

# **Models of Local Government after Covid-19: Introducing the Concept of a Wellbeing Economy**

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## Introduction

In this report we propose that the county council should introduce a wellbeing economy in Cambridgeshire, as a model for how the local government could look following the recovery from Covid-19. We will discuss the importance of wellbeing in light of Covid-19; briefly look at the current context in Cambridgeshire; evaluate various case studies and draw out what the county council could learn from them; look at the role of sustainability in wellbeing; discuss wellbeing in local governance; and discuss how a measurement framework could be implemented. Proposing a detailed framework of how Cambridgeshire's wellbeing economy could look is beyond the scope of this report. However, we will introduce the theory behind a wellbeing economy and explain how this could benefit Cambridgeshire. We believe that the introduction of a Wellbeing economy would serve as a means for the council to focus much of the work already carried out and align work to a rewarding framework. We will propose to the council that development of a wellbeing economy framework would be a constructive approach to take. Furthermore, the report will include various proposals and recommendations for the council to consider, acting as a sounding board for best practices surrounding development, implementation and evaluation of a wellbeing economy framework.

As the joint administration establish their priorities, they are presented with a unique opportunity to re-think the decision-making process within the council. The introduction of a wellbeing economy could serve as a means to shift the council's mindset to look at the impact of the council in a broader sense, integrating the fulfilment of the council's statutory duties with the drive to bring positive change to the lives of those it serves. Changing perspectives to think about the broad influence the council can have, rather than just what it is required to do, would establish a different way of working. A holistic approach, whereby decisions that are made by all committees within the council are aligned with one another, would bring endless benefits not only the council itself, but also to all those that the council serve.

In 2008, a Commission was set up in France on the request of President Nicholas Sarkozy in order to look into the limitations of GDP as a measure of prosperity and social progress. [The Commission agreed](#) that using national income is not a good indicator of human wellbeing and that the measurement itself contained several conceptual and statistical deficiencies. For example, National Accounts in different countries are computed in different ways which effects the final GDP figure and leads to flawed outcomes. At the moment, local and international policy-making are greatly influenced by variables that go into GDP growth such as economic prosperity, inflation and unemployment. Although these measures are important for the persistence of an economy, they prevent us from looking at what it is that civilisations have really been working towards: wellbeing. The narrow indicators of GDP have contributed to governments making bad choices for their people and precluded a probe into their welfare. With that in mind, the aim of this report is to look into other dimensions of social existence such as health, community, education, capabilities, freedom and sense of security. Whilst there is no single indicator that can give an insight into the proper ways of measuring these factors, this report will try to initiate a dialogue that would encourage the Cambridgeshire County Council to look into other avenues that would define and direct its future policies.

Although regions that focused on economic performance were able to invest in their infrastructure, it is also important to note that a focus on economic factors have contributed to the degradation of the environment in Cambridgeshire as in the world. One of the County's prized assets is its environmental assets and the sense of community that pervades every aspect of human life. Instead of measuring the productivity of all individuals and firms in the economy, we are encouraging a look into measures of societal wellbeing and assessing the failure of economic metrics of taking the individual into consideration. At the core of our study is a revelation that economic objectives should not be seen as ends by themselves but as a means for better living. Indeed, although there have been some GDP measures – such as 'green GDP' created by the mining industry in order to take account of environmental degradation – which take into consideration other factors of life, we are suggesting a radically different system that prioritises individual perception and capabilities.

## Importance of Wellbeing in Light of Covid

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an adverse impact on the UK economy as a whole leading to a 20.4% fall in the national GDP in the second quarter of 2020, [according to the Office for National Statistics](#). For this reason, there has generally been a push in local councils, especially in Scotland and Wales, to make a further step in the right direction and make progress on the level of social factors that are unrelated to monetary gain. That is not to say that these regions, or any in the UK for that matter, have been solely focusing on financial factors but, in a capitalist world, this focus is inevitable and it all amounts to what is suggested on the accounting balance sheets. It must also be mentioned that matters do not work in the same way they used to in the past; in other words, the profit or return on an investment is no longer a business decision but one that measures the influence and consequences of a decision on society as a whole, in consideration of individual prosperity and the comfort of the individual. However, the point here is to bring forward a plan that would further establish and set in motion a grander scheme that gives more attention to wellbeing, community wealth and societal welfare. That is, to set in motion what is already there and to get this idea off the ground. A wellbeing economy is not counterproductive to GDP, it is merely a way to achieve social equality and do justice the citizen who does not have the right to just 'quit'.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, [the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery](#) in Scotland gathered evidence that a wellbeing economy was favourable in terms of generating economic growth and quality job creation whilst still addressing important issues such as climate change and fair work. The Advisory Group professed that the model of a wellbeing economy is now more vital than ever in order to build resilience in the face of future adversities, whether they are in the shape of other pathogens, cyber-attacks or other economically damaging threats.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted and exacerbated the existence of unequal distributions of income, issues in housing, racial discrimination, class divisions and social inequality in access to education, healthcare and transportation. With these issues highlighted in the report, it was concluded that it would be

more suitable to address matters that pertain not only to financial and physical capital, but also to natural capital (geology, soil, air, etc.), human capital (skills, knowledge, health, etc.) and social capital (networks, communities, norms, etc.). Whilst each of these features can reinforce and reinvigorate the other, it should be mentioned that the different factors can also restrict and hinder one another; for example, a lack in financial capital can place limits on how much the local economy allows for investment in natural and social capital. Therefore, an assessment of each of these factors must take place and the impact of the pandemic on all these factors must be considered for the design of a new way forward. The pandemic has also affected different sectors disproportionately, therefore on the Gross Value Added (GVA) side of things a sectorial analysis – also taking into consideration the effects of Brexit – will have to be conducted paying attention to the segregation of sectors and their division into subsectors.

