

REPORT TITLE: Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP)

To: Councillor Martin Smart, Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services

Committee: Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee

20th March 2025

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All Wards

1.	Recommendations
1.1	<p>The Executive Councillor is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support continuation of the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP), based on a combination of projects in delivery, those committed and substantially developed, and those committed that still offer value to the Council and will proceed when capacity allows (Appendix A, Tables 1 and 2). b) Support the allocation of remaining available funds to increase budgets for those already committed projects that would benefit from and can be delivered with a funding top-up (Appendix A, Table 3) c) Support discontinuing with those previously committed projects that are proving difficult to implement or no longer offer good value to the Council (Appendix A, Table 4). d) Support a further review of EIP delivery, and focus, through 2025/26, identifying where existing committed schemes might be further

	<p>discontinued; and how the programme might be further adapted to continue to provide good, and additional value to the Council.</p>
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	<p>This report provides an update for the Scrutiny Committee, Executive Councillor and ward councillors on the current position with the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP), considers several options available to the Council, and makes recommendations around future delivery and focus through 2025/26.</p> <p>The report includes an outline and critique of how other Councils deliver similar programmes of environmental enhancement, and how Cambridge's programme might be further adapted to provide additional value to the Council and communities.</p>
3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	<p>Existing Committed Programme</p> <p>For those EIP projects already allocated funding and approved by the Executive Councillor for development and delivery, the following options are available to the Council at this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Status Quo: Continue with the development and delivery of all such projects that are still able to practicably proceed. Currently there are ~49 such projects with a current value of ~£241,000, although a proportion require review to determine whether they still offer good value to the Council. b) Close the Programme: Further work on all incomplete projects will cease; with all other than contractually committed programme funds available for return to the Council's capital programme.

- c) **Trim the programme:** Continue with **only** those projects in delivery or substantially developed into 2025/26: Currently there are ~29 projects with a combined value of ~£139,000
- d) **Expand the current committed programme:** As Status Quo, but additionally invest remaining allocated budget funds to commit further works

EIP can be a valuable tool for enhancing Cambridge’s open spaces and supporting community well-being. It has involved the community in the open applications for funding rounds which are then assessed and go through a public approval process. This has committed the Council to a programme of projects and for which there is a public expectation for implementation. Closing the programme could pose a reputational risk for the Council. Therefore, a continuation of the currently committed programme, with a review of remaining projects, is the most preferable option proposed in this report (Option a).

3.2 **Further Programme development**

A review of EIP, including how other Councils across the UK invest in environmental enhancement, was undertaken in 2022/ 23. This identified a range of options whereby the Council’s approach might be adapted to offer better value and better reach the communities it serves:

- Restructure EIP thematically
- Re-evaluate funding strategies
- Enhance community engagement
- Improve geographical distribution
- Develop robust feedback mechanisms
- Strengthen stakeholder partnerships

Whilst each of these might lead to improvement in isolation; collectively they have the potential to offer significant additional value where there’s no conflict and approaches are able to be taken forward together.

A summary of this review work is attached at **Appendix C**.

	<p>It is suggested that a further review be undertaken through 2025/26 to identify how such adaptations might be made to ensure the programme best continues to offer good value to Cambridge, its residents and visitors and the Council. Changes that enhance the programme's strategic alignment, community engagement, funding efficiency, and geographical equity are likely to prove of most benefit.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Background and key issues</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>EIP is designed to fund small-scale environmental enhancements that deliver lasting and noticeable changes in local areas. It has been operating as a rolling programme since 2004.</p> <p>In March 2019, and following consideration by Scrutiny Committee, the Executive Councillor approved restructuring the programme budget, allocating £70,000 per annum to a Strategic, city-wide, programme, and £100,000 per annum devolved between the four Area Committees (on a population basis) for locally generated projects. From 2020/21, with Area Committees no longer meeting in person, their role changed to making recommendations on local projects to the Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services; with who rested the final approval under established powers of delegation.</p> <p>Currently there are ~£350,000 of outstanding EIP budget funds yet to be financially committed (albeit ~£284,000 of this has been allocated to develop specific projects by the Executive Councillor) and, in a time of austerity, it is right to review the value to Cambridge in continuing with programme development and delivery.</p> <p>Over the last 2 years, some 44 committed projects have been completed. Some 29 further projects are well developed and are projected to be completed during 2025/26, at a value of ~£139,000. A further ~36 projects are either only part, or still to be, commenced, at a value of ~£154,000. Of these latter 36 projects, around 15 have encountered difficulties with delivery, or local circumstances may have changed, or more funds will be needed to realise them and, therefore, they require review.</p>

