Annual Report

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

2022-2023

Cambridge City Council
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2022/23

Foreword

2022/23 was another year of change and turbulence for many people and organisations in Cambridge, in the face of a complex and intertwined set of circumstances. Following the upheaval and tragedy of the global pandemic across the previous two years, 2022/23 saw war break out in mainland Europe, leading to hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the tragic situation there and exacerbating energy supply and price shocks.

Hundreds of residents of Cambridge showed characteristic generosity in opening their homes to refugees from Ukraine and elsewhere; while other residents found themselves facing rampant inflation and a cost of living crisis. At the same time, while some sectors of the local economy thrived, others faced a harsh trading environment recovering from the pandemic and Britain's changed place in the global economy. And like most parts of Europe, Cambridge experienced a record-breaking heatwave in the summer of 2022, further evidence of our changing climate.

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Cambridge City Council sought to facilitate community-wide responses to these complex new challenges, whilst also adjusting to the impact of inflation on our own operations. And continuing to work in partnership to address the longstanding facets of our city – housing affordability, congestion and environmental strain.

This report reflects just some of the highlights and key challenges faced by the Council during the year, by way of a report against the priorities in our Corporate Plan. It doesn't seek to cover everything the council does, but aims to give a flavour of the key activity in response to those four priorities.

For a fuller picture of the Council's performance, this report and the KPI data published alongside it, should be read as a family with the financial outturn report and the annual customer feedback reports.

This year we are also publishing a fuller "State of the City" report, building on the pilot we published in 2022. This State of the City or "City Portrait" has been produced by independent experts commissioned using funding provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. It aims to give a data-led evidence-based picture of what Cambridge is like, when looked at through six lenses broadly reflecting the environmental, economic and social dimensions of the city.

We hope you find this report useful and welcome any feedback.

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PRIORITY 1

Leading Cambridge's response to the climate change and biodiversity emergencies

Reducing carbon emissions from council buildings, land and vehicles

During 2022/23, we took forward a number of major projects to reduce carbon emissions from council buildings, land and vehicles, with the aim of achieving net zero carbon emissions from these assets by 2030. We have produced a new Asset Management Plan, setting out the carbon reduction needs and costs for all council buildings. We completed a £1.7m scheme (using Government funding) to reduce carbon emissions from Parkside and Abbey Pools. By installing air source heat pumps, LED lighting and other measures, the project will reduce CO2 emissions by 552 tonnes per annum, which will reduce our total CO2 emissions by approximately 9.6%.

With our partners at South Cambridgeshire District Council, we have secured £2.7m funding from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority for a new £6.1m solar farm next to the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service depot in Waterbeach. The city council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have each contributed £1.7m. The scheme will provide renewable electricity to charge electric vehicles at the site, enabling up to 20 diesel refuse collection vehicles to be replaced with electric vehicles.

With the University of Cambridge, we have secured government funding for and started a feasibility study looking at opportunities for a city centre heat network, which could potentially generate renewable energy to heat buildings in the city centre.

Reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions from homes and buildings in Cambridge

Over the past year, we have taken steps to help reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions from homes and buildings in Cambridge. This has included installing external wall insulation and solar PV to 96 existing council homes with poor energy efficiency ratings. We also launched a £5m Net Zero Carbon Homes pilot project, where up to 50 council homes will be retrofitted to net zero carbon standards. During 2022/23, we have actively engaged with interested council tenants to join the pilot project, to inform work expected to take place during 2023 and 2024.

We have set high sustainability standards for new council homes, and during 2022/23 the development of 21 Passivhaus Certified homes commenced on site, with these homes to be completed by the end of 2023.

We have also supported energy efficiency improvements to privately-owned homes. Leading a partnership of all the Cambridgeshire local authorities, during 2022/23 we used a total of £2.4m in Government funding to retrofit energy efficiency measures in 271 homes across Cambridgeshire, with 101 of these in Cambridge.

We have produced and promoted a guidance document for residents, setting out which carbon reduction measures could be installed in their property type.

Reducing carbon emissions from transport in Cambridge

During 2022/23 we have taken forward a number of projects to help reduce carbon emissions from transport in Cambridge, with a particular focus on providing new charge points for electric

vehicles (EVs). We are working in partnership with Connected Kerb to provide a network of publicly accessible EV charging points across our 14 car parks. During 2022/23 13 of the EV charging points have been installed.

Using government funding, we have been working with Cambridgeshire County Council to install on-street residential charge points. By April 2023, a pilot project had installed 38 of 42 planned charge points.

