

Our Cambridge – Cambridge Together Project – Resident and Community Engagement

Equalities Panel: 4 July 2023

Introduction

This report to the Equalities Panel sets out the outcomes of the Resident and Community engagement during February and March 2023 as part of the Cambridge Together project, with a particular focus on the following: -

1. Highlight the feedback around things that matter to various communities
2. How the engagement approach has helped/not helped to increase the participation of seldom heard communities and the lessons we have learned

Panel members will be invited to share thoughts on key findings, including what might be surprising and anything that might be missing given their knowledge of communities with different protected characteristics

They shall also be asked for feedback on how the Council can improve its engagement with people with different protected characteristics whose views were underrepresented in the project.

Background

The project is part of the council's transformation programme, [Our Cambridge](#), which aims to create a more modern and community-focused council delivering services through better use of technology and new ways of working.

The project sought to understand the similarities and differences in the way a range of stakeholders imagine the future of the city and to create a Cambridge Rich Picture tool¹ in the form of visual illustrations. The tool is designed to support conversations about the city with communities, partners, and stakeholders, helping to clarify similarities and differences in expectations, and providing valuable insight for Cambridge, of which the Council is a part.

The project also sought to explore additional routes to community engagement, by using a combination of methods, including an online survey tool, recently procured by the Council, called [CitizenLab](#), more traditional pop-up events, and testing the use of community conversations, facilitated by community partners to reach residents and communities who we might not otherwise hear from.

An [equalities impact assessment](#) was undertaken in January 2023 as part of designing the project's approach to engagement.

¹ Cambridge Rich Picture is a visual tool that has been developed by [Live Illustration](#) working with council staff, stakeholders and partners. It will be used by the Council for future conversations to understand the city as a whole system, its priorities, and where attention should be focused.

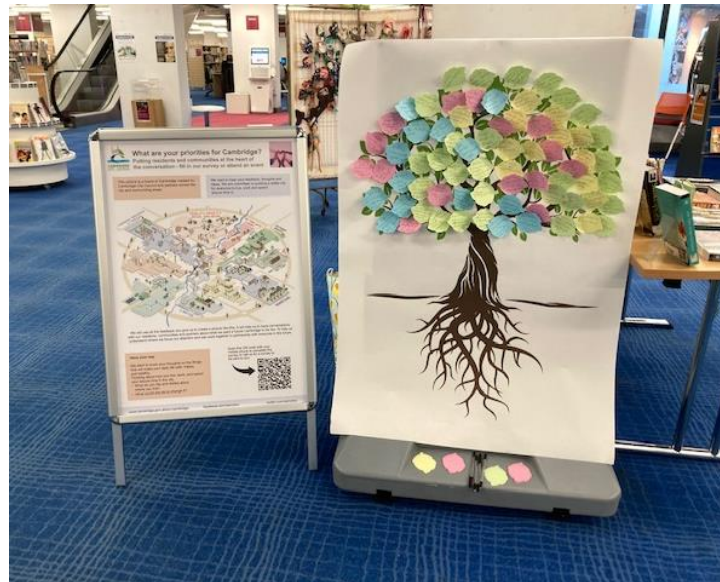
Engagement Approach

Linda Thomas, [Futurebright Solutions \(FBS\)](#) was commissioned to deliver the engagement to find out what matters to residents and communities to support us in this transformation work. The engagement was carried out, under a campaign called [Putting Residents and Communities at the Heart of the Conversation](#), during February and March 2023 via the Council's online survey platform (CitizenLab), in-person hosted pop-up events, online focus groups and conversations with several community groups.

We asked the following open-ended questions:

1. Thinking about where you live, please tell us in a few words what are the things that make your daily life safe, happy, and healthy
2. Thinking about where you live, please tell us in a few words what you like about it as a place to live, work and spend leisure time in
3. Please tell us in a few words what you dislike about where you live
4. Thinking about where you live, what would you do to make it a better place to live, work and spend leisure time in?

The questions were designed to be open ended, while not specifically asking about council services and functions. Open ended questions were chosen so that there was no leading of responses towards any themes or choices. Although this meant that this increased the amount of time to analyse responses, we were keen to have a fuller picture of what mattered to our Residents and Communities.