4.2	<p>The programme remains well positioned as a key tool for enhancing open spaces and supporting community well-being. Research comparisons with approaches from councils such as Dover, Hinckley and Bosworth, Bristol, and Nottinghamshire reveal alternative models that better integrate thematic focus, stakeholder engagement, and strategic funding allocations. This research has highlighted that if EIP is to be extended via a potential future capital bid, then there are several potential operational enhancements that could further enhance its value in meeting its objectives.</p>
5.	<p>Corporate plan</p>
5.1	<p>The programme primarily supports Corporate plan Priority 1: <i>Leading Cambridge's response to the climate change and biodiversity emergencies</i>; with it being a key contributor towards the delivery of Climate Change, and Biodiversity, Strategy objectives. The key programme aims are to preserve and improve the quality of the natural and built public realm environment across Cambridge, in a manner that does not contribute towards climate change, and that leaves a positive legacy for future generations. The Council has declared both a Climate, and Biodiversity, Emergency and there is increased focus on climate change mitigation, and adaptation, and biodiversity protection and net gain. The overall impact of the programme on the environment within Cambridge has therefore been rated as +M (positive; Medium).</p> <p>The programme also contributes significantly towards other core Council objectives, including promoting equality for all, social and community cohesion, and reducing isolation and loneliness – with the importance of quality, safe and accessible open spaces recognised as a key component of these.</p>
6.	<p>Consultation, engagement and communication</p>
6.1	<p>The Council's Citizenlab public engagement tool has been used for the most recent application rounds over the spring and summer of 2022 and 2023 respectively. These exercises canvassed public views directly and sought to involve and engage all sections of the community in EIP funding</p>

	<p>allocations. Projects only then proceed where they both meet local needs within communities and have a strong degree of public support. All the programme projects are consulted on at the planning/ design stage, with the level/ type of consultation determined by and proportionate to the nature, scale, and scope of the proposed project.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact</p>
<p>7.1</p>	<p>Both Councillors, and the communities they serve, have long valued investment in the city’s unique environment. The Council’s capital funded EIP programme has delivered some particularly significant enhancements to the city’s public realm, over its lifetime, that would not, otherwise, have been realised. EIP has supplemented other Council capital infrastructure investment; including S106 funded improvements secured through new growth across the city.</p> <p>In reviewing the programme of projects due to be delivered in 2025/26 and beyond (see Appendix A), the range is diverse in scope. EIP had delivered enhanced biodiversity improvements to reduce climate impacts as local responses across the city’s recreational and public spaces, along with enhancement of social opportunities for interaction and helping build community cohesion in all areas across the city.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committee and Executive Councillor are invited to reflect on the programmes achievements over the last 20 years in considering how it might best meet future needs in an increasingly challenging environment.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Implications</p>

8.1	Relevant risks
	<p>Reputational – whilst in the current financial climate the Council is faced with having to make difficult decisions around funding priorities, the breadth of EIP and what it delivers locally, and the impact it can have in contributing to core Council objectives, should not be under-valued. This report aims to set out a range of options available to mitigate this impact whilst still meeting programme and community benefits; with the level of residual risk considered low. The recommended approach is however not without risk since project stakeholders may not agree where funding is being de-allocated, or for not further investing in projects.</p>
	Financial Implications
8.2	<p>Financial – Ongoing capital costs for continuing the programme based on a combination of projects currently in delivery, those substantially developed, and those beneficial projects (subject to review) already allocated funds, minus those for potential deallocation, would cost ~£241,000. However, this is within existing approved budget allocation.</p>
	Legal Implications
8.3	<p>Although considered a low risk, there is the potential for challenge if the Council were to withdraw funding previously allocated towards projects.</p>
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
8.4	<p>EIP project bids have historically been prioritised across all areas proportionate to population and in accordance with locally identified need. The impact of all EIP projects on Equality Act ‘protected characteristic</p>

	<p>groups' is assessed on an individual basis at the design/ planning stage of each approved project.</p> <p>All hard infrastructure schemes are designed to national standards to accommodate the needs of those with protected characteristics and any other factors that may lead to inequality. The overall impact of the programme is considered positive considering the typologies of the projects being developed.</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment is included as Appendix B.</p>
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.5	<p>The programme aims to preserve and improve the quality of the natural and built public realm environment across Cambridge, in a manner that does not contribute towards climate change and leaves a positive legacy for future generations. The Council has declared both a Climate, and Biodiversity, Emergency and there is increased focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity protection and net gain. The overall impact of the programme on the environment within Cambridge has previously been rated as +M (positive; Medium).</p>
	Procurement Implications
8.6	<p>The programme projects are either delivered in-house, utilising existing internal resource within City Services, or externally, via existing competitive and framework contract arrangements. This ensures best value for money for the Council, with the requirements of current procurement regulations always met.</p>
	Community Safety Implications
8.7	<p>The programme is designed to deliver local public realm environmental improvements and foster increased pride of place and community</p>

