

Agenda item 5: Equity Strategy

To be presented by Keryn Jalli, Strategic Resettlement and Community Equity Lead, and Helen Crowther, Equity and Community Power Manager

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What is the starting point for our Equity Strategy ?

Cambridge is a prosperous place, but the City's opportunities are not experienced equally

Cambridge City Council is committed to addressing inequality

We want our work to be based on what communities have told us is important to them

We will focus on Equity – recognising that people face different barriers and which need different solutions

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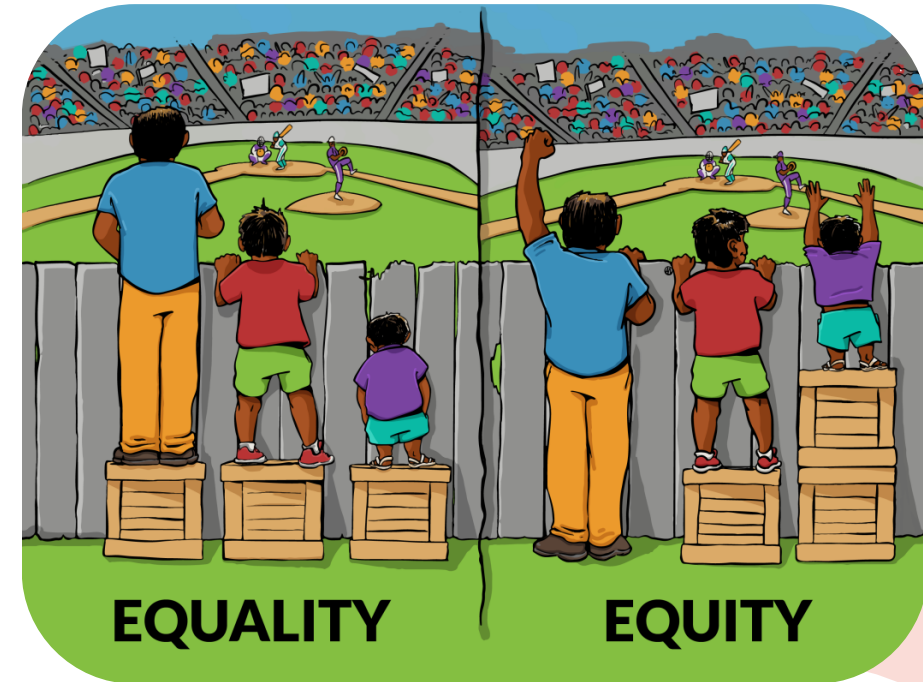
Why are we doing this?

Our Purpose:

- To better understand peoples lived experience
- Identify solutions that work for specific communities
- Create a feedback loop that builds trust with marginalised people

Which enables the Council to develop a strategy that:

- Embeds lived experience into the Council's work, policies and decision making
- Identifies key opportunities to improve inclusion in the city.
- Guides our approach to working alongside marginalised communities



Cambridge at a glance

Cambridge is one of the most prosperous, healthy and highly educated cities in England

Cambridge is rich in community organisations and community action

Most residents in Cambridge enjoy a high quality of life. Cambridge's population is diverse and accepting

Disability employment rate is lower in Cambridge than the national average

Some households experience low pay, food and fuel poverty, and there are pockets of child poverty within the City

Cambridge is one of the least affordable cities in the country, with high levels of income inequality

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Our engagement to inform the Equity Strategy

Designed and delivered with trusted community organisations



Focussed on understanding:

1. What community means to people
2. What already exists that give people a sense of belonging or helps them to thrive
3. What needs to change

- Engaged with over 573 people
- 32 different engagement activities
- Focused on communities experiencing inequality and discrimination

What we heard and what want to do about it

Overview of our engagement

Key Points:

Cambridge's communities are rich in strengths, relationships and diversity

People value the culture, leisure and natural environments within the city

Structural, economic and social barriers limit opportunities for people to participate, connect, belong and thrive

These barriers are especially present for those most marginalised, but crucially can be experienced differently by different communities

The engagement identified **10 themes** that improved and impacted on people's feelings of belonging in Cambridge and opportunities to thrive:

1. Community and Connection
2. Transport
3. Pace and Scope of Change
4. Inequality and Cost of Living
5. Natural Environment and Physical Space
6. Cultural and Leisure Opportunities
7. Access to Services
8. Safety
9. Education and Employment
10. Youth Provision

Community and connection

“Belonging is not simply about being physically present. It is about being able to participate safely, being treated with dignity and having your own account of your body and needs taken seriously.” – Disabled participant