## Current Context in Cambridgeshire

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented Cambridgeshire with a chance to remodel its approach to governance and reorganise its assets in a way that would be fairer to all individuals in society. The city of Cambridge, which forms the economic powerhouse of Cambridgeshire, has [ranked 6th out of the top 50 cities](#) where Gross Value Added (a measure similar to GDP but used for local economies) was measured, showing a 7.3% growth in 2021 compared to the projected 2% annual increase that was [expected](#) before the pandemic hit which was a rate higher than all regions in the South East. Of course, this boost in the GVA is a direct and indirect result of the lifting up of restrictions and the return to business. And, whilst this rate is favourable and welcomed, it is also indicative of the North/South divide in Cambridgeshire and a lack of implementation, or realisation, of the 'levelling up' agenda. The agenda of equality must be put at the heart, where its success is dependent on a radical rehabilitation of policy making priorities and the inclusion of wellbeing in local decisions. In the spirit of cultivating resilience and preventative action, the local economy must not be steered from above as it has been in the past but must be provided for and nourished in a manner that takes into consideration not only profit maximisation and high GDP but also the long-term effects of education, unemployment, income disparities, virtual infrastructure and life skills.

The pandemic acted to highlight at an international, national and local level the serious, and tragic, effect that inequalities can have. This is heightened in the [local context](#), illustrated by the fact that life expectancy of a man living in the poorest part of Peterborough is 75.8 years, whereas the life expectancy for a man living in the richest part of Cambridge is almost ten years greater, at 85.2 years. This starkly emphasises the impact of inequalities across the county, and these have only been widened by Covid-19. There are many strategies at both a local and national level that are already in place to address this, for example [the NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health inequalities Strategy](#). Furthermore, the [PwC CNN Future of Local Governments report](#) emphasises the importance of placing wellbeing at the centre of covid recovery schemes. We believe that the introduction of a wellbeing economy to Cambridgeshire as a model of local government after Covid-19 could act as an umbrella

aim towards reducing these inequalities at a local level. The priorities and focus would be specific to local areas, leading to a direct impact on individuals experiencing these inequalities on a daily basis.

Regarding measurement practices, the Cambridgeshire County Council already places significant emphasis on several of the factors that could ultimately form part of a wellbeing economy framework. Indeed, environmental, economic, and health outcomes are regularly measured and analysed. However, there is the potential of presenting these measures together in a cohesive framework to ensure that each policy decision is made with the aim of balancing all of these important aims. Furthermore, currently only objective measures of wellbeing are used by the Council. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the importance of subjective measures of wellbeing for government decision-making was made clear by the success of the weekly subjective wellbeing figures collected by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in the [“Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain”](#) bulletin. The analysis was of course UK-wide, and therefore measured the subjective wellbeing of the citizens of Cambridgeshire. Moreover, it was a short-term or “momentary” measure of subjective wellbeing, since it sought to monitor fast-moving changes in wellbeing as the pandemic progressed. The use of a long-term or “global” measure of subjective wellbeing could therefore be a significant asset to the Council as it eventually moves into the post-Covid phase.

We understand that the council is currently exploring the [principles of Doughnut Economics, as pioneered by Kate Raworth](#). The Doughnut Economics model is designed to provide a framework to change the way in which we think about economics and economic growth that is suitable for the current century. The fundamental principle of the Doughnut is to “meet the needs of all people within the means of the living planet”. The Doughnut illustrates a “social foundation” and an “ecological ceiling”, between which is “the safe and just space for humanity” to thrive. The social foundation ensures that everyone has access to basic needs, such a food and water, education, housing and safety. The ecological ceiling states the fundamental properties of our living planet that must be sustained, or limited, to support life, such a biodiversity, climate change and pollution. The Doughnut states that we must not fall short of any of the social foundations but that we must also not exceed the ecological ceiling, but rather we must strive towards thriving within social and ecological limits.

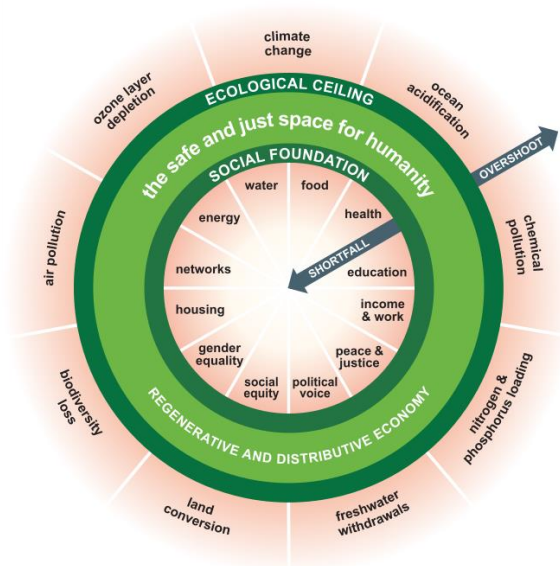


Figure from: [Doughnut Economics Action Lab](https://doughnutactionlab.org/). Accessed: 7.11.2021.