	<p>cohesion. Several local area projects have been delivered in association with local community and voluntary groups. Where there have been community safety concerns expressed through project development consultation processes, City Services have sought advice and worked together with Community Safety colleagues before implementing any physical changes.</p>
9.	Background documents
9.1	<p>The following background documents have been used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee Agenda and Minutes 21st March 2019.
10.	Appendices
10.1	<p>Appendix A – Tables</p> <p>Table 1 - Projects committed and significantly developed</p> <p>Table 2 - Further projects allocated funding (with potential de-allocation options)</p> <p>Table 3 - Projects for consideration of Additional Funding</p> <p>Table 4 - Potentially de-allocate/abandon funding</p> <p>Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix C – Review of Environmental Improvement Programme – 2022/23</p>
	<p>To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alistair Wilson, Strategic Delivery Manager, Tel: (01223) 458514, email: alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk • James Ogle, Project Officer, Tel: (01223) 457354, email: james.ogle@cambridge.gov.uk

Appendix A - Tables

TABLE 1 - Projects committed and significantly developed

Projects	2025 / 26 (£)
Projects Committed* (29 Projects)	
N20 - 2023 - Create a community haven on Green End Road, Chesterton	5,000
City 1 - 2023 - Citywide Community Engagement led biodiversity and habitat improvements	1,000
E16 - 2023 - A memorial to a forgotten abolitionist, Rustat Road	500
N13 - 2023 - Restore benches at the 'Cyclops' junction on Histon Road/ Gilbert Road	2,000
WC10 - 2024 - Creation of a Biodiversity Hub at St Clement's Church in central Cambridge	4,350
sN3, sN5, sN9 - 2024 - St Albans Rec, Arbury Town Park and 'Hedges for Kings Hedges' biodiversity improvements	6,500
WC6- 2023 - Display boards for the Ascension Burial Ground, Huntingdon Road	2,500
WC8 - 2024 - Biodiversity in Ascension Parish Burial Ground, Huntingdon Road	4,250
City 3 - Silver Street River bridge street-scape enhancement	10,000
E10 - Petersfield ward streets window boxes (£10,000 allocated)	1,000
sE8 – 2023 - Increasing biodiversity in Sedgwick Street	1,500
WC6 - Histon Road Recreation Ground improvements	5,000
N4 -2023 - Biodiversity and social interaction improvements in Green End Road Park, Chesterton	5,000
E27 - 2023 - A community garden on Peverel Road	3,500
N24 - 2024 - Building biodiversity at Alexandra Gardens	4,600
WC6 - 2024 - Histon Road Rec biodiversity improvements	7,000
S3 -2024 - Reclaiming green space on Church End/ Rosemary Lane, Cherry Hinton, through tree planting	4,500
S8 - 2024 - Growing Nightingale Community Garden by increasing biodiversity and engagement	4,350

Projects	2025 / 26 (£)
sN18 - 2024 - Greening Gilbert Road through tree planting	10,000
E2 - 2024 - Creating more spaces to meet on Coleridge Rec.	5,000
E23 - 2024 - 2 x Community Information noticeboards in Romsey	3,000
E11 – 2024 - Community noticeboard (St Matthews Piece)	1,800
WC14 - 2023 - Planting to screen Lammas Land from traffic and reduce air pollution in the park	1,000
S1 - 2023 - Installation of drinking water point – Clay Farm Community Centre	2,500
City 5 - Programme of welcome signage for open spaces	5,000
City 6 - Programme of biodiversity explanatory boards for Local Nature Reserves	5,000
City 7 - Programme of long grass and pictorial meadow information signs for open spaces and highway verges	5,000
sWC4 - Biodiversity explanatory boards in open spaces	5,000
N2 - 2024 - A second wildflower meadow in Five Trees open space, off Fen Road	5,000
SUB TOTAL	120,850
Staffing Project Delivery Costs @ 15%	18,128
TOTAL	138,978