Pop up event and display at Central Library

Communications

This took place throughout the consultation period using traditional written communications (press releases and publications) and social media (Facebook and Twitter). The Council's website also had a landing page with information about the consultation, which linked to the survey on CitizenLab.

The information sheet for communities was translated into several languages, especially to reach refugees and asylum seekers (Ukrainian, Farsi, Arabic, Dari and Cantonese).

Summary of Engagement levels

Online Survey

465 responses were received from the residents of Cambridge over a 6-week period.

Participants were asked to respond 'in a few words' to four open ended survey questions. Typically, several topics* were identified for each answer, and each was coded and analysed. **As a result of more than one topic per response, the percentage response rate for each answer may be greater than 100%.*

Data was analysed at ward level and this information is available in the full report [online](#)

The top three ranked responses overall have been included below for each question

	Ranked First	Ranked Second	Ranked Third
Question 1: Thinking about where you live, what are the things that make your daily life safe, happy and healthy?			
Q1	Open Spaces – green spaces, trees, river, parks (39%)	Community – family and friends, good neighbours (32%)	Housing – location and proximity to shops, GP, work, activities, etc. (30%)
Question 2: Thinking about where you live, what do you like about it as a place to live, work and spend leisure time in?			
Q2	Housing – location and proximity to shops, GP, work, activities, etc. (44%)	Open Spaces – green spaces, trees, river, parks (35%)	Community – family and friends, good neighbours (22%)
Question 3: Please tell us what you dislike about where you live?			
Q3	Built Environment – potholes (22%)	Transport – congestion (16%)	Built Environment – parking and enforcement (on pavements, verges) (13%)
Question 4: Thinking about where you live, what would you do to make it a better place to live, work and spend leisure time in?			
Q4	Built Environment – fix the potholes (17%)	Transport – cycling, cycle Lanes (more, less, separate, policing) (15%)	More amenities, activities and things to do (12%)

Equalities Monitoring

Voluntary questions were asked for the purposes of monitoring and advancing equality and diversity in Cambridge City Council, and we used the standard set that have been agreed for use within CitizenLab. This section sets out the findings: -

Age of Respondents

Of the 465 respondents, 29% did not provide their age. Of those who did, the greatest number of responses were received from residents aged **41-50 years old – 16%**. Three wards had responses from age band up to 20 years old – Arbury (6%), Castle (7%) and Trumpington (3%). At the other end of the scale, age band 90+ received responses from one ward, Queen Edith's. For the remainder there was a wide range of age band responses across all wards except for Newnham which had a narrow range 60-90, but with a high percentage (41.67%) not reporting any age at all.

Disability, Health Conditions/Illnesses

Of those who responded, **19.57%** (91) stated that they have a physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more and **51.83%** (241) stated they did not.

Ethnic Origin

Of those who responded to this question, the greatest number of responses was received from those identifying as **White: English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British (56.8%)**.

Respondents of ethnic backgrounds, origins and heritage other than White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British were broken down as follows: _

- **'White Other'** background (**8.6%**) were African, American, Anglo-American, Anglo-Greek, Austrian, Canadian, Caucasian, Danish, European, French, German, Italian, Latino, Anglo-Estonian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian/ American, Scottish/German, Slavic/Polish, Swedish, Welsh.
- **'Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian'** background (**0.43%**) responses were Japanese and Iranian.
- **'Any Other Mixed'** background (**1.08%**) were Latin/Asia, Mixed White/Middle Eastern, White/Arab.
- **'Any Other Ethnic group'** (**0.65%**) were Hong Kong and Persia.

What is your sex as registered at birth?

Of those who responded to this question **45.16%** (210) were registered as **Female**, **28.60%** (133) as **Male**, and **1 person (0.22%)** as **Intersex**.

We also asked the following questions: -

Does your gender identity match your sex as registered at birth?

Yes 67% (312), No 0.86% (4), Prefer not to say 2.3% (11) and not answered 29.67% (138)

Which of the following describes how you think of yourself?

Identified as Female 42% (196), Male 27% (126), In another way 0.43% (2) Prefer not to say 2.3% (11) and not answered 28% (130)

Pregnancy/Maternity

There were no questions asked in the survey relating to this.

Religion or beliefs

There were no questions asked in the survey relating to this.