“If you are part of the community, you become someone providing and giving support to it, which encourages a lot of autonomy for people” – Jewish participant

What we heard:

Community activities help communities to feel connected and give them a sense of belonging. These were especially important for people that experience discrimination

There's a need for more places to connect and access services

Some communities, such as Deaf and Travelling Communities feel isolated

What we already do:

Invest over £1 million into community organisations through our Community Grants

Communicate our commitment to equality

What we could do differently:

Create opportunities for different communities to come together

Explore the development of Community Hubs, where residents can access a range of information and services in one place

Explore how we make our values and commitment to equity even more visible

Transport

“Change the way transport is set up so I can use the taxi or a bus, so I can travel as a human being rather than travel as a problem.” - Disabled participant

What we heard:

People valued walkability of Cambridge and ease of cycling

There's a big need for more accessible taxi options

The reliability of and space on buses, poor road and pavement conditions, lack of disabled parking and blocked pavements are big issues

These issues reduce people's independence, their ability to participate in community life, access employment, education and services. Especially for disabled people.

What we already do:

Provide training to taxi drivers to improve their understanding of disabled passengers' needs

What we could do differently:

Create an Inclusive Service Plan to make sure taxi and private hire services are accessible, inclusive and safe for all users

Work with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), so that resident's experiences inform their future Transport Strategies

Pace and Scope of Change

"I now feel like a fish out of water" – Older resident

What we heard:

Some communities raised concerns about being left behind by the nature and pace of growth

People shared feelings of loss and frustration that spaces geared towards residents, like the Grafton Centre and Beehive, were being redeveloped into laboratory and office spaces

People felt that new development receives more investment than existing services and spaces, and infrastructure investment was not keeping pace with growth or meeting community needs.

What we already do:

We have a [Shaping Neighbourhoods](#) approach, where residents input into and influence decision on Council developments

What we could do differently:

Listen to and co-design with communities when proposing change, fund them for their involvement and build trust by feeding back what has been done

Build the evidence base for more community space within the [Local Plan](#), future-proofing community infrastructure in the city

Inequality and cost of living

“Cambridge is becoming a city for the wealthy” – Pride participant

What we heard:

Multiple communities shared concerns about the unaffordability of living in Cambridge and how this impacts their ability to participate in community life

People specifically spoke about the increased cost of living, high rental costs, the cost of transport and childcare, and a lack of free spaces where people could come together

Many felt that benefits of wealth and privilege were not shared across the city. Specifically spoke about the relationship between Cambridge University and the rest of the city

What we already do:

We have built over 850 Council homes since 2018

We run a Tenancy Sustainment Service, that helps people reduce their debts, maximise their income and maintain their tenancy

We offer short term funds to help people cover their rent

What we could do differently:

Deliver the new Inclusion and Equity Panel, enabling residents and community organisations to directly inform Council decisions

Build 1,400 more Council homes by 2036

Research and co-design solutions to people experiencing furniture poverty

Provide personalised budgets, to help address issues for people with complex needs who are in crisis

Natural environment and physical space

“If I could change one thing about Cambridge, it would be the constant conflict between preserving the city’s heritage and ensuring everyday accessibility.” – Disabled participant

What we heard:

People valued access to nature and green space. Has positive impacts on mental and physical health and social connection

Disabled and older people identified issues to accessing disabled/changing places toilets and benches for people less mobile

Physical barriers like narrow pavements, lack of dropped curbs, loose paving slabs, uneven and blocked pathways create danger for those using mobility aids, and for blind and partially sighted people - Cambridge’s historic streets and design made it feel it is not set up for disabled people

What we already do:

Provide public toilets at 13 locations. Most toilets have accessible facilities and 5 have changing places (fully accessible) toilets

Offer free trees and shrubs to increase people’s access to nature

What we could do differently:

Explore how Council assets can be used to enhance the benefits they bring to communities as part of the [Council’s Asset Review](#). This review will look at how Council-owned buildings and other property assets are used, including their wider value to the community

Culture and leisure opportunities

“Cambridge has a lot of things for those [who can] afford it” – Travelling Community participant

“I can walk out of my door and in 20 minutes be standing in front of a Monet!” – Pride participant

What we heard:

People praised the variety of cultural and leisure activities. There was a desire for more free community events and activities

Women shared the need for more free or affordable childcare to enable them to access activities, or child-friendly events/activities

Disabled and older people shared how inaccessible venues and transport issues create barriers to participation.