TABLE 2 – Further projects allocated funding

Projects Approved (20 projects)	Review	Current Budget Remaining (£)
N7 - Mitcham's Corner - public realm enhancement	This long-standing legacy project was initiated by the local Friends group but has not progressed due to capacity constraints. It is suggested its potential benefits be revisited in conjunction with the applicant and local councillors, since circumstances and need may have changed.	2,000
WC7 - Adam & Eve Street/ Paradise Street corner	This long-standing legacy project is aimed at addressing complex ASB issues and has consequently not progressed due to capacity constraints. It is recommended that its potential benefits be revisited with local councillors to determine whether to continue with it or otherwise.	10,000
E10 - Petersfield ward Victorian streets window boxes (Originally £10,000 with spend circa £7,000)	Ongoing several-year project. Interest from community appears now to be largely exhausted, despite amendments to approach to encourage uptake. If further progress proves impracticable, there may be further savings in programme funding allocations.	2,000
N22 – 2023 - Moving Forward – Arbury Court Community Garden Project	Volunteer Group have established Garden, and project is part completed with some elements outstanding to be completed in 2025/6.	1,500
WC9 – 2023 - Community Noticeboards in Newnham, Castle and Market to promote community cohesion.	This project has not progressed due to capacity constraints. It is recommended that a discussion is had with local councillors to see whether there is still need for this project, or whether circumstances have changed.	4,500

E3 – 2023 - Green the Streets, Petersfield	Ongoing several-year project. Interest from community appears now to be largely exhausted, despite amendments to approach to encourage uptake. If further progress proves impracticable, there may be further savings in programme funding allocations.	1,000
WC2 – 2023 – Verge, greening and biodiversity Improvements - Woodlark Road, Hoadley Road, Sherlock Road & Eachard Road	Community interest in project, however different solutions for each small section of verge – with no clear consensus, consistency, nor strategic benefit. It is recommended that the benefits be reviewed in consultation with local councillors before proceeding further.	5,000
sE1 -2023 - St Matthew's Piece - Improving Biodiversity	Considerable resource invested in bringing this forward, in association with local Friends group. Difficulty realising some aspirations but potential still to establish very worthwhile elements (such as a community orchard, and other biodiversity improvements) if existing obstacles can be overcome.	10,000
N15 - 2024 - Raised Beds on Hazelwood Close	Project doesn't now appear viable – applicant asked to identify other suitable nearby site or options, as that in application was not viable. No response from applicant since June 2024.	1,000
E12 – 2024 - Riverside shrub bed planting	This project has not progressed due to capacity constraints. It will require a high level of community engagement and involvement, with potentially further budget funds, and has ongoing maintenance implications. It is suggested its benefits be reviewed in association with local councillors and the applicant.	2,500
E1 – 2024 - Rainwater collection for Millennium	Project hasn't thus far progressed due to capacity constraints and may require considerable resource time to gain permission from private owner to attach water butt to downpipe (if this is the	2,300

Gardens, Petersfield	option chosen). Benefits to be reviewed in conjunction with local councillors.	
E8 – 2024 - Plantings around Equiano Bridge	There are sensitivities from the County Council Bridge team in establishing anything potentially flammable within close proximity to the bridge. Any planters would need to be small and consequently hard to establish and maintain. It hasn't thus far developed due to capacity constraints and would require significant community and stakeholder input to bring forward successfully. Benefits to be reviewed in conjunction with local councillors.	2,000
E21 – 2024 - Aberdeen Avenue garden, Accordia, or similar location	Project hasn't thus far progressed due to capacity constraints and may require considerable resource time to gain permission from private owner to attach water butt to downpipe (if this is the option chosen). Benefits to be reviewed in conjunction with local councillors.	3,500
sE9 - Coleridge Street tree and verge protection	Aspiration to further green this quite barren and wide street. Project well developed in association with County Highways and the Council's own tree team.	10,000
sE24 - 2023 - Create community gardens, increase biodiversity and beautify Tiverton Estate	Following some initial investigations, viability would appear an issue because of lack of public open space in the area. Project has not progressed further as little or no known local interest in taking forward. To be revisited in conjunction with local councillors.	10,000
E4 - 2023 - Improving biodiversity - East Road Housing Area	Proposals have been drawn up ready for local consultation. However, from previous experience of similar projects in the area there may be limited local interest in the scheme, especially in regard to helping to maintain. It is therefore suggested its merits be reviewed in conjunction with local councillors.	5,000

N12 - 2024 - Water Street (Chesterton) Preservation Plan	Progress on the project is held up due to private land ownership issues. Landowners are now engaging, with consent to proceed anticipated. Its future success will depend on the local community appetite to manage and maintain any areas created.	3,000
N23 -2024 - Protection of grassy areas and biodiversity increase at front of Rutland Close	Applicant approached to initiate project development but despite several attempts no response nor details on specifics forthcoming thus far. Further attempts to engage will be undertaken.	3,000
sE18 -2024 - Increase biodiversity and tree cover on Cherry Hinton Road	This project has thus far not progressed due to capacity constraints but is still considered good value in helping green this very urban environment, with biodiversity, canopy and other mitigations available.	20,000
E10 - 2024 – Norfolk Street entrance to Mill Road cemetery - blind corner needs safety measures	Some initial feasibility options considered, options shared with project applicant, however no response forthcoming as yet so project not progressed further. Further attempts to engage to be made.	3,000
TOTALS		£101,300

Note: – Projects are showing the full allocation except for N22 and E10 which show allocation minus spend to date.