Household Income

Response rate to this question was very low, with **41.5% not answering** the question and a further **15% preferring not to say**. Of those who did respond,

5% below £19K

12% £20-£40K

5% £40-£50K

17% £50-£99K

6% over £100K

Hosted Pop-up events

199 people took part in conversations during these sessions.

- **Clay Farm Community Centre – 2 sessions, 70 people**
 - Age range: under 18 (10), 18-30 (13), 31-49 (32), 50-64 (6), 65-80 (5), 80+ (4)
 - Ethnic group: White British/English (44), Asian (6), Ukrainian (6), Indian (4), Chinese (3), Turkish (2), French (1), Latin American (1), White Other (1), Moroccan (1), South Asian (1).
 - Gender description: Female (56), Male (14)
 - Physical or mental ill health: 4, including mobility (2)
- **Cambridge Central Library – 2 sessions, 55 people**
 - Age range: 18-30 (17), 31-49 (8), 50-64 (11), 65-80 (13), 80+ (6)
 - Ethnic group: White British/English (32), Indian (5), Chinese (5), Asian (3), Black British (3), American (3), Arabic (2), Black Caribbean (1), Mixed (1)
 - Gender description: Female (48), Male (7)
 - Physical or mental ill health: 4, including epilepsy/learning disability (1), low level mental health condition (1)

- **Grafton Centre – 2 sessions, 74 people**
 - Age range: under 18 (2), 18-30 (33), 31-49 (21), 50-64 (18)
 - Ethnic group: White British/English (52), Chinese (7), Asian (7), Indian (4), Ukrainian (3) White Mixed (1)
 - Gender description: Female (62), Male (12)
 - Physical or mental ill health: 1 – PTSD/Anxiety

Online focus groups

- 4 sessions were held on various days and times - only 2 people attended. 3 of the sessions were focussed on emerging themes from the survey and the last session focussed on a discussion around the Rich picture.

Conversations with communities

185 people took part in these conversations.

- **The Kite Trust** delivered a community conversation with **15 LGBTQ+ young people**.
- A drop-in took place at the **Bangladeshi and Indian Women's lunches** with **15 women** taking part.
- The **Cambridge Ukrainian Community Group** is a network meeting chaired by the City Council. A discussion at this meeting reached **20 people** working with Ukrainian refugee communities and led to the collaboration below with the Ukrainian PhD student.
- A **Ukrainian PhD student** from Anglia Ruskin University worked with FutureBright Solutions to translate questions and supported **37 Ukrainian refugees** to complete the survey.
- Two drop-ins took place at **Serving and Veteran Armed Forces** personnel activities with **46 people** taking part.
- A pop-up took place at **Anglia Ruskin Students Union** during a volunteer fair event and spoke to **28 students**.
- The **Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum** Workshop had **15 participants**.
- The event hosted by **Cambridge Junction** had **9 Arts and Culture** Organisations participating. These were invited as they work closely with communities across the city.

Headline Findings

What people valued included:

- Living within walking or cycling distance of amenities and services – people felt that these were important for a good quality of life.
- Open and green spaces
- A sense of community

In terms of what people dislike about where they live, the most popular themes included:

- Potholes
- Congestion (this included concerns around the Greater Cambridge Partnership's proposals for a Sustainable Travel Zone)
- Irresponsible parking on pavements and verges

Thoughts on making things better included addressing the dislikes and enhancing more of the things that were valued.

The full report on findings and analysis can be found on the Council's website [Putting Residents and Communities at the Heart of the Conversation](#)

Findings through the lens of protected characteristics

- **Diversity** of people and culture was identified as a positive element to the city, which made it feel '*international and open minded*', and made people feel safe and welcome. However, a couple of responses (one Japanese and one Polish resident) picked up on bias and implied racism at GP practices.
- **Affordability** was an issue (for shopping, eating and the wider economy) and it was important to maintain a balance of offers so that things were **equitable** for all. A number of people felt that there was an **imbalance**, with **inequitable access to jobs, housing**, etc. raised, with the feeling that the system was biased to those who were more affluent.
- Some people felt that the **Sustainable Travel Zone** proposals were **inequitable** as they favoured people on higher incomes who could afford to pay the charge, whereas others on low incomes having to **drive for work** would be disproportionately affected. Also affected would be **informal carers, older people** (who rely on their cars to access friends, family and social activities), people with **mobility issues** and those having to **visit the hospital regularly**.
- **Digital exclusion** came through strongly in conversations at the Central Library, reflecting the demographic of the audience – older adults, people with disabilities and health conditions (learning disabilities and mental ill health).