Several groups felt communication on events was inaccessible or scarce making it difficult to know what is going on

What we already do:

Offer free cultural activities, such as [Music in the Parks](#) and the [Out of the Ordinary Festival](#)

Offer community centre cafes and foyers as free places for people to meet

What we could do differently:

Improve how we communicate so that it is more accessible

Support opportunities for communities to celebrate their cultures and identities

Access to services

"What is the point of local authorities putting everything online when they know we can't access it?" – Older participant

"People that are supposed to be helping us need to make sure they know our ways." – Travelling Community participant

What we heard:

Disabled people described difficulties obtaining reasonable adjustments, leaving them feeling unheard and unsupported

Women, Travelling communities and refugees said services need to better understand trauma and people's cultural backgrounds. Participants also described difficulty getting timely, free mental health support

Migrant and Deaf communities shared communication barriers as a significant source of exclusion

What we already do:

Provide interpretation and translation, including BSL access to customer services.

Provide support for Travelling communities to better access services through making connections and advocacy

What we could do differently:

Improve awareness of reasonable adjustments and conduct accessibility and inclusion audits of services with residents to improve Council services

Work with communities to develop the Council's response to the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's updated Code of Practice for public bodies](#)

Safety

“It feels safe most of the time” – Chai and Chat participant

“Queer friendly spaces. I feel safe.” – LGBTQ participant

What we heard:

Cambridge generally felt safe, but communities that experienced hate, violence and discrimination felt unsafe in the city.

Women often change their behaviour to avoid harassment impacting their freedom of movement, capacity to participate and contribute to community life

LGBTQ+ people shared the importance of declarative statements, backed by action, stating that LGBTQ+ and/or trans people “are welcome here” as they are experiencing increased hate and hostility, especially transgender people

Racially minoritised and faith communities shared the impact of international and national events on their feelings and experiences of safety

What we already do:

Remove offensive graffiti urgently

Work through [Cambridge’s Community Safety Partnership](#) to tackle hate and support community cohesion

What we could do differently:

Promote active bystander training to challenge harassment safely and to give people the confidence to stand up for victims of hate

Train Council staff on Antisemitism and Islamophobia

Education, employment and youth provision

“You can't put square pegs in round holes, we need a more diverse offer for young people” – Young person, Included focus group

What we heard:

Racially minoritised and migrant communities shared the importance of support to access employment opportunities. This included support with learning English, to access employment as an essential way to develop community connection

There's a desire for more support and provision for children and young people

Young people wanted more spaces where they felt safe

It is difficult for young people to get work experience and they felt opportunities are often linked to privilege

What we already do:

Fund English classes and employment support for refugees

Run [Hello Summer](#), funding community organisations to provide free activities for children, young people and families

What we could do differently:

Support more investment in [Creative Futures](#), providing opportunities for young people within the creative industries

Invest in the [Included Programme](#), building clear pathways to fulfilling careers from early years to early adulthood. Included is a city-wide programme with a focus on young people facing disadvantage or at risk not being in education, employment or training

**How does what we have
heard shape our approach?**

Our Core Values to tackle inequality

To address the barriers residents face, we need to build on our strengths and go further.

We are proposing these core values for the Council to drive the change needed to deliver our Equity Strategy:

1. Lived experience is valued, it shapes and challenges our thinking
2. Communities have the power, influence and confidence to shape decisions that affect them
3. We value, listen to and trust in community leaders and organisations
4. We work collaboratively with others to deliver change
5. We focus on equity, not just equality
6. Community wealth, skills and resources are retained, developed and shared locally
7. We recognise our role in creating barriers and take action to remove them

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Key roles for the Council

Strategic Leader

The responsibility to tackle inequality and injustice is one which must be shared.

Tackling these challenges requires us to be bold. We must use our platform as a community leader to listen and to influence – putting the community's voice at the heart of our city's future

Service Provider

The Council has a direct role in the lives of our residents. We're the city's largest social landlord, we manage community centres and care for the city's green spaces. We are committed to making sure our services are accessible and inclusive. By listening to residents' lived experience, we can examine how we provide these services and make meaningful changes.

Funder

We are a large local funder and commissioner.

We want to make sure that those we commission to deliver goods and services are promoting diversity, equity and adding value to our communities.

Questions for the Inclusion and Equity Panel

Do you think the actions we're proposing will make a difference?

Do you have other ideas for how we can make an impact?

What do you think of our core values?

What are your hopes for the Equity Strategy?

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Key dates

Late October/early November to mid-December:

Consultation on draft Equity Strategy

February:

Formal approval of Equity Strategy