Table 3 – Projects to be considered for additional funding

Projects	Description	Budget (£)
<p>WC16 – 2023 - Christs' Pieces - Provision of places for unsightly bins improving environment</p>	<p>Significant progress has been made to develop and bring forward this project, but the expected third-party contributions have only come forward in part and limited. The budget allocation for this project is £3,000. Further significant funding would be needed to achieve project; with member views on the benefits invited in the context of the profile of this open space; funding limitations and other priorities.</p>	<p>3,000* +12,000</p>
<p>Other project overspends and contingencies e.g. shortfall on Romsey Rec</p>	<p>There are existing projects which now part developed have funding shortfalls. One example is the Romsey Rec Garden enhancement which is mainly being funded via s106 developer contributions - however it does have a deficit. Such additions would enable implementation to a high standard and enable local aspirations to be met.</p>	<p>10,000</p>

Table 4 – Potentially de-allocate/abandon funding

14 projects - for consideration		Potentially De-allocate (£)
N3 – 2023 - Hazelwood Close - seating installation	Negative community response to local consultation due to concerns about ASB. Relayed to Councillors but no firm steer to continue with project implementation, since the potential disbenefits would outweigh benefit.	1,500
sE8 – 2023 - Increasing biodiversity (Sedgwick Street)	Ongoing project similar to E10 and E3 - interest from community appears to be waning with 2 rounds already undertaken. It has proven resource intensive for limited strategic benefit, with any further work beyond existing budget provision unlikely	1,500
S5 – Cavendish Avenue – Road narrowing pavement build-out	Focus of EIP has changed since adoption of this long-standing legacy aspiration. Furthermore, County Council Highways have introduced a parking management scheme in the area, that negates any benefit which this EIP would add. This has largely dealt with issue identified, therefore, recommended project be deleted from the programme.	5,000
sN5 – Hurst Park estate - verge & footway protection TRO	GCP are progressing a residents parking scheme for the Milton Road area including Hurst Park estate. When implemented, this should largely address the potential for inconsiderate parking; and there is therefore no need for a further TRO.	2,500
N18 - 2023 - Community Planting in Minerva Way/ Kings Hedges Rec	Application for a mini community garden. These have proven very hard to achieve successfully, requiring a disproportionate level of resource versus benefit – with	950

14 projects - for consideration		Potentially De-allocate (£)
	implications for ongoing local ownership and management of an ongoing maintenance need. Funding also insufficient to achieve expected benefits i.e. wheelchair accessible raised community growing spaces.	
N19 - 2023 - Making the most of small spaces in King's Hedges	As per N18 above	800
sE23 -2023 - Improve tree cover in Hobart Road	Some new street trees have been established in this area in previous EIP rounds. However, and despite concerted effort with 5x trial holes at separate locations, the extent of underground utilities is such that further trees would be impracticable.	7,000
S9 -Trumpington fringes bus stops	This project has not progressed due to capacity constraints and is no longer considered to offer good value to the Council. It requires engagement from bus operators, which has not progressed, and significantly more funding to create paved areas on verges; potentially with connections to paths and other support infrastructure (such as shelters). Fundamentally, funding new bus infrastructure along with an ongoing maintenance obligation is not considered a priority for the Council	3,000
WC9 - Sidney Street green landscaping	Technically challenging environ in which to establish street trees. Some interest from Anglian Water in terms of surface flooding mitigation, along with success in providing trees in larger tub	5,000

14 projects - for consideration		Potentially De-allocate (£)
	planters in nearby Peas Hill which might be available for redeployment as part of the Civic Quarter project. Therefore, this project no longer provides good value	
WC15 - 2023 - Improve the street bench on corner of Eltisely Avenue and Granchester Meadows in Newnham	Though a design has been worked up to improve this bench it has emerged that the location is on privately owned land and with a very large mature tree not inspected nor maintained by the Council. A risk assessment will be undertaken to determine whether the existing bench can remain or should be removed.	2,000
E9 – 2024 - Extend the successful ‘Green the Streets’ scheme in Petersfield ward	Ongoing several-year project (see E10 and E3). Interest from community appears now to be largely exhausted, despite amendments to approach to encourage uptake. Beyond funds already budgeted elsewhere, this further allocation is unlikely to be needed.	2,000
E12 -2023 - Biodiversity & social interaction improvements, Maple Tree Area, St Matthews Street	Project investigated and high level of resource input given, however the primary local aspiration of installing a bench and meeting place cannot be met due to potential for ASB. Objections from Police and Council’s Housing and Community Safety teams, so unable to proceed further.	3,000
N8 - Humberstone Road landscaping (Elizabeth Way end)	This long-standing legacy project is no longer considered viable, since circumstances have changed. There is little evident community support and context changed, and two large utility	5,000