A core thought process behind the Doughnut is the understanding that growth cannot continue endlessly and rather everything should go through a healthy phase of growth, followed by a period during which it can then thrive. Kate Raworth eloquently described this in her [TED Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/kate_raworth_the_doughnut_economics), using the analogy of how a human will grow in height until adulthood, at which point they stop getting taller, but continue to develop and thrive as a person. The Doughnut says that the same principle must be applied to an economy. Raworth proposes that there is an ever-increasing need to move the goal of economics away from endless GDP growth towards the ability to thrive in the “safe and just space for humanity”, that the middle of the Doughnut provides. We believe that there is great synergy between the values of the Doughnut framework and those of a wellbeing economy. Both frameworks emphasise the need to place human and environmental factors at the centre of all decision-making processes. Furthermore, the introduction of a wellbeing economy could serve as an incredibly effective means by which to implement the [Doughnut Principles of Practice](https://doughnutactionlab.org/principles-of-practice/). The culmination of Doughnut Economic principles underpinning a wellbeing economy represents a truly exciting opportunity for Cambridgeshire County Council to be a radical, transformative and forward-thinking organisation.

## Local Application of Case Studies

The concept of a wellbeing economy first originated in Bhutan with the introduction of a measure of ["Gross National Happiness" in 1972](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/2011/05/12-environmental-wellbeing.html). Inspired by the Buddhist concept of the “Middle Path”, the happiness that Bhutan seeks to measure covers a wide range of factors that influence human wellbeing. These encompass both traditional areas of concern in the West, such as living standards, health and education, along with additional, less traditional measures such as psychological wellbeing and environmental diversity. In 2011, the UN General Assembly acknowledged the universal benefits of such an approach by passing the resolution ["Happiness:](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/2011/05/12-environmental-wellbeing.html)

[towards a holistic approach to development](#)". This report will present a detailed overview of a few case studies, which collectively demonstrate the various ways in which wellbeing frameworks have recently been incorporated in modern economies.

In 2019, New Zealand published the first ever [Wellbeing Budget](#), whereby success of the country would be measured through wellbeing, rather than purely through economic metrics. Placing wellbeing at the heart of the budget takes a novel approach to economic growth, where a new [Living Standards Framework](#) is used in place of GDP to measure and track progress. The key features of the Living Standards Framework are financial, environmental, human (individuals) and social (communities). Aligned with these key features, New Zealand have developed a comprehensive list of 61 indicators within this framework that are measurable and trackable. The Living Standards Framework has been [criticised](#) for being overly complex, with suggestions that a single measure of quality of life would be more efficient. The subjective nature of the indicators has also been a point of criticism, with some suggesting that objective measures correlating to wellbeing, such as access to housing and education, would be better metrics. Nevertheless, evidence gathered from the Living Standards Framework analysis was used to inform where priority areas for investments should be; these are the areas that would have the most substantial and lasting intergenerational impact on wellbeing. In short, these are topics surrounding mental health, poverty, inequalities of marginalised groups, sustainability and productivity. The biggest new spend in the Wellbeing Budget was in a range of areas that will improve broad aspects of mental health. As well as solutions as an individual level, the importance of economic and social determinants of wellbeing were also highlighted.

All ministries of the government were instructed to design policies to improve wellbeing. Additionally, and of interest to local decisions, part of the novel approach to the Wellbeing Budget meant that every bid for funding from the budget has to go through a Wellbeing Analysis. This meant that initiatives were assessed on their impact upon the five key priority areas of the Wellbeing Budget. This has helped to shift public discussion towards increased interest and understanding of the budget. Additionally, the budget is clearly designed so that a growing economy demonstrates meaningful benefit to citizens' everyday lives, further increasing the favourable view in which the Wellbeing Budget was received.

In 2014, Wales launched 'The Wales We Want [National Conversation](#)'. This was a 6-month national consultation period about the vision that citizens have for the future of Wales. This shaped the development of seven wellbeing priorities for the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act of 2015](#). The priorities are: a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a more equal Wales; a healthier Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; a globally responsible Wales. As a result of this act, all public bodies have a duty to work towards achieving all seven of these goals. To ensure accountability to this act, Wales established a new government role, 'Future Generations Commissioner for Wales'. This role ensures that policy makers take responsibility for the long-term impact of all decisions that are made and monitors the extent to which wellbeing objectives are being met. If the structure of the local council allows, introduction of an analogous role to Cambridgeshire County Council would greatly accelerate the process of developing, introducing and evaluating a wellbeing economy framework. This role would serve to ensure the longevity of



the framework. Furthermore, this would be a very progressive step that would take Cambridgeshire County Council one step ahead of international and national trends.

Over the last few years, there has also been murmurs of the establishment of a wellbeing economy by the UK parliament. For example, the [2019 Labour Party Manifesto](#) included the promise of the introduction of a ‘Future Generations Wellbeing Act’, to ensure that all policies were built around striving for improvements in various aspects of health and tackling widening health inequalities. Furthermore, in January 2020 Lord Bird, a Crossbench Peer, introduced a Private Members’ Bill titled '[Wellbeing of Future Generations Bills \[HL\]](#)', which was inspired by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act of 2015. However, this Bill has not progressed further than its second reading. The Bill would require all public bodies to act in the interest of the environmental, social, economic and cultural wellbeing objectives, which would be determined through public consultation. Additionally, the Bill places an emphasis on the importance of consideration for the future generations in all policymaking decisions, alongside the introduction of a Commissioner for Future Generations for the United Kingdom and a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Future Generations. This suggests growing interest at a national, as well as international, level in this topic. We believe that the establishment of a Wellbeing Economy in Cambridgeshire would place the local government at the forefront of cutting-edge policymaking attitudes, providing an opportunity to be one step ahead of the national governments’ decisions.

