

## **2030 vision for the Cambridge sub-region**

### **Workshop summary: Social cohesion**

#### **Thought**

- Despite areas of deprivation the sub-region is one of the wealthiest parts of the country. But ageing, social isolation and unemployment will create ever-greater challenges here than elsewhere.

#### **Issues**

- Life expectancy continues to increase. Half the population increase in the sub-region is due to ageing (70+). Fewer potential carers. Huge impact on social services. But older people are fitter than their parents' generation and can therefore contribute more to community for longer. But there remains a huge potential problem of ever-older people caring for vulnerable young.
- There is a huge gap between expectation and provision for social services. The voluntary sector is important but maintaining continuity in this sector can be difficult.
- Dominant growth is in one-person households.
- There is a danger of generations growing even further apart.
- Weak social cohesion with poor informal social control leads to disorder and crime. Those living in problematic areas have no solutions. Support for change has to come from outside.
- There are marked differences in educational attainment in the sub-region.
- Being in employment is biggest factor in well-being. But those in work may have little time for community and even communicate with neighbours by email.
- Society is becoming more individualistic.
- Dormitory villages generate isolation.
- Only the affluent may be able to distance-commute by 2030.

#### **Propositions**

- We need to re-engage with the political system – possibly through new technology.
- Local government needs to be more creative in support of community efforts.
- Policy-making should be evidence-based. We need data on effects of living longer and should paint pictures and create narratives of the future that can be challenged.
- In proposing changes, we must take account of the fact that we do not all start from the same base. Government policies may be lessening the life-chances of some poor.
- Funding should be applied to reduce concentrated disadvantage.
- The national and local economies need rebalancing. Social enterprise, which constructs its business model on community interests, should be encouraged.
- Work opportunities need to be redistributed and working hours should be reduced to allow greater family and community engagement. Consider lower wages in return for flexible hours.
- Care provision should be tailored to the needs of particular communities rather than uniformly provided – and could be cheaper.
- The web should be available to the vulnerable as a means of contact in times of trouble. Virtual systems alone are not, however, an adequate form of care.
- People need to come together face-to-face as well as on-line. Inter-generational and neighbourhood contact – for mutual benefit – is needed, particularly for young. Needs constant renewal. Areas of collaboration include allotments, gardening, shopping and decoration.
- A strengthened rhetoric is needed for shared aims and the public good. Opportunities for projects to celebrate diversity – archaeological digs, celebrations, clean-ups – should be exploited.
- We need to value each other's cultures. As our society becomes more diverse, educational and community activities should help develop a sense of shared heritage and place.
- Free sport and music should be encouraged – with a focus on the young.
- There should be opportunities for community involvement in the curriculum and schools should be used as a focus for wider community activity (like village colleges). But there are big problems (Health and Safety, supervision, insurance and so on).
- The loss of pubs and village stores needs to be compensated for by community buildings which could include post offices. (In Cambourne 300 groups have just 6 meeting places). Section 106 money tends to come in too late for new communities. Unbuilt space is just as important.
- Changing economic and employment conditions mean that we need to think more creatively about housing types and forms of tenure. New (and old) housing must be cheaper to run.
- New communities do not exist in a vacuum – they co-exist with older ones. Key persons should live locally – vicar, police, head teacher.