Reducing consumption of resources, increase recycling and reduce waste

Over the past year, we have taken steps to help reduce consumption of resources, increase recycling and reduce waste in the city. The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service completed a three-year trial of separate food waste collections. In 2022/23 over 9,000 homes took part in the trial, which increased the volume of food waste recycled per household taking part in the trial and reduced the amount of food waste generated.

Promoting sustainable food and food justice

In 2022/23, we have taken part in a number of local initiatives to promote sustainable food and food justice. We have supported Cambridge Sustainable Food Partnership to work towards the Gold Award for Cambridge from Sustainable Food Places. We have continued to fund a food distribution hub and community kitchen, and we have committed to progressively increase the proportion of plant-based foods served at civic events.

Ensuring designated sites and priority habitats are in good or favourable condition and connected

The council's strategic objectives in relation to biodiversity are set out in our Biodiversity Strategy [PDF, 2.5MB]. During 2022/23, we carried out a number of projects to ensure designated sites

and priority habitats are in good or favourable condition and connected. These projects will help increase resilience to a changing climate.

With support from the Wild Trout Trust we have delivered enhancements to the fish pass at Byron's Pool Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and worked with the Wildlife Trust to undertake habitat enhancement at the Coldham's Lane lakes. We have also secured external funding for future projects, including community focused restoration work along Coldham's Brook, and wetland creation at Logan's Meadow LNR.

During 2022/23, we planted trees in 469 locations in Cambridge and a further 178 trees were distributed to residents. 235 trees were removed. 13 trees were planted on Coldham's Lane in Romsey and Cambridge's first 'tiny forest' was delivered at Five Trees park in Chesterton.

Maximising the potential of our buildings, parks, open spaces, watercourses and tree stock to support biodiversity, whilst balancing their multifunctional needs

We have also continued to maximise the potential of our buildings, parks, open spaces, watercourses and tree stock to support biodiversity, whilst balancing their multifunctional needs. For example, we have increased areas of long grass and meadows in parks and on road verges and continued to implement the Happy Bee Streets scheme for pesticide free streets.

We have published more than 9,000 comments received as part of the consultation into the First Proposals for the new Local Plan being developed in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council, and an update to the development strategy. Emerging policies included in the First Proposals included a net zero carbon buildings policy, requiring net zero carbon operational emissions, a water efficiency policy and a requirement for all development to achieve a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain.

PRIORITY 2

Tackling poverty and inequality and helping people in the greatest need

Supporting residents struggling with the rising cost of living

During 2022/23, we have worked with partner organisations to support residents struggling with the rising cost of living in Cambridge. As part of a joint 'Heating and Health' initiative with South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire District Councils funded by the Integrated Care Board (ICB), we organised a series of 11 Cost of Living Support Pop-Ups at community venues across the city from October 2022 to February 2023.

A total of 500 hot water bottles were distributed at these events. 130 heated blankets and 89 air fryers were distributed to residents in council-managed assisted living schemes, and we identified 250 households who may benefit from additional support to reduce heating and cooking costs and offered them a free air fryer, with a 74% uptake.

As part of the 'Heating and Health' project, from November to March we also provided regular 'Warm and Welcoming Spaces' at our five community centres, which offered community events, quiet spaces and meals to local people. We awarded £1,000 Winter Support Grants to 43 voluntary and community organisations, and

we promoted additional warm spaces at public libraries and 17 venues run by voluntary and community partners.

In addition to responding to the cost of living crisis, we delivered a range of planned activity to help people on low incomes to maximise their incomes and minimise their costs. We offered tailored budget advice on benefits and grants, and on maximising incomes. We provided Council Tax reductions for 6,732 households and administered the government's initial £150 energy rebate scheme, making over 40,000 payments to residents with a total value of £6 million. In addition, we provided a £240,000 local energy rebate scheme, which gave £22.50 top-ups for disabled and low-income people.

We also worked closely with partner organisations to allocate £1m of Community Grants to 65 organisations for projects aiming to reduce social and economic deprivation. We worked with Cambridge Online to support residents to access the internet and use digital technology. We partnered with Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT), who provided tailored energy advice for residents, and we relaunched the Action on Energy partnership with other local authorities across Cambridgeshire to deliver energy improvements to homes of 173 low-income residents using government funding (the 101 households mentioned under priority 1) and wider council resources (a further 72). We continued to promote Living Wage accreditation to employers in Cambridge, including through organising events during Living Wage Week in November 2022.

Strengthening families and communities and support people who are more likely to experience poverty, inequality and vulnerability

We have taken steps to strengthen families and communities and support people who are more likely to experience poverty, inequality and vulnerability. We provided a programme of 10

'community days' and 11 'skip days' to save residents money by disposing of almost 150 tonnes of bulky waste and develop a sense of pride among residents in their neighbourhood.