We believe that Cambridgeshire County Council could learn from the approaches that have already been taken in various ways. For example, the commonalities between the approaches taken by all of the aforementioned approaches can be drawn out and their skeleton structures aligned to the current priorities of the new administration. The recently signed [Cambridgeshire County Council Joint Administration Agreement](#) states that the council aims to work towards a “greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire”. The priorities agreed could align into the following categories: financial, environmental, human, social. By categorising the priorities in this way, these currently standing priorities could directly translate into Cambridgeshire’s wellbeing economy priorities; equivalent to those set by New Zealand in their wellbeing budget or Wales in their Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act of 2015. The table below gives an example of how all the priorities of the aforementioned case studies, as well as the joint administration, could align to four main categories: financial, environmental, human and social.

Category	Wales’ seven wellbeing goals	New Zealand’s six wellbeing priorities	Cambridgeshire Joint Administration priorities
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A prosperous Wales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building a productive nation</li> <li>• Investing in New Zealand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid recovery Plan</li> <li>• Real Living Wage</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A resilient Wales</li> <li>• A globally responsible Wales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitioning to a sustainable and low-emissions economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackle the climate emergency</li> <li>• Move forward Net Zero target</li> <li>• Increase biodiversity</li> <li>• Encourage sustainable travel</li> </ul>

<b>Human</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A healthier Wales</li> <li>• A more equal Wales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking mental health seriously</li> <li>• Improving child wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackling poverty and inequality</li> <li>• Health in all policies</li> <li>• Focus on children and young people</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Wales of more cohesive communities</li> <li>• A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting Māori and Pasifika populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop community hubs</li> <li>• Devolve power to local communities</li> </ul>

Furthermore, the [Joint Agreement Action Plan](#) discusses the following actions:

- That the review process for decision making on spending and investments will ensure that all decisions are made in the context of meeting the Net Zero strategy.
- That all decisions are equally weighted for social, environmental and financial criteria. This would ensure that decisions are assessed for their impact on residents living in deprivation and on the population as a whole, with a commitment to fairness in overall allocation.
- A plan to deliver a ‘health in all policies approach’, which would include clear criteria for evaluating policies.

Taking inspiration from the New Zealand model, where every bid for funding from the budget has to go through a Wellbeing Analysis, these three actions could all be aligned to fall under a wellbeing economy umbrella, whereby all new committee proposals include a section where policy suggestions undergo a wellbeing assessment. The wellbeing assessment would ensure that all new policy proposals are aligned with the County Council’s financial, environmental, human and social priorities, as stated above. Furthermore, the introduction of a wellbeing assessment to committee proposals could serve as a means for each committee’s key performance indicators to be reassessed and viewed in a more holistic manner, ensuring that all of the key performance indicators align with the goals of the wellbeing economy framework. It would be of utmost importance that the wellbeing assessment was aligned to the principles of the Doughnut Economics model. For the greatest chance of success and impact, a wellbeing economy underpinned by Doughnut Economic principles, must not sit to the side of decision-making processes, but rather at the heart of all decisions that are made.

## Sustainability and Wellbeing

Sustainability takes into account the aforementioned pillars of economic, environmental, human and social development. These should consider actions not just on an urban level, but also on the rural aspects, specifically for areas in the Cambridgeshire County Council.

Overall sustainability takes into consideration the consequences of our present action and impact of these actions on the future and the conditions of subsequent generations. In our case, how the rural environment will be affected in the future by our actions today. These ideas should be part of the CCC's holistic ambitions and not only across different sectors. Therefore, sustainability needs to be implemented as a holistic strategy across Cambridgeshire County. Similarly, we cannot rely on sustainability only, as this could have an impact on how people live and possibly individual lives. For example, how sustainability can improve individual lives in and around Cambridgeshire and how can support a better approach for sustainable prosperity?

This section is discussing the relation of sustainability to the wider well-being. This is because often sustainability is not seen as been directly linked to higher levels of wellbeing, especially this is not well thought for rural areas. This is evident through local policy that should consider sustainability as a practice where people should to enhance the urban and rural environment or as a fulfilment of national and international goals. For example, protecting the environmental using less plastic, this often is a personal choice, or when the Council adopts strategies towards the national level of lowering carbon emissions. Furthermore, strategies should consider the impact of carbon on the rural areas of the County Council. For example, sustainability needs to be at the heart of decision making when planning future actions for the Cambridgeshire County.

Cambridgeshire County Council needs to establish a connection between policy for sustainability and wellbeing. This means, that a certain trust across all levels of citizenry should be built to develop strategies and policies which provides benefits for sustainable city and urban living. There have been several examples internationally for example, the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) which has clear aims for "people, planet and prosperity". The Sustainable Agenda was adopted by the UN members aiming for the fulfilment of the [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) and their 169 targets within the SDG goals. The 17 SDGs, consider the overarching strategies which cover most, if not, all the great challenges of the environment, across all scales. It is considered an important statement into the sustainability and wellbeing relationship. It is not until access to resources, equality, a sustainable environment, peace (these are some of the goals) are addressed that we can ensure global sustainability. For example, we cannot claim local sustainability, unless we take action for global sustainability. Equally, we should be able to address individual sustainability once we have implemented ways of local sustainability.