- People said they felt safe when there was adequate **street lighting**, and when **police** were visible (*note, majority response to the survey was from White British/Other residents*) and wanted more **safe spaces** especially for young people (in general and for LGBTQ+ communities).
- People would like to see a range of **playground offers** and **more activities** – free or low cost – especially for families/children, young people, and older adults transitioning into retirement and in retirement. There was also a request for women only swimming and exercise classes.
- A number of respondents with **Illness/Disability** – spoke about the need for clean air, due to respiratory issues, and felt that on the whole Cambridge City had good air quality. Easy access to GPs, pharmacies and hospital were important. The condition of pavements and parking on pavements was raised, in particular for those with mobility issues who use mobility scooters and was often a reason why people stayed at home.
- **Easy access to good GPs, health services and pharmacies** was important, especially for those with health conditions, and for people without health conditions, this was also an important element to staying healthy and well. Timely access to **GP appointments** was raised as an issue, which is a national issue exacerbated since the pandemic. The lack of **‘walk in clinics’** (urgent treatment centres) was highlighted at the Bangladeshi and Indian conversation, along with opportunities for women only exercise classes and swimming.
- **Isolation and loneliness** was a particular issue for **older adults**, especially those in the **80+ age** bracket. It was more difficult for them to access activities and social events, coupled with the fact that many of their friends were not around anymore. Many feared that they would become more isolated as a result of the introduction of the **Sustainable Travel Zone**

Learnings

At the outset of the work, we wanted to engage a wide range of voices, including underrepresented communities, and test methods of engagement to provide learning for future work.

Learning from overall approach

The combined use of the online survey platform and community conversations has proved a successful pilot approach to engagement. There were limitations due to the relatively short length of time set aside to deliver the initial engagement, as this impacted on the ability to develop collaborative and trusting relationships with communities of interest. It was felt that a number of ‘voices’ were missing from this engagement, including people with small business and people who work in the City but might not live in Cambridge, and Black and Asian residents taking part in the survey. For the latter, this was addressed to some extent by the community conversations, however further consideration is required on how to ensure these voices are heard in representative numbers in future conversations.

Learning from activity to engage with underrepresented Groups

There is no 'one size fits all' and methods should be flexible so they can adapt to suit the need for engagement and the audience. A key critical factor is the element of trust, and it is essential to take time to build trusted and mutually beneficial relationships with communities of interest, as well as community leaders and organisations who represent those communities. Although some initial approaches were made with Faith and Disability groups a longer development lead in time would have been needed to build trust within these groups, and there were limitations in the ability to follow up due to time constraints.

Learning from the CitizenLab online survey

This is a relatively new platform used by the Council. People who wanted to fill in the survey were first required to register on the CitizenLab online platform. This could be perceived as a barrier, however, 528 people responded to this survey with a further six people telephoning the council for a paper copy of the survey. This figure demonstrates a reasonable return when compared to other recent surveys that have taken place on CitizenLab, and by offering a paper copy option, the issue of digital exclusion was partially addressed. It should be noted that the majority of responses were from White British/White Other residents.

Although CitizenLab can accommodate surveys in multiple languages, it does not automatically translate content and questions, so it is a very time-consuming manual process and use of the Council's translation contract would be required.

Consideration should be given as to how ethnic diversity could be increased, and whether this type of platform is suitable for all communities or whether different approaches might be more effective, such as working with Community groups to translate and undertake surveys. An example of this was a Ukrainian PhD student from Anglia Ruskin University worked with FutureBright Solutions to translate questions and supported 37 Ukrainian refugees to complete the survey.

Learning from Community conversations – Working with Community Groups and Representatives

The approach being tested was a collaborative model, working with groups, organisations and individuals to support them to have conversations within their own communities. Originally up to 20 community conversations were planned, however due to time constraints, capacity within groups, and their focus on other priorities the numbers engaged were lower. A £100 incentive was available to Community groups who took part in this to support staff involvement time.