14 projects - for consideration		Potentially De-allocate (£)
	boxes installed on site will make it impractical to undertake groundwork improvements.	
N3 - Hurst Park Avenue verge planting	This long-standing legacy project would require a licence to cultivate from County Highways. Further, it appears to have been part implemented by the local community – with no further requirement for EIP funding allocated.	1,000
TOTALS		£40,250

Note: – Projects are showing the full allocation except for sE23 and sE8 which show allocation minus spend to date.

Appendix B –Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service

Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP)

2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)

Weblink:

[Agenda for Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 20th March, 2025, 6.00 pm - Cambridge Council](#)

3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

The Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) delivers small scale, direct, lasting and noticeable improvements to the appearance of the public realm environment across all areas of Cambridge. The committee report recommends maintaining the EIP. Changes being proposed at committee relating to the EIP are to:

- Discontinue committed projects that are proving difficult to implement, or no longer offer good value to the Council
- Support the allocation of remaining available funds to increase budgets for those already committed projects that can be delivered with a top-up
- Support a further review of EIP delivery, and focus, through 2025/ 26, identifying how the programme might be further adapted to provide additional value to the Council.

4. Responsible Team and Group

City Services – Streets & Open Spaces/ Public Realm

5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick all that apply)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residents <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visitors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff
<p>Please state any specific client group or groups (e.g. City Council tenants, tourists, people who work in the city but do not live here):</p> <p>All residents, visitors to and those who work in Cambridge are able to benefit from these improvements.</p>	

6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Major change <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minor change
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7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<p>If 'Yes' please provide details below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge City Council City Services, and Communities, Group colleagues • Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service - Urban Design and Conservation teams • Cambridgeshire County Council (as Highway Authority) • City and County Councillors • User and Stakeholder group representatives 	

8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?
Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee – 20 March 2025

9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?
Applications for new EIP projects have been invited across all areas of Cambridge in recent years. Councillors, representative and community groups and other

organisations, and individual members of the public are able to apply. This latest proposal takes stock of successes and considers how the programme might be adapted in the coming years to continue to present good value to the Council and the Cambridge public.

In identifying equality impacts of the proposals this report draws upon the Council's Vision of One Cambridge Fair for All.

The text below also captures main equalities impacts of discontinuing some EIP projects. However, it does not capture equality impacts of discontinuing projects where the original aim of a project has been met/taken up by a partner organisation, where there is no choice but to discontinue something (due to budget or something being on private land for instance), or where equality impacts are very minimal.

10. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age - Please also consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk

General impacts relating to the EIP's continuation

Some of the projects that have been undertaken to date have been especially beneficial to children in the following ways:

- Measured to reduce speeding around schools, including by introducing vehicle activated school warning signs
- Improving lighting and footpaths on routes to and from schools
- Making improvements to recreation grounds

Other projects have been especially beneficial for older people and those with mobility and visual impairments, the likelihood of which can increase with age linked to frailty (see box below).

Equality impacts of discontinuing certain projects

- Hazelwood Close, and Eltisley Avenue, Newnham, seating installations: Discontinuing these projects would mean that older people, who might be more likely to have mobility impairments, will not be provided extra seating. However, a recommendation not to proceed is for technical reasons, with concerns around safety and potentially increases in ASB.

(b) Disability

General impacts relating to the EIP's continuation

All new and improved infrastructure schemes are designed to be fully inclusive and accommodate all needs. In many cases these have been specifically focused on making life easier for those with mobility impairments especially. Examples include improved dropped kerbs and tactile surfaces, and restrictions to prevent parking on verges, footways and adjacent to junctions, in several locations across the city. Improvements to lighting have been especially beneficial to people with visual impairments.

Equality impacts of discontinuing certain projects

Hazelwood Close - seating installation: Discontinuing this means that people with mobility impairments, will not be provided extra seating. However, a decision to stop this relates to community concerns regarding fears of creating a space that increases ASB, which could increase safety and decrease risk of injury that can be caused by ASB.

(c) Gender reassignment

No impacts have been identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

No impacts have been identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

General impacts relating to the EIP's continuation

Some schemes have had a positive impact related to pregnancy and maternity such as improvements to recreation grounds and improvements to footpaths that can increase access for parents with pushchairs.