In this conceptualisation of implementing the individual, societal, and planetary wellbeing, [The Liveable cities](#) (LC) project (EPSRC) developed a methodology to measure performance in terms of wellbeing and the overall liveability within the lower carbon levels. Similar attempts to measure liveability levels were developed by private entities, for example, the [Global Liveability Index 2021](#) and [Liveability](#). The LC research developed radical solutions for achieving the UK's ambitious carbon reduction targets for people, environment and governance. What the research showed, is that environmental sustainability could add long term benefits to peoples' life. The LC vision is to transform urban and rural living by protecting and enhancing the environment as the way to achieve better living. The LC method, showed that environmental sustainability in particular is affecting overall living across the individual, societal, and planetary wellbeing.

According to the [Carbon Majors Report 2017](#), 100 companies in the world are responsible for 71% of global greenhouse gas emissions. It is hardly the case that a small County like Cambridgeshire is held responsible for the remaining 29%. Yet, through collective action and community awareness a ripple effect of ‘carbon conversations’ and a sense of belonging to a worldwide movement can help the citizens feel more at ease and would enhance their mental and physical wellbeing. Environmental activism has been proven to have [public good characteristics](#) and although individual participation has low impact on the climate crisis, it instigates a psychosocial effect that encourages, or even forces, companies and governments to move away from environmentally harmful modes of living. Government action on the local level contributes to a higher level of citizen trust and to the creation of an idea of ‘collective risk sharing’ as well as a feeling of involvement which gives the citizens more power and control over their own wellbeing. These factors are reflected in measures of economic activity and form a vital part of human wellbeing.

In order to implement environmental sustainability and achieve wellbeing and a better liveability for all, a radical agenda is needed. For example, how are the three pillars of sustainability of ‘society, environment, and economy’ are prioritised in the County’s Councils’ Action. In particular, the Liveable cities research provides the evidence base for the short- and long-term benefits in the local economy. The aim for Cambridgeshire County Council in order to achieve sustainability in terms of low carbon strategies and to design these criteria into the future economy policy which can benefit people and the environment.

The shared benefits of practicing environmental sustainability are realised increasingly, but in a long-term manner. For example, cycling is a practice which helps to lower carbon emissions, reduce congestion in heavy traffic areas, and improve air quality. Additionally, cyclists could harness the societal benefits of becoming part of the cycling community in the city. However, designing this solution can seem challenging in terms of its timeframe. For example, the impact in the existing city infrastructure needs radical change in urban engineering and relevant decision-making in policy. Such a radical change would need time, resources, and mostly, political wiliness, which might exceed the timespan of the policy decision-makers.

When it comes to sustainability, all three pillars should be considered in order to achieve a holistic approach to wellbeing in cities. In order to achieve economic sustainability in the local governance, the County Council should prioritise environmental practices using an evidence-based scenario to show the short- and long-term benefits. Using academic research, the Council can design and develop local policy to support environmental sustainability and prove at the same time the wellbeing economic benefits. This will allow the Council to adopt a new strategy to focus on the paradigm shift that economy needs to adopt wellbeing and sustain quality of life in the future.

Other radical practices which can enhance low carbon can be designed in the future Local Plan. For example, academic research into the practice of smart cities, showed that cities can benefit from the overarching concept of smartness. Specifically, cities can become [truly smart](#), meaning they can address local challenges understanding their potential for lowering their carbon emissions. A tool developed within the smart cities research has implemented more than 500 criteria into four main lenses: Environment, Society, Governance, and Economy to understand the impact of decision making across all lenses. This can offer a good opportunity for

Cambridgeshire County Council to further the smart agenda beyond the digital implementation that some consider smartness is all about ([Cavada et al., 2019](#)).

## Implementing a Measurement Framework to Monitor the Success and Impact of a Wellbeing Economy

After assessing several case studies, discussed previously, we deem that any wellbeing economy should be loosely structured around three core principles: the maintenance of human health, economic health, and environmental health. Beyond these, there is wide scope for governments to introduce additional wellbeing factors, such as the maintenance of culture, that can be tailored in different regions. Once such a framework is established, governments are then faced with the challenge of how to best monitor these crucial factors. Recently, Pappalardo et al. presented the review article [“Measuring objective and subjective wellbeing: dimensions and data sources”](#), which highlights the many benefits of wellbeing measures to public policy makers. In today’s increasingly fast-paced, technological society, there is large scope for the frequent measurement of several key markers of societal wellbeing. The article outlines a potential series of criteria for objective wellbeing as follows: health; safety; job opportunities; socioeconomic development; environment; civic and political engagement.

It is widely acknowledged that such objective measures provide good indicators of a healthy society. Moreover, they link closely with those observed in case studies, such as New Zealand’s Living Standards Framework or the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act of 2015, as well as with the principles of Doughnut Economics. There are several potential data sources by which each of the above criteria can be measured.

### Objective measures of wellbeing

Regarding physical health, there is a wide range of readily available data on health standards available from Public Health England (PHE) in its [Public Health Profiles](#). Many governments throughout the world make extensive use of data such as these at both national and local levels. It is self-evident that a key factor determining whether such measurement practices translate into positive outcomes for a community is the speed with which institutions can reverse the negative health trends of a population. [This can be achieved by measuring and carefully examining trends in several key “risk-indicators”, such as the number of people that drive carefully, who do not drink large amounts of alcohol, and who do not smoke.](#) It is helpful to consider this as proactive monitoring, rather than purely reactive monitoring, such as measures of disease rates, etc. Once a trend is identified in the latter case, it is often too late to reverse negative outcomes for the individuals comprising the data sources. Of course, a comprehensive measure of health standards will require a wide selection of both types of indicators. Personal safety is another factor that can be placed in the broad category of physical health, and can be monitored with the wide range of statistics pertaining to criminality, which is [one of the most common security threats in both developed and emerging nations.](#)

The assessment of the economic health of a society is essential for the achievement of the broader aims of any wellbeing economy framework; it is therefore essential that measures of economic growth are included. Job opportunities can be broken into three broad categories: [employment rate, quality of work, and work-life balance](#). Quality of work can be estimated in a variety of ways, including [objective working stability and safety at work](#), while work-life balance can be estimated by calculating the average percentage of an individual's day that is spent at work. Socioeconomic development more broadly can be measured in a plethora of ways. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [the economic wellbeing of a society ultimately reduces to two key factors: available income and wealth, and consumption expenditure](#). These objective measures are straightforward to measure.