As initial contact was made by Linda Thomas and opportunities presented themselves, development meetings took place during February with a number of community groups and organisations. These worked with a number of audiences including carers, LGBTQ+ and young

people, and people with mental health issues as well as arts/culture and communities, and families. Time constraints, and/or differing priorities for some of the potential collaborators, meant that a number of the community conversations did not move forward but for those that did, support materials were produced – conversation guides, information sheets to share with communities, and guidance for gathering feedback (to support their community conversations).

Working with staff members in Community Development and Community Safety, who have connections to communities of interest was very successful. More work in this area can provide a greater reach. Acknowledging that building trusted relationships and identifying opportunities for collaboration require lead in and development time.

People valued that Linda Thomas had taken the time to visit them to understand what's important. It provided the opportunity for a focus group type conversation with a targeted audience in their own surroundings.

It is important to recognise the value that community and voluntary groups and organisations provide in reaching further into communities. Resources are always limited for these and identifying a budget to enhance staff capacity, and/or fund an activity or event is an important element to working with communities and developing mutually beneficial relationships. Offers could also be 'in kind' from the council in the form of training, materials, access to venues, etc. We do recognise that, many organisations even with small amounts of funding will just simply not have capacity due to numbers of staff and volunteers, and pressures of core work e.g. in the context of Covid-19 impacts and Cost of Living Crisis

Learning from Pop-up events

Pop-ups allowed face to face interactive conversations with the public – passers-by who were already visiting the site either for shopping, refreshments or to use the library services. A number of people said they had seen the pop-up advertised on the display panel when they visited the site on a previous occasion and had come along to have a chat as a result of that.

Of the three locations that were used, interactions at the Clay Farm Centre were most relaxed as the setting was informal, not too big, and people were on site for some time either using the library or the café. This meant that the host could approach people, introduce the work and leave post it notes with them to fill in and be collected in their own time. The Grafton Centre had good footfall and people did engage, however, many more were focussed on shopping and getting from A to B.

The Central Library has three floors and while the pop-up was in the foyer which provided an opportunity for interaction as people entered and left, it did not lend itself so well to people being approached once they had settled at their location within the library.

This approach demonstrated that being located at sites where people are already visiting provides the potential to reach larger numbers. It is important to think about the return on investment (staff time vs numbers engaged) as some sites will lend themselves more to conversational space than others. Consider using more locations out in the community rather than the city centre such as social clubs, pre-school nurseries, community, and faith facilities.

Learning from Online Focus groups

The uptake of online sessions was very low; this may be because many had their say through the survey or because there was a lack of financial incentive for this option. Consultation and Zoom fatigue could also be factors affecting engagement.

Learning around Accessibility

Face to face community conversations and drop ins, hard copy surveys, and working through and with community leaders to develop the approach/ language/ translation requirements are all important factors in accessibility, as well as using digital. This can take time, but the effectiveness of engagement can be greatly improved as a result.

Next Steps

We said at the outset that this engagement work was the starting point of the council working more collaboratively with residents and communities across Cambridge. The learnings from the project will help to build relationships for continued conversations that will help shape future priorities and outcomes for residents and communities. The council will:

- Feedback outcomes to a wide range of stakeholders
- Use the findings to inform the [Our Cambridge Programme](#) and future day to day operations of Cambridge City Council
- Deliver staff training on how to use the Rich Picture tool ²(Appendix 1 – Current working version)
- Build on the Community Conversation approach
- Use the “State of the City” Report ³and dashboard and annual data refresh to track the impact of the collective work that we and our partners are doing to help everyone in the city live safe, happy and healthy lives, knowing whether we're making a difference.

Questions for the Panel

Q1. How can we improve our reach with underrepresented equalities groups to improve future community engagement?

Q2. Is there anything that surprises you about the responses from the Cambridge Together engagement with regards to your knowledge of different equality groups in the city?

² Cambridge Rich Picture is a visual tool that has been developed by [Live Illustration](#) working with council staff, stakeholders and partners. It will be used by the Council for future conversations to understand the city as a whole system, its priorities, and where attention should be focused

³ The State of the City report and dashboard is a research data led tool which will provide a picture of what Cambridge is actually like (through economic, social and environmental lenses), and how that changes over time.