(f) Race – Note that the protected characteristic ‘race’ refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

No impacts have been identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

(g) Religion or belief

No impacts have been identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

(h) Sex

No current impacts have been identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

Previous EIP projects have however delivered enhancements to lighting, which can provide positive impact relating to sex for improving women’s feelings of safety in public spaces - nationally research suggests women are less likely to feel safe at night. EIP projects have also improved visibility for people using spaces in other ways (e.g. clearing paths so people are able to see more what is around them).

The research commissioned by the Council on girl’s use of open spaces indicates that visibility of space increases girl’s feelings of safety, with a consequent increase in their likelihood to use open spaces.

(i) Sexual orientation

No impacts have been identified specific to this protected characteristic group.

(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular, please consider the impact of any changes on:

- **Low-income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty.**
- **People of any age with care experience – this refers to individuals who spent part of their childhood in the care system due to situations beyond their control, primarily arising from abuse and neglect within their families. The term “Care experience” is a description of a definition in law, it includes anyone that had the state as its corporate parent by virtue of a care order in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and amendments.**
- **Groups who have more than one protected characteristic that taken together create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Here you are being asked to consider intersectionality, and for more information see: https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_159kt25q).**

Equality impacts of discontinuing certain projects

- Community Noticeboards in Newnham, Castle and Market to promote community cohesion. There appears to have been little follow-up demand for this from the community, with some lack of clarity over whether such analogue mechanisms are still the best mechanisms for reaching communities. Consequently, impacts relating to promoting community cohesion might be quite limited. The project benefits might therefore be revisited in conjunction with local councillors, in case needs may have changed.

11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqIA accordingly.)

Applications for new EIP projects have previously been invited on a regular basis. Each has assessed by officers for eligibility and practicality, and in relation to their equality impacts. Most potential equality impacts will be more easily identified during the project development and delivery cycle (and where relevant, EqIAs specific to an individual project proposal will be produced, as needed). However, with increasing pressure on Council benefits and need to ensure investment is appropriately

targeted at those services and areas most in need, the programme would benefit from review to ensure it is still able to provide good value.

12. Do you have any additional comments?

General impacts of the EIP

Environmental improvements are offered across all areas of Cambridge proportionate to population and in accordance with locally identified need. In addition to locally prioritised projects, strategic, city-wide, projects have been accommodated since 2019-21. Improvements can be enjoyed by all and do not discriminate between any particular user groups. All infrastructure schemes are designed to accommodate people with differing needs, and in particular those with mobility and visual impairments. The overall impact of investment in such facilities is therefore considered to be positive.

Impacts of change to EIP to enhance the programme's strategic alignment, community engagement, funding efficiency, and geographical equity

By adopting annual thematic projects that align with broader council strategies there is scope to enhance the council's ability to meet its equalities objectives. In considering new means to engage with communities on the programme, it will be important to consider means to hear from diverse voices in different neighbourhoods. If geographical allocation can be refined so allocation is directed to where there is greatest need, this can be informed by needs of diverse communities and therefore strengthen the programme's existing ability to improve access of spaces for different groups (as explored above relating to general impacts of EIP continuation).

13. Sign off

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment: John Richards
– Technical & Specialist Services Manager – City Services

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted:
Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer

Date of EqlA sign off: 5 March 2025

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: February 2026

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: 10 March 2025

All EqlAs need to be sent to the Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk

Appendix C

Review of Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) – 2022/ 23

Subject:

Appraisal and Critique of the Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) with Recommendations for the Executive Councillor for City Services and Open Spaces

1. Executive Summary

This report critically appraises the current Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) as implemented by Cambridge City Council (CCC). Drawing on comparative research with similar schemes across various councils, this report identifies key strengths and areas for improvement. Recommendations are provided to enhance the programme's strategic alignment, community engagement, funding efficiency, and geographical equity, ensuring that the EIP not only addresses immediate environmental issues but also supports wider council priorities such as anti-poverty, climate change, and biodiversity initiatives.

2. Background

The EIP is designed to fund small-scale environmental improvements that deliver lasting and noticeable changes in local areas. The programme is positioned as a key tool for enhancing open spaces and supporting community well-being. However, recent research has highlighted the potential for restructuring and operational enhancements that could further its impact. Comparisons with approaches from councils such as Dover, Hinckley and Bosworth, Bristol, and Nottinghamshire reveal alternative models that better integrate thematic focus, stakeholder engagement, and strategic funding allocations [\[cite turn0file0\]](#).