Cambridgeshire County Council has already made a strong commitment to environmental health by signing up to the [UK 100 clean energy pledge](#). Measuring the progress towards the Council's environmental goals is a challenge, and must balance both global and local considerations of environmental impact. It is beyond the scope of this report to recommend further measures in addition to the extensive range already employed by the Council. Rather, this report proposes that the Council's environmental aims take a central position within a new, wellbeing framework, to improve communication between different departments of the Council and ensure that environmental considerations are discussed during all policy decisions, and potential impacts are balanced alongside broader societal and economic goals.

Aside from measures related to the three core principles of physical health, economic health, and environmental health mentioned previously, it is interesting to note that [Pappalardo et al.](#) also include a measure of civic and political engagement. This can be broadly viewed as an instance in which a wellbeing framework includes a "cultural" element. In this case, its inclusion by a government reveals an underlying aim at cultivating a society that values the political engagement essential to a healthy democracy. It is also a [key measure of social cohesion and the extent to which citizens trust their government](#). It is best measured by voter turnout, i.e., the percentage of the registered population that vote at both national and local elections.

The indicators outlined above provide a broad framework of objective measures that could potentially be useful for the Council to monitor. Additionally, it is worth noting that the UK national government periodically makes use of [The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 \(IoD2019\)](#) to measure relative deprivation in small areas of England. There are seven domains of deprivation that are weighted and combined to create a single Index of Multiple Deprivation score. The seven domains are income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing, and services and living environment. Furthermore, local data on deprivation are available via Cambridgeshire Insight and the Business Intelligence Team at Cambridgeshire County Council, who may like to take a lead on this aspect of the mindset shift. By inverting such measures, they could be used to measure wellbeing as opposed to deprivation. In this way, they could be combined to generate an 'Index of Wellbeing' score. This simple inversion represents a concrete example of how the Council could align pre-existing measurement structures with the principles of the Doughnut Economics framework.

Subjective measures of wellbeing

In addition to the measures of objective wellbeing mentioned above, there exist both [global and momentary measures of subjective wellbeing](#):

- Global measures include large surveys with a single-item scale, such as the Positive and Negative Affect Scale
- Momentary measures include the Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) and Day Reconstruction Method (DRM)

Data science researchers tend to [recommend the use of both for accurate results](#), however, this may not be feasible in the case of the Cambridgeshire council. Both EMA and DRM methods are quite involved, involving the participation of select samples of a population for extended periods of time. It is possible that the council could consider utilising such methods in the future, particularly in times of unprecedented societal stress, as exemplified by the weekly wellbeing figures collected by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in the [“Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain”](#) bulletin. While momentary measures provide key insights during such times, [Shiffman et al.](#) demonstrate that future behaviours can be more easily predicted using global measures of happiness. As such, this report recommends that the council initially measures subjective wellbeing using the global measure already available from ONS data. This data consists of a [quarterly estimate of personal wellbeing over the entirety of the UK, collected from the Annual Population Survey](#). The ready availability of such data will ensure that the necessary changes can be made to measurement strategies in an efficient, cost-effective manner, without the need to create additional teams to determine council-specific measures of subjective wellbeing. Further measures could potentially be added later on to expand the assessment of subjective wellbeing, if the initial implementation is successful.

One key advantage of monitoring a subjective measure of wellbeing, is the potential that it could be used as a “failsafe” in tandem with several objective measures of wellbeing. In this way, the chosen wellbeing framework could be consistently reassessed based on ONS data. If there is consistently a correlation between the implementation of a policy and a change, either positive or negative, in the subjective wellbeing of Cambridgeshire as a whole (or, indeed, individual regions) then the policy could be re-evaluated. One possible way in which this could be implemented is to introduce two broad metrics for the assessment of the wellbeing of the citizens of Cambridgeshire:

- Several objective measures of individual, societal, environmental wellbeing, analogous to New Zealand’s Living Standards Framework or the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act of 2015.
- One subjective measure, based initially on ONS data, that could potentially be further expanded to make use of other data sources, such as google search trends.

The specific choice of the objective measures used in this framework is flexible. It can vary as the goals of the council change in response to shifts in public opinion, national priorities, and the success of the initial implementation of a wellbeing economy. However, the key point is that the introduction of such a framework will send a clear message to council staff and the wider community that consideration of citizen wellbeing should

never be neglected in council policy. Likewise, the rigour with which the council decides to monitor changes in both objective and subjective wellbeing is also variable. During the initial implementation phase, it is reasonable that this could simply consist of qualitative observations of general trends in plots of each measure produced by the council. If the initial implementation of the wellbeing framework shows promise, it may be the case that the council would desire to expand the programme by introducing a greater level of rigour to the measurement process.

## Implementing a Wellbeing Economy

The implementation of a wellbeing economy for the Cambridgeshire County Council will involve a consideration of the time-scale over which the necessary changes will be made to the aims and policy assessment procedures employed by the council. In this report, a three-step framework is proposed, outlining the short-term, medium-term and long-term plans for implementing a measurement system for evaluating the success of any policy proposal. The stages are designed such that each stage could be the last stage reached, i.e., they are effectively three graded models of how to implement a measurement system that facilitates the maintenance of a wellbeing economy. The choice of which stage to reach is dependent upon the goals of the council, and the success of previous stages.

