

EQUALITIES PANEL

6 February 2024

4.00 - 6.00 pm

Present:

Chair: Sam Scharf, Director of Communities

Councillor members: Cllr Porrer; Cllr Thittala Varkey; Cllr Wade

Public members: Orsola Spivak; Raheela Rehman

Officer members: Alistair Wilson; Ariadne Henry; Lesley-Ann George; Naomi Armstrong

Other officers in attendance: Caroline Gill; David Kidston; Helen Crowther; Vicky Haywood

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

24/1/EP Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Flaubert and Cllr Smart.

24/2/EP Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

24/3/EP Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2023 were noted subject to the following amendment requested by Councillor Thittala Varkey:

The deletion of the following text 'One member expressed that they were disappointed at the low response rate to the survey and questioned whether the findings of the survey were sufficiently representative to be used by the Council to inform future decisions. They felt that using council resources for research with a low response rate was unfair to ethnic minority communities.'

The addition of the following text 'One member, who himself is from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community, expressed that he was disappointed at the sampling method used in the survey, and questioned whether the findings of the survey were sufficiently representative to be used

by the Council to inform future decisions. He said that it lacks proper reflection of South Asian people included in the survey, especially people from the Pakistani community who seem not to have been included in the survey.'

24/4/EP Public Questions

There were no public questions.

24/5/EP Community Wealth Building Strategy

David Kidston, Strategy & Partnerships Manager, presented on the Council's draft Community Wealth Building (CWB) Strategy and asked for comments from Panel members on the strategy and approach relating to equality impacts: David said:

- The strategy aims to set out an approach to tackle poverty and build an inclusive and sustainable economy in the city. It is going to Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee for approval on 21 March 2024.
- The CWB Strategy is an evolution of the council's approach to tackle poverty (previously captured in Anti-Poverty Strategies covering the period from 2014 to 2024).
- The CWB sets out our approach to building community wealth around four themes:
 - Using the council's own resources, assets, and powers to address poverty and inequality.
 - Building an inclusive and sustainable economy.
 - Empowering communities and giving individuals more agency over their lives.
 - Taking a holistic, systems-based approach.
- There are a number of projects piloting the CWB approach and once the strategy is approved, we will be identifying a wider programme of activity that will help deliver the 4 themes of our CWB approach. The pilot projects have been referred to in the Equality Impact Assessment on the strategy. They include:
 - A Focus on Abbey – taking a whole systems approach to CWB focusing on building upon strengths and assets that already exist in the area.

- Greater Cambridge Impact Fund – This is an independent investment fund to address the causes of inequalities and offer a new type of finance.
- Region of Learning Programme – supporting disadvantaged young people to access better employment opportunities.

Panel members asked clarifying questions on the strategy:

- How is the council seeking money through the social impact investment fund since put seed funding in?
- Has the disparity in incomes between the richest and poorest has changed over the last five years?
- Is the council working with the Bennett Institute or just using its model of six capitals?
- What are the definitions of social capital and human capital?

David's answers were:

- The fund Greater Cambridge Impact Fund was developed with input from different stakeholders. The Council will be providing up to £1 million in seed funding and the Impact Fund is seeking up to £15 million public and private investment. The council's contribution is contingent on other organisations contributing funding.
- Statistics have suggested there are ongoing inequalities between those on the lowest and highest incomes in the city. Many Cambridge businesses are global so need to pay globally competitive salaries to attract employees to their highly skilled roles. The council hopes that the CWB strategy will help increase incomes of those on lowest pay in the city by providing them with greater opportunities to develop their skills in key areas of the Cambridge economy.
- The council met with the Bennett Institute at the University of Cambridge as part of the development of the strategy. We are using their Bennett Institute Wealth Economy model, which identifies six capitals (human, social, knowledge, physical, natural and institutional). The six capitals are being applied nationally to the government's Levelling Up approach and the council is looking into how they can be applied at a local level.
- Human capital consists of the skills and the physical and mental health of people in communities. Social capital relates to trust, connections and community cohesiveness.

Panel members provided the following feedback on the strategy:

- Members of the Panel emphasised the importance of developing holistic person-centred approaches to building community power that reflects intersectionality to capture the complexity of people's identities. Cllr Porrer shared that it is important to embed this approach with officers and executive councillors.
- Cllr Porrer also shared that mental health and low-income affect people with different protected characteristics as an example of intersectionality. She raised that it would be beneficial for the Council to move away from one year funding for the voluntary and community sector to fund some organisations longer-term to enhance their security.
- Cllr Porrer added that in our own employment practices and in aiming to influence others championing flexible working would be important, including job share of management opportunities. Cllr Wade shared that the civil service has a job share model that the council could itself use.
- Cllr Wade said that Executive Councillors champion the CWB approach.
- A public member of the Panel pointed out that in the equality impact assessment on the strategy, specific work relating to education and skills was mentioned impacting positively on young people. They recommended targeted activities towards people with other protected characteristics to raise skills and tackle barriers to learning opportunities. David Kidston shared that skills and employment is an area that needs a whole-systems approach to address as this is not one of the City Council's statutory responsibilities. He said the council currently makes a difference in having targets around disability and ethnicity for its own workforce, through projects such as the Region of Learning and through over £1 million provided in community grants funding annually, including to projects supporting young people.
- In response a staff member of the Panel pointed to other existing activities relating to community development. The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community Development Officer has been supporting communities access heavy goods vehicle training. Community Development Officers are also looking into bringing skills development opportunities into community centres.
- Cllr Porrer mentioned that the council could work more closely with Anglia Ruskin University around shaping skills and learning opportunities