3. Comparative Analysis

3.1. Organisational Approaches

- **Thematic Integration:**
Councils like Ashfield and Hinckley and Bosworth have adopted annual
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thematic projects (e.g., focusing on public health or conservation) that align closely with broader council strategies. This approach contrasts with CCC's current method of listing projects by ward, potentially obscuring thematic impacts.

- **Funding Strategies:**

Some councils have opted for fewer, larger investments per project. For instance, Bristol's spatial mapping and targeted funding in areas of inequality suggest that larger investments in key projects (such as communal gardens) can yield more substantial environmental and social benefits compared to a dispersed, small-scale funding model.

- **Community Engagement:**

Innovative practices such as online submission forms, citizens' panels, and drop-in sessions for idea generation are evident in councils like Dover and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. These models foster robust engagement and allow for direct feedback, contrasting with CCC's more static project listing approach.

3.2. Operational Models

- **Geographical Allocation:**

Councils such as Nottinghamshire and Bristol have integrated spatial mapping to ensure equitable project distribution, especially in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. This method addresses the disparities highlighted in anti-poverty research and could inform a more equitable allocation of resources within CCC's EIP.

- **Feedback and Evaluation:**

Systems that actively collect feedback from project beneficiaries and community volunteers (as seen in Nottinghamshire) provide a mechanism to measure success and inform future funding decisions. CCC's current framework would benefit from a similar feedback loop to continually refine and improve project outcomes.

4. Appraisal and Critique

Strengths:

- **Existing Structure:**
The current EIP has established a foundation for funding small-scale environmental improvements across wards, contributing to noticeable local benefits.
- **Alignment with Wider Policies:**
There is potential to further link EIP projects with broader council strategies such as housing, biodiversity, and climate change initiatives.

Areas for Improvement:

- **Thematic and Strategic Focus:**
The absence of annual themes or a clear categorisation of projects limits the ability to focus on specific environmental or social issues. A thematic restructuring could enhance clarity and strategic impact.
- **Funding Allocation:**
The current model of numerous small-scale investments may dilute impact. A shift towards concentrating funds in fewer, but larger, projects could lead to more transformative outcomes.
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:**
Enhanced user-friendly online platforms and proactive outreach (including the formation of dedicated climate or environmental forums) are needed to increase resident and stakeholder participation.
- **Geographical Equity:**
There is an opportunity to refine the geographical allocation of projects by integrating spatial mapping techniques, ensuring that areas with higher needs—such as those affected by income disparities and social mobility challenges—are prioritised.
- **Evaluation Mechanisms:**
A structured approach to collecting post-implementation feedback and measuring project success is currently lacking and should be developed to support continuous improvement.

5. Recommendations

Based on the comparative analysis and critique, the following recommendations are proposed for the Executive Councillor for City Services and Open Spaces:

1. Restructure EIP Thematically:

- Implement annual themes (e.g., safety, public health, biodiversity) that align with overarching council strategies.
- Clearly categorise projects under thematic areas to provide strategic focus and transparency.

2. Reevaluate Funding Strategies:

- Consider consolidating funds to support fewer but larger projects that deliver significant environmental and social benefits.
- Explore flexible funding mechanisms that allow for innovative, high-impact investments.

3. Enhance Community Engagement:

- Redesign the EIP online portal to be more intuitive and interactive, featuring a clear submission process for community ideas.
- Establish dedicated forums or panels (with a focus on climate change and community improvement) to facilitate ongoing dialogue with residents and local organisations.

4. Improve Geographical Distribution:

- Adopt spatial mapping techniques to monitor and guide the geographical distribution of projects, ensuring equity across wards.
- Integrate findings from the anti-poverty strategy to target investments in areas with higher social and economic need.

5. Develop Robust Feedback Systems:

- Create a systematic approach to collect and evaluate feedback from project beneficiaries and community stakeholders.
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- Utilise qualitative and quantitative metrics to assess project success and inform future improvements.

6. Strengthen Stakeholder Partnerships:

- Proactively identify and engage with key community groups, non-profit organisations, and other stakeholders to expand the reach and effectiveness of the EIP.
 - Foster partnerships that support broader council initiatives such as climate resilience and sustainable urban development.
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6. Conclusion

The Environmental Improvement Programme is a valuable tool for enhancing Cambridge's open spaces and supporting community well-being. However, there is significant potential to amplify its impact through thematic restructuring, strategic funding, improved community engagement, equitable geographical allocation, and robust evaluation mechanisms. By adopting these recommendations, CCC can better align the EIP with its wider strategic priorities and deliver more meaningful environmental and social benefits to residents.

This report is submitted for your consideration and further action, with the aim of providing the Executive Councillor for City Services and Open Spaces with a clear pathway towards a more effective and impactful EIP.