### Stage 1 (short-term implementation – implement as soon as possible)

In this stage, only objective measures of wellbeing comprise the framework. Each new policy implementation must pass through a specific checkpoint (a “wellbeing assessment”) in order to be implemented. This checkpoint will likely involve a meeting with senior members of the council. It must be demonstrated that there is reason to believe that the policy implementation will have a positive impact on the desired objective measures of wellbeing. Furthermore, at periodic intervals (to be defined in accordance with the frequency at which the key measures can be determined) the change in each measure will be published (e.g., for that quarter). The Council’s Strategy and Resources Committee would provide the ideal platform for the discussion and assessment of each measure, and possible ways to improve each associated outcome.

### Stage 2 (medium-term implementation - implement after the collection of two data points of the ONS annual measure of subjective wellbeing, i.e., 1-2 years after Stage 1 begins)

Identical to Stage 1, with the addition of at least one measure of subjective wellbeing to the overall list of measures. There is now the ability to annually examine the change in subjective wellbeing and analyse this in the context of any noticeable changes in objective measures. The inclusion of subjective wellbeing as an independent measure of the progress of the county would potentially send a significant message that the Council is concerned deeply with wellbeing at the fundamental level, and is striving towards the development of a county that puts the wellbeing of its citizens as one of its highest priorities.



### Stage 3 (long-term implementation)

At this point, the Council will have developed a significant quantity of longer-term data. In order to introduce a greater level of rigour to the measurement process, a bespoke team (either internal to the council, or hired consultants) could be assigned the task of establishing the necessary numerical tools needed to automatically track and flag any significant correlations between desired measures. Once implemented, the variable costs of maintaining such a system would be effectively non-existent. A significant decrease in any objective measure will prompt an assessment by the department most associated with the measure and a brief report outlining potential ideas to reverse the trend. Moreover, if there is a significant decrease in subjective measures, it could then be determined which of the other measures correlates most with this change in subjective wellbeing. The associated department will then present a brief report outlining how to improve their measure and potential changes to the Council's operations will be discussed at the quarterly meetings of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

## Policy Recommendations

This report recommends that:

1. That the council develops and implements a wellbeing economy framework in Cambridgeshire
2. The council works to transform ways of thinking and change mindsets to take a holistic and aligned approach to all decision-making processes
3. That all committee proposals include a section where policy suggestions must undergo a wellbeing assessment. The wellbeing assessment would ensure that all new policy proposals are aligned with the County Council's financial, environmental and human priorities.
4. Therefore, that the Council addresses matters that pertain not only to financial and physical capital, but also to natural capital (geology, soil, air, etc.), human capital (skills, knowledge, health, etc.) and social capital (networks, communities, norms, etc.).
5. That the Council confronts the North/South and East/West divide in Cambridgeshire in realisation of the 'levelling up' agenda, and with the goal of promoting wellbeing evenly across the County.
6. If the principles of Doughnut Economics are adopted, these should be used to underpin the development of the wellbeing economy framework.
7. That there is a creation of a new Wellbeing Officer role within the council's structure. This role would be responsible for holding the council accountable and ensuring that all of their actions are aligned with the priorities of the wellbeing economy.

8. The Business Intelligence Team leads on the transition to invert Measures of Deprivation to create an 'Index of Wellbeing' score, forming the foundations of a mindset shift within the organisation
9. The Council employs a range of objective measures of wellbeing, alongside one subjective measure of wellbeing (using ONS data) in order to regularly assess the success of its wellbeing economy framework by monitoring wellbeing at a fundamental level.
10. The Council initiates the three-stage scheme for the introduction of a measurement system for the wellbeing economy, presented in Section 6. In outline, Stage 1 consists solely of objective measures, Stage 2 introduces at least one subjective measure, while Stage 3 seeks to add quantitative rigour to the assessment procedure.
11. Cambridgeshire County Council needs to establish a link between sustainability and wellbeing across the individual, societal, and planetary wellbeing ([LC, 2017](#)). Through action, it needs to show the importance of low-carbon solutions. Academic evidence can support this radical solution.
12. It would be beneficial to use academic-developed tools to support solutions within the low carbon agenda. In this way, it is possible to minimise the cost and any risk involved in these decisions.

## Conclusion and Ongoing Research Suggestions

Due to the shortened timeframe of this CUSPE research project, unfortunately we were not able to conduct any primary research. Nevertheless, we believe that in order to implement the recommendations from this report effectively, it would be essential for the County Council to conduct some primary research to establish the priorities of Cambridgeshire's wellbeing economy. We propose that the County Council could conduct a piece of research, with the aim to understand what improvements in wellbeing would look like from the point of view of local residents. It would be most impactful if the wellbeing priorities could be decided based on the views of the local residents. This would be most beneficial if all of the different areas of the county were assessed individually. It would likely result in some overarching priorities as well as other region-specific policies. It would be interesting to look at what wellbeing priorities would be most important for different age ranges.

We propose that the council could initially engage in open-ended discussions to scope what sort of wellbeing priorities would be suggested from local residents, of all ages and demographics. Once a shortlist has been created, a voting system could be set up to pass the final decision back into the hands of the local people. This could be done online, with the vote advertised widely across schools, workplaces and community centres. We would recommend that the wellbeing priorities are reviewed and updated in this manner on a regular basis. Although more logistically challenging, it is key to understand that the key indicators of wellbeing will be very dynamic overtime. Taking inspiration from Wales' National Conversation, this would likely increase engagement

in local policy making, especially if local residents can see their views and feedback reflected in the work of the council.