We awarded a total of over £18,000 in small grants to 40 community groups that organised events to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee which were attended by over 6,000 people. We also worked with local organisations and communities to support events marking International Women's Day, LGBTQ+ History Month, Pride, Black History Month, and Southeast Asian Heritage month.

We funded Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) to support people to volunteer and to build the capacity of local organisations to work with volunteers. We have also funded Tempo to provide time credits as an incentive for residents to volunteer.

Sharing in our city's success

During 2022/23, we took a range of steps to make sure that everyone shares in our city's success by promoting an inclusive economy, by raising skills, and by improving access to a range of employment opportunities for people on low incomes. We have worked with a range of partner organisations to develop the 'Region of Learning' project to promote learning pathways for people aged 15-24, evidence formal and informal learning and skills through digital badges, and link to live labour market opportunities.

We have also worked with local partners in the Social Mobility Business Partnership to deliver a Work Skills and Insight Week, which introduced 30 young people from low-economic backgrounds to local creative industries and provided contacts for future employment opportunities.

Improving health outcomes, including mental health

During the year we have taken steps to improve health outcomes, including mental health, for people, on low incomes. To support physical activity, we have continued to provide 50% reductions on entry prices at our leisure centres for people receiving means-tested benefits, leading to 56,878 discounted entries during 2022/23. As part of an exercise referral scheme, 251 people have been referred by health professionals for 12-week subsidised exercise programmes at local gyms and sports centres.

To support healthy-eating we have piloted a free six-week family cooking course by a nutritionist which was targeted at low-income families, and we have provided a regular programme of free lunches during the school holidays.

We have also secured significant funding from the Integrated Care System (ICS) for wider work to address health inequalities, including £179,000 in 2022/23 to deliver activities to address the links between heating, health and the cost of living.

Developing our Equalities Scheme

Through our Single Equality Scheme, we have continued to work towards a situation where all residents have equal access to public activities and spaces in Cambridge and are able to participate fully in the community and in making decisions about the places where they live. During the year, we have provided support for over 500 Ukrainian refugees as part of the national Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family visa schemes and have continued to support Afghan and Syrian refugees as part of resettlement schemes.

We have taken action to tackle discrimination, harassment and victimisation and ensure that people from different backgrounds living in the city respect and value each other and continue to get on well together. We have carried out a range of activity to tackle domestic abuse, including a domestic abuse conference to mark White Ribbon Day and holding a 'Survivors Conference' in September 2022 in partnership with Cambridge Women's Aid.

We also worked with Cambridge BID and Cambridge Business Against Crime (CAMBAC) to secure re-accreditation for Cambridge under the Purple Flag scheme to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour at night.

PRIORITY 3

Building a new generation of council and affordable homes and reducing homelessness

Increasing affordable housing delivery, diversifying the market and accelerating delivery

We have completed 208 new council homes during 2022/23. This makes up the majority of all new affordable homes completed in the city in the year. We have started building work on a further 144 new council homes, including 45 which will be let at 80% of market rents to help people who are a low priority for social housing but for whom renting or buying on the open market is a challenge.

Achieving a high standard of design and quality in new homes and communities

21 of the council homes started on site are to be Passivhaus Certified, and a further 84 received planning approval targeting Passivhaus performance standards. We are achieving a 60% biodiversity net gain at our Meadows Centre development, the first phase of which has been successfully completed.

Improving housing conditions and making best use of existing homes

Improving council homes

Our council tenancy audit programme started in April 2022, with just under 10% of tenancies audited during 2022/23. As a result we have provided 26 victims of domestic abuse with support after reaching out for help, we have given advice and support to 147 households on moving to more suitable accommodation, and we have identified three sub-lets and two abandoned properties. 60% of properties visited were found to have property condition issues.

Condensation, damp and mould issues have been a priority. We have received 12 formal damp and mould complaints, and have surveyed 215 properties that have made contact through the new dedicated damp and mould contact pathway.

Empty council homes ("voids") took an average of 65.9 days to let. This is considerably higher than our target of 28 days but it is expected to improve during 2023/24 now that a backlog of void works has been significantly reduced.

Performance on collecting current and former tenant arrears was lower than the previous year, with 96.74% of rent collected compared with 97.21% in 2021/22.

Private sector homes

We have received and investigated 283 complaints around housing safety, suitability and management during 2022/23.

228 Houses in Multiple Occupation, (HMOs), both licensable and non-licensable, have been brought up to the required safety and suitability standards. 96 HMOs were licensed with the Council and added to the licence register in 2022/23.. Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) work has brought a further 21 private rented homes up to at least an 'E' Energy Performance Certificate rating.

Preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

Performance against homelessness prevention and relief targets was lower than expected in the first half of the year, although it picked up in the second half, falling just short of the target of 235 cases. A key factor has been the shortage of suitable private rented accommodation compared to previous years, particularly for those claiming benefits and/or with unconventional employment or credit histories. We have continued to look at ways of incentivising landlords and letting agents to accept referrals for low income households.

We identified 23 rough sleepers in the November 2022 annual street count, up from the previous year, although down on the summer 2022 count. The increase reflects a national trend. We have put further measures in place to help tackle the issue, including more targeted support for people with multiple and complex needs.

We have put together a Homelessness Prevention Plan to support the significant numbers of Ukrainian households accommodated by Cambridge-based hosts and have checked over 300 Ukrainian host properties for safety and suitability. We have given advice to more than 100 Ukrainian refugee households on their housing options in and around Cambridge.

PRIORITY 4

Modernising the council to lead a greener city that is fair for all

Transforming the council so we can continue delivering our priorities and provide quality services despite reduced funding and income

The city council's transformation programme, Our Cambridge, is a multi-year programme, with three main strands: how we work with our communities and partners, how we are organised internally, and how we deliver our services.

2022-23 saw the work on our internal organisation move from planning into delivery, with a milestone report to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in October 2022. The largest single internal action undertaken so far has been the review of the senior leadership structure of the council. The new structure was agreed in January 2023, with the process of implementation starting shortly afterwards.

In 2022-23 we also started work on reviews of the way in which our services run, and the way in which we use our buildings, the outcomes of which will be coming forward during 2023-24.

Our transformation work with communities and partners had already started at the beginning of 2022-3 with the delivery of our vaccine community champions project, which brought partners in from the outset to shape planning and delivery, with 6 groups involved, reaching 4,050 people.

During the year we have also:

- developed a set of principles to underpin our commitment to partnership working,
- worked with partners to develop a 'Rich Picture' of the city,
- run a project to test a new way for us to hold community conversations, through the Cambridge Together project, and
- carried out development work on the feasibility of a place-based social investment fund for the city.

Supporting sustainable business development

We have funded additional growth and business support to 30 businesses to develop and enhance their growth and business opportunities within cleantech sectors. We have provided green business grant funding to 18 businesses to improve their sustainability and have agreed further green business grant funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), to help small businesses reduce carbon emissions and energy costs, in partnership with South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire District Councils. We have also agreed SPF funding for providing advice and training support for local businesses most affected by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis

Promoting vibrancy in the city centre

We have worked with tenants in challenging times to use our assets to support businesses as well as generating revenue for the council. We have let the ground floor of the Guildhall to Allia as a Future Business Centre. The redevelopment of Park Street Car Park has continued at pace to re-provide a modern, fit for purpose car park due to open in Summer 2024 followed by a 229 bedroom aparthotel in 2025. We have extended facilities for gathering, eating and resting by installing new outdoor seating and picnic tables at key locations around the city centre.

We have continued to work with our partners Cambridge BID, King's College and Fitzwilliam Museum Enterprises to establish a new destination management organisation for Cambridge. The Visit Cambridge website promotes the city's visitor offer; and a mobile visitor information service has been established, using two electric assisted vehicles.

We have continued to support the Cambridge Market by running a campaign to attract traders, making shorter term improvements such as replacing canopies, and agreeing SPF funding to enhance local markets, including by encouraging people to shop and visit locally and through a youth enterprise programme for disadvantaged and future traders (in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council).

Driving down long-term inequalities

We have agreed funding to support the Abbey Community Wealth project – a social action partnership to improve quality of life and opportunities for people in Abbey ward.

We have funded a feasibility study to develop a Social Impact Fund in partnership with city businesses, to support social inclusion and community wealth-building projects.

We have initiated a project to provide employment and training support for refugees including access to crowdfunding support and mentoring from business and the community.

Ensuring a varied cultural offer is available to all those who live, work and study in, and visit Cambridge from all backgrounds and incomes.

We continue to have a broad and accessible programme for city residents that offers a vibrant cultural offer to all including:

- The Cambridge Corn Exchange and Guildhalls programme, which held 264 shows/events in 2022-23;
- The City Events programme which oversaw inclusive outdoor events such as Mayor's Day Out and Music in the Parks, and city centre events;
- Cambridge Folk Festival, attracting circa 13,000 people each day for a four-day festival;
- Arts development and advocacy for the role of arts and culture

The Folk Festival retained its Outstanding award with A Greener Festival, ensuring our green credentials are consistently being developed.

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To find out more about the council's Corporate plan 2022-27 and our priorities for Cambridge please visit:
www.cambridge.gov.uk/corporate-plan-2022-27-our-priorities-for-cambridge