

# Public Document Pack

Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 3 February 2026

## **SERVICES, CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

3 February 2026

5.30 - 8.20 pm

**Present:** Councillors Young (Chair), Gardiner-Smith (Vice-Chair), Divkovic, Glasberg, Griffin, Hauk, Payne, Pounds and Swift

### **Officers:**

Head of Economy, Energy and Climate: Jemma Little

Inclusive Economy and Climate Manager: David Wright

Assistant Director for Housing and Health: Samantha Shimmon

Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Justin Long

Deputy Democratic Services Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

### **Other councillors in attendance:**

Councillor Rosy Moore, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Cabinet Member for Planning & Transport

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones, Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness

Councillor Tim Bick (Market Ward)

## **FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

### **26/1/SC&C Apologies**

No apologies were received.

### **26/2/SC&C Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

### **26/3/SC&C Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

## **26/4/SC&C Public Questions**

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment responded to the public question received on the recycling contract with Re-Gen in Northern Ireland.

It was confirmed that no recycling or waste collected by the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service was sent to the Warrenpoint refuse centre. Any contamination such as dirty nappies, food and clothes that is separated out and cannot be recycled, is stored at Re-Gen's Derryboy Road site and then sent to Sweden to an energy-from-waste facility.

The importance of the waste hierarchy (reduce, re-use, recycle) was emphasised along with the extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme.

## **26/5/SC&C Work Programme**

The Work Programme was noted.

## **26/6/SC&C Update on the Climate Change Strategy (2026-2031)**

The Inclusive Economy and Climate Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the development of the new Climate Change Strategy (2026-2031). This would replace the current strategy which ends in March 2026.

The following key points were noted:

- i. The Council's direct emissions made up approximately 0.7% of the total carbon emissions of the whole city.
- ii. The highest proportion of these (council) emissions came from leisure centres and swimming pools.
- iii. Emissions reduction had been achieved through the decarbonising of the national grid and initiatives including the use of electric and HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil) waste vehicles.
- iv. The Council continued to perform extremely strongly compared with other UK councils on carbon reduction and sustainability, and Cambridge was currently one of the highest-performing cities in the UK for sustainability.
- v. The emerging strategy aimed to continue progress and had been developed following widespread public engagement.

- vi. The proposed strategy was structured around three key sections with differing levels of authority, control and influence: Sustainable City Council (High Control), Sustainable City (Medium Control/ Influence), Working Together for a Sustainable Cambridge (Influence/ Facilitation).
- vii. The strategy plotted reduction over the next ten years and suggested that emissions could reduce by approximately 500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) per annum.

Members raised a number of questions, and a summary of the key points were:

- i. Officers reported that details on carbon savings for the Civic Quarter project were being developed and would be dependent on whether the sites used on-site power generation or whether the City Centre Heat Network proceeded. In either scenario, the intention was that the Guildhall would be operationally net-zero.
- ii. The Council had several challenging buildings in its portfolio from a retrofit perspective (including the Guildhall) and it was noted that all council buildings would need to meet forthcoming (more stringent) minimum energy efficiency standards (EPC C rating by 2028) and therefore 'doing nothing' was not an option.
- iii. Members emphasised the growing energy demands of digital services (associated with AI, cloud computing and data centres) and noted that the strategy did not directly address this issue.
- iv. It was reported that the City Centre Heat Network project was progressing well and an update was due to be considered by the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- v. It was confirmed that the long-term aim was to get as many waste vehicles as possible electric (subject to the solar power capacity of the recharging stations) and the others would remain as HVO-run.
- vi. It was reported that many of the 'quick wins' on emissions had been secured and therefore the Council was undertaking more expensive and complex projects (such as City Centre Heat Network, Civic Quarter and the Solar Farm) and would face more difficult decisions as it moved towards net-zero.
- vii. Officers confirmed that EPC standards were the responsibility of landlords (in the private rented sector), and it was agreed that further information would be provided on enforcement work in this area.
- viii. It was reported that Abbey and Kings Hedges swimming pools would be outside the proposed new Heat Network, but work was ongoing to reduce energy use at these sites including as a part of the tender process for the operation of these facilities.

- ix. Officers confirmed that transport strategy and delivery sat with the Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- x. Officers outlined how moves to a unitary authority should give successor councils more scope to tackle climate change.
- xi. Commercial properties (shops and businesses) accounted for a significant proportion of emissions in Cambridge (23%); a much higher proportion than the UK average. It was reported that work was ongoing in this area to increase engagement and awareness as well as share best practice.
- xii. Officers reported that water scarcity had featured heavily in the consultation responses and work in this area was being led through the Local Plan and the Cambridge Growth Company.
- xiii. The link between the Strategy and the emerging Local Plan was discussed with officers working closely together. It was noted that the Local Plan was focused on new buildings and infrastructure (not existing).
- xiv. Members supported the focus on carbon reduction over offsetting wherever possible, noted that the consultation had clearly informed the strategy, and supported the international outlook being adopted.
- xv. It was agreed that more detail would be provided on progress in key areas such as on retrofit and adaptation initiatives.
- xvi. It was confirmed that the Council's proportion of emissions (0.7% of total emissions) had gone down – both as a proportion and in real terms.
- xvii. Members highlighted the importance of tree-planting and particularly tree preservation in addressing climate change and improving biodiversity. It was noted that a new Urban Forest Strategy was out for public consultation, and current planning policy stipulated all major planning applications were to provide a mandatory 10% uplift in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) with an aspiration for this to be 20% and a proposal in the emerging Local Plan for this to increase to 30%.