We believe that Cambridgeshire County Council is in a very strong position to introduce a wellbeing economy, building on much of the foundations that are already established within the organisation. This would serve as a framework by which many current activities of the organisation could culminate and align so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We believe that the policy recommendations in this report come in a timely manner as the joint administration establishes its priorities. This is an exciting opportunity for Cambridgeshire County Council, and we look forward to seeing where it is taken.

## Future Outlook: A Transition into a Wellbeing Economy through PPEs and Community Wealth Building

The neoliberal economic system has long ignored the impact of its policies on human wellbeing but this does not mean that wellbeing cannot be integrated into classical and liberal approaches to politics and economics. [A transition into a wellbeing economy](#) would entail redistributing income in a way that is fairer to all members of society, the rich and poor alike. An added focus on income disparity, housing conditions, job security and economic justice is essential to the model of wellbeing and is a necessary factor in fostering local potential of under-represented members of the society of Cambridgeshire. The movement away from the neoliberal model – not to say that this is the that Cambridgeshire follows such models but to highlight possible roots that it might have in this model – requires a deeper analysis of the local situation through the lens of wellbeing and through criteria that contribute to human and social wellbeing. The implementation of a wellbeing economy requires structural changes and systemic work that should be supported by research and analytic premises that support its continuation as well as ensure that the application of wellbeing is meaningful within local contexts. In Cambridgeshire, a radical overnight change is not required since a focus on wellbeing is already there; ideas of wellbeing should be introduced, however, more formally, in a gradual manner, and a study of their effects is to be considered until a full model matures and a combination of different approaches should be achieved. The Covid-19 pandemic has put local ecologies and health in danger, and showed the weakness of models that have their roots in neoliberalism. The neoliberal model considers the wellbeing approach to be [‘weak’ and ‘unrealistic’](#) but this stance has been brought into doubt with current events. The current global economy has its roots in a design that ignores both nature and mental health, and is not prepared to adapt to changes in societal needs. With this in mind, a complexity of approaches that covers many sectors of the economy is needed at the *local level* for such deep structural change that lead to an economy that gives attention to wellbeing

In order to implement a model of wellbeing that is as spread out in Cambridgeshire as possible, the Council could benefit Public-Private Partnerships in which the existence of private companies can be utilised to the citizen’s

advantage. Whilst private consumers have the option of boycotting goods and services, citizens of Cambridgeshire face high costs of relocating and 'opting out', which is why focusing on wellbeing through sustainability will contribute to a higher citizen retention rate and, consequently, a decrease in loss of local culture. Public-Private Partnerships (PPEs) would contribute to maintaining the focus on citizens and exploit the benefits of capitalism in order to serve local communities. Breaking the barriers between companies and governments requires administrative action at the highest level of both organisations with the aim of merging profit maximisation goals with those that seek the maximisation of social welfare. The two need not be mutually exclusive. Government inclusion in the market can lead to expansion of welfare services, but the inclusion of private companies in governmental decision does not, partly because private companies are not accountable for the citizens that they serve or liable for any form of transparency in their dealings. Local populations have a higher degree of trust in their councils, the same cannot be said with regards to their views of 'the market' which is more random, foreign to them and self-interested in nature. The issue at hand pertains more to the ability of a synergetic symbiosis that would serve the wellbeing of citizens and less about the functionality and ultimate objectives of each sector. The goal of this type of hybrid form of organisation is to encourage local involvement and participation, and result in a 'collective mentality' that promotes ideas of welfare in local economies combining features of market capitalism and societal benefits. Local governments, for example, may involve a higher degree of taxation on companies that hinder or degrade these welfare values. It should also be realised that in some instances, citizens end up paying (in the form of taxes) for the effects that private companies have on the planet. Citizens are often unfairly taxed for environmental damage and waste management. The majority of this damage actually comes from private companies that emit greenhouse gases, and externalities that come at a price and social cost that damages local populations in Cambridgeshire.

Moreover, it is favourable in Cambridgeshire to tie a wellbeing economy with the idea of community wealth building, the two reinforce each other and constitute a synergetic combination. [Community wealth building](#) the economy towards thoughtful actions about individuals, it pushes businesses to contribute to the prosperity of local citizens and empowers them to feel like they are part of the local economy to which they can contribute and take decisions in. The idea has been launched in other UK councils, such as [North Ayrshire](#) in Scotland, where the public sector and private sector showed high degrees of collaboration driven towards the enhancement of wellbeing in local societies. It is a notion based on the ideals of sustainability and participation, and one that could be easily actioned in Cambridgeshire County Council given the diminished focus on monetary aspects to begin with. The community wealth building approach was initially developed by the Democracy Collaborative in the USA and has proved to be successful in Cleveland and Ohio, as well as Lancashire and Preston in the UK, the latter of which showed a 4-time increase in local spending and a huge reduction in the unemployment rate (almost halved). All in all, it is our stance in this report that community wealth building and wellbeing go hand in hand, and should be implemented together. The result would be a highly resilient economy, reduction in inequalities, added consideration to the climate emergency, a higher rate of re-investment and the ability to deal with social challenges through the integration of economy and society. For more on the community wealth building plan in North Ayrshire, the first to be implemented in Scotland starting 2019, refer to [NAC CWB Strategy Brochure \(north-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](#).

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