



Improvement Framework

To:	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Meeting Date:	20 March 2023
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson
From:	Angela Probert, Interim Programme Director, Transformation
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	N/A
Recommendations:	The Overview and Scrutiny is recommended to: Consider the February Improvement highlight update to the Combined Authority Board on 22 March 2023.
Voting arrangements:	A simple majority of all Members present and voting

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the agenda item is to provide the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the Improvement highlight update going to Board on the 22 March 2023.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also advised of the current stocktake activity being undertaken to ensure the continued focus for improvement is appropriate and takes into account the key areas of concern set out in the Best Value Notice and External Auditors letter.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Board in October agreed the Improvement Plan to address the Chief Executive's diagnosis assessment of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- 2.2 The assessment also set out key deliverables over a three-month period and what might be different as a result of the proposed activity.
- 2.3 The Best Value Notice received in January 2023 set out specific areas of concern to be addressed and therefore to be included in a reframed improvement plan

3. Progress on Improvement activity for month 4 (February 2023)

- 3.1 Attached as Appendix A is the Improvement Highlight update for activity undertaken to February 2023.
- 3.2 Good progress has been made and Overview & Scrutiny Committee are asked to note:
 1. We are nearing completion in several key areas of the current Improvement Plan agreed in October.
 2. The Corporate Plan was adopted by the CA Board in January and the development of other related strategies in our strategic framework, such as the Bus Strategy and LTCP are progressing well.
 3. Proposed changes to our committee structures for both member and informal officer groups that will underpin new ways of working is timetabled for the CA Board in March.
 4. The future role and configuration of the Business Board is also timetabled for the CA Board in March.
 5. Woven through all the above plans and strategies will be our values and operating principles agreed at the CA Board in January. They are also being enshrined in our directorate business plans and in the individual personal development plans that all staff will have.
 6. Alongside this we have an agreed senior management structure in place with two new Executive Directors starting at the beginning of March.
 7. The recruitment to the Chief Executive post is underway.
 8. We are working closely with partners to describe and then devise a set of performance management frameworks that will help us to better understand and therefore drive improvements in the delivery of our plans and programmes. This work sequentially follows the development of our strategic aims and will be in place by the early summer.

4. Outcomes on improvement over the initial 3 months

- 4.1 Specific areas of improvement to be delivered over the initial three-month period were set out clearly in report to CA Board in October. Attached as Appendix B is an update on overall progress on the identified key areas.

5. Reframing the next phase of improvement

5.1 Currently the future focus for Improvement activity is being reframed to take account of:

- Concerns set out in the Best Value Notice received in January 2023
- Concerns set out by the External Auditor in June 2022
- Improvements (to be) identified by the independent Improvement Board
- Current improvement activity that requires a longer term corporate focus

5.2 Where planned improvement activity that has progressed sufficiently to pass to 'business as usual' and owned by relevant Executive Directors, it will form part of directorate business plans for 2023/24.

5.3 The reframed improvement plan will include the following key areas of focus identified by the Best Value Notice (January 2023), the External Auditors letter (June 2022) and the initial areas of focus identified at the IIB induction day in January 2023:

1. Governance and decision making
2. Project plans and delivery
3. Procurement
4. Partnership working
5. Improvement plan progress
6. Independent Improvement Board engagement
7. Conclusion of investigations
8. Capacity and confidence

6. Perceptions of change

6.1 Perceptions on the changes made over the first three months have been sought from staff through a second staff survey; the first being held in September 2022. The key findings are set out below:

- Overall improvement – but not exclusively
- Staff feel more confident
- Staff want to see planned improvement fully embedded
- Mixed responses to feeling valued – and that opinions count
- Low scores on being effective and efficient
- More positive feelings about working for the CA and an overall sense of optimism

6.2 Interviews with