In summation, the Chair noted the following points on behalf of the Committee:

- i. Concern on the deliverability of the strategy if major projects such as the City Centre Heat Network and Civic Quarter did not progress as planned.
- ii. Support for the focus on innovation, efforts to tackle water scarcity and the principle of offsetting only as a last resort.
- iii. Recognition that there was a balance moving forward between a focus on the Council's direct emissions (only accounting for 0.7% of overall city emissions) and wider areas including business, commercial and private sector emissions.

## **26/7/SC&C /~Cambridge City Homelessness Review**

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health introduced the item reporting that there had been several changes since the 2018 Homelessness Reduction Act, and therefore it was considered the right time to review the whole system in Cambridge. A review was procured last year from PPL, and it was planned that this would be followed by the development of a strategy and then its implementation.

Joe Kane-Smith, from the consultants PPL, then gave a presentation summarising the review and noting the following key points:

- i. There had been several recent national developments including publication of the 'National Plan to End Homelessness' in December 2025, recent consolidation of local authority funding into one 'Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant', and legislation under the Renters' Right Act (2025) and Social Housing (Regulation) Act (2023).
- ii. The lines of enquiry for the review were summarised. These included analysis of the existing strategy and landscape, current and future levels of homelessness, current provision and resources.
- iii. The review had mapped and explored in detail current pathways for different groups including young people, victims of domestic abuse, families, rough sleepers and those with no recourse to public funds.
- iv. The review found that Cambridge had strong foundations in place to respond to homelessness with partnership working well established; however, these strengths were under increasing strain with demand for homelessness services rising.
- v. PPL found that the system was good at responding to crisis but less consistent at preventing homelessness earlier or stopping it from reoccurring.
- vi. Key pressure points for Cambridge included discharge from institutions into homelessness, gaps in high needs supported housing, uneven access to health services and limited options for groups including women, people with no recourse to public funds and those experiencing hidden homelessness.
- vii. Recommendations were focused on strengthening prevention, improving flow through the system and targeting resources where they would have the greatest impact.
- viii. The strategy should be guided by a clear principle: 'start less and finish more', with a small number of priorities for the next two years and limited, targeted test-and-learn activity.

Members raised a number of questions, and a summary of the key points were:

- i. The report was commended by members for its level of detail, the system-wide approach, and the focus on strengthening prevention.
- ii. Key drivers of growing demand were discussed including victims of domestic abuse (these had doubled since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act in 2021) and evictions from supported housing and the private rented sector.
- iii. It was noted that the review did not include specific public consultation, but it was anticipated that this wider work would be undertaken in the strategy development phase.
- iv. The importance of aiming to end homelessness rather than manage homelessness was emphasised. There was a recognised need to focus on moving people through pathways by reviewing incentives for each organisation in the 'eco-system' and making sure these all support the desired outcome.
- v. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 mandated that local authorities in England develop supported housing strategies based on a supported housing needs assessment by 2027.
- vi. Members discussed the importance of ensuring that there was no fragmentation in the system as well as the importance of getting the Housing First model right in Cambridge. This included considering PRS delivery in lower cost parts of the city together with visiting support.
- vii. Officers reported that the strategy development stage would focus on prioritisation and how the various recommendations would be delivered. This stage would also consider the implications of LGR, alignment with South Cambridgeshire District Council, and the need for wider-partner engagement.
- viii. Use of AI and data analytics was discussed including existing utilisation of the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT). This also included a way of establishing a good system wide method of assessing demand to ensure sufficient capacity e.g. for high needs space
- ix. Officers noted that housing was a key area of consideration as LGR proposals developed and getting proper alignment would be crucial.
- x. It was clarified that those homeless because of domestic abuse have a priority need and the Council had a duty to provide accommodation, and under the Council's lettings policy they would be placed in Band A.
- xi. Prevention, including the use of more predictive approaches, was considered a key priority as well as working more closely with social housing providers to support people to move on from homelessness.

- xii. Consideration of whether the Cambridge Charter should be taken under council control.

In summation, the Chair noted the following points on behalf of the Committee:

- i. Concern about the rise in those suffering domestic abuse and related homelessness.
- ii. Support for the focus on early intervention, identifying and preventing homelessness, and working with social housing providers to help people move on from homelessness.
- iii. The need to lead and consider the whole system, the incentives for each entity within it and how progress can be measured
- iv. The necessity to address the shortage of high needs accommodation and review all options to provide stable accommodation for those leaving homelessness e.g. an assisted PRS package.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

**CHAIR**

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