in the city. The university offers courses widely available around health and wellbeing, English as a second language, counselling and more.

- A staff member mentioned the physical disability and sensory impairment can be barriers to work and that poverty can exacerbate the ability of disabled people to leave their house. The council has a new Health Prevention Officer considering some of these issues.

24/6/EP Youth Strategy

Vicky Haywood, Community Development Manager, and Caroline Gill, Senior Community Development Officer, presented on the council's draft Youth Strategy. They asked the Panel for their views on whether the right approach is being proposed and for any other advice or suggestions on what it needs to include. Vicky and Caroline shared:

- 33.2% of the Cambridge population are school children or students. Key issues for children and young people are poverty (experienced by 11%), increased mental health diagnoses, exploitation, knife crime, youth violence and educational attainment (only 40% of children and young people on pupil premium score well for English and Maths GCSEs).
- It is important that Cambridge City Council's Youth Strategy recognise that these challenges faced by children and young people cannot be solved by the council alone. The council will need to work with partners on delivering the strategy who have a statutory duty to children and young people.
- Children and young people currently lack a universal offer of support in the city unless they are able to participate in local youth groups or can pay for activity aimed at them.
- The Youth Strategy will draw on the council's current vision of "One Cambridge – Fair for all" and more explicitly apply this to fairness for youth. The strategy aims to provide young people with a greater voice. The language used in the strategy will be checked with young people to ensure it fits their understanding and priorities.
- Commitments within the strategy, currently in draft form, are:
 - To provide real opportunities for children and young people to be heard and the ability to deliver on what they ask about. This would

- involve setting up a Youth Assembly run independently of the council but commissioned by it.
- Provide joined up and accessible activities for children and young people to engage in (including around play, culture, and sport).
- For the council to be more explicit on what it means by its commitment around safeguarding.
- Using the council's assets (what it manages and owns) to make the best offer to children and young people.
- Next steps for the strategy:
 - Ascertain the final draft of the commitments and ensure each commitment has an action plan.
 - Political sign off in March 2024.
 - Commission a Youth Assembly from April 2024.
 - Consider governance relating to commitments set out in strategy.

Sam Scharf, shared that the council is looking into how best to ensure all its strategies fit together and form a coherent whole.

The Panel members provided feedback on the Youth Strategy:

- Cllr Wade asked if housing affordability for young people aged up to 25 is being considered, including raising awareness of options like housing cooperatives and studio apartments for young people.
- On the theme of housing affordability, Cllr Porrer mentioned that primary schools in the city are losing students as house prices are rising meaning parents cannot afford to live in school catchment areas anymore.
- Cllr Thittala Varkey asked that in providing opportunities for young people and children to be heard, there is proper representation of children in poverty. He thanked Vicky and Caroline for a superb presentation.
- Cllr Porrer said that social capital is often held by well-off children and the Youth Strategy might be a good means to increase social capital of children on lower incomes. She also felt that involving them in designing spaces in the city was important.
- The council has passed a motion to treat care leavers in the same way as protected characteristics in the Equality Act as part of its commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty. A panel member pointed out that this applies to decisions on the Youth Strategy too.

Vicky responded to the Panel's feedback:

- In relation to points made on housing affordability the team developing the Youth Strategy are liaising with housing around how to build this into the strategy.
- The Youth Assembly will work across a wide range of schools with pupils on different incomes and will consider how to hear from young people not in education, employment, and training, and special educational needs schools. It is important that the strategy is owned by young people and young people will be involved in developing and co-producing a video to communicate it. It is important that the Youth Assembly be as representative as far as it can of young people in the city.
- The Local Plan includes an aspiration for children and young people to provide feedback on new developments. In developing the Youth Strategy this has uncovered a need to develop more spaces for girls as well as boys.

The Chair said that boards and assemblies are very formal means to seek feedback and asked if there is another more agile way to hear feedback. Vicky said that other methods of hearing from children and young people will be reflected in the action plan for the strategy as well as the Youth Assembly. The Chair asked that the action plan be brought back to the Panel in July. Vicky said the Panel members could also be engaged with outside of the meeting to give them assurance that the Strategy reflects the priorities and asks of children and young people themselves.

24/7/EP Any Other Business

None.

24/8/EP Date of Next Meeting

2 July 2024.

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm

CHAIR

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