver this response, with voluntary and community organisations playing a key role.

4.4 Full updates on cost-of-living support activities are provided in the APS annual report in Appendix A, but key actions included:

- Organising a series of 11 Cost of Living Support Pop-Up events at community venues across the city.
- Providing regular Warm and Welcoming Spaces at 5 Council community centres, which offered community events, quiet spaces and meals to local people, and promoting additional warm spaces at Cambridgeshire County Council's public libraries and venues run by voluntary and community partners.
- Providing £1,000 grants to support 43 voluntary and community partners to provide warm spaces and community meals.
- Distributing 500 hot water bottles, 130 blankets and 89 air-fryers to households in need free of charge.
- Administering the Government's initial £150 energy rebate scheme and providing £22.50 top-ups for households living in Council Tax bands A-D and disabled and low-income people living in band E-H properties.
- Providing £20,000 funding to the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS) to help ensure that they could meet increased demand for energy vouchers from Cambridge residents in urgent financial need.
- Providing £10,000 match funding for Cambridge Sustainable Food and Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance's "Cost of Food and Living Crisis Campaign".
- Carrying out a wide range of communication activity through the autumn and winter to help residents access support available with the cost of living.

4.5 The Council is using the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) data system on a trial basis for an 18 month period from September 2022-

March 2024. LIFT uses benefits data held by the Council (including housing benefit, council tax reduction and some Universal Credit data) to drill down from a citywide level, to ward and individual household level. It also provides dynamic datasets which are updated as claimants' circumstances change, enabling the Council to monitor change over time. All data is anonymised and cannot be matched with people or addresses in the system.

- 4.6 We are intending to use the system to help strategic decision-making. For example, we have recently produced an updated [Mapping Poverty](#) report based on LIFT data to provide a city-wide and ward-level analysis of poverty in the city, which will inform the Council's approach to tackling poverty.
- 4.7 We are also intending to use the system operationally to improve the Council's "business as usual" support for low-income households and to help identify opportunities for targeted campaigns. This will include using the system to target a range of support to low-income households, including the Council's work on homelessness prevention, maximising income and reducing debt, providing energy support, and raising skills and employability.

5 Implications

a) Financial Implications

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The Anti-Poverty Strategy primarily seeks to co-ordinate and refocus City Council activity so that it focuses on tackling poverty where possible. The actions in the Anti-Poverty Strategy are being delivered by:

- the Council's mainstream services, either directly or in partnership with other organisations. This activity is funded through mainstream service budgets.
- providing grant funding through the Council's Community Grants and Homelessness Prevention Grants to support activity by voluntary and community organisations

b) Staffing Implications

Much of the work to deliver the Anti-Poverty Strategy is being achieved within existing staff resources. However, some of the initiatives being taken forward have involved the recruitment of a limited number of additional staff, usually on fixed-term contracts.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was produced for the current APS and is published for information on the Council's website here:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/equality-impact-assessments>

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Some of the activities being delivered as part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy and other Council strategies will have a medium positive environmental impact. For example, work to improve the energy efficiency of existing Council homes, build new Council homes to high sustainability standards, and enforcement action against private landlords whose properties do not meet nationally-set Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES).

e) Procurement Implications

The Council has achieved accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation as a Living Wage Employer. As part of this, the City Council has adopted a Living Wage policy in respect of contractors. This policy requires contractors to pay the Living Wage to Qualifying Staff unless it would be unlawful or inappropriate to do so.

f) Community Safety Implications

There are no community safety implications associated with the updates provided in this report.

6 Consultation and communication considerations

The Council's first two Anti-Poverty Strategies were informed by available

data and evidence and extensive consultation with partner organisations, stakeholders and local residents. In developing the current strategy in 2019 and 2020, we built on this evidence base using updated data and further consultation. This included: engagement with residents at a range of community group meetings; a stakeholder workshop; meetings with key partner organisations; workshops for City Council frontline staff who support residents in poverty; and engagement with management teams in key Council services.

The content of this annual report will be communicated to residents through the media using a news release, and on the council website and Twitter

7 Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Anti-Poverty Strategy Annual Report

9 Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact David Kidston, Strategy and Partnerships Manager, tel: 01223 457043, email: david.kidston@cambridge.gov.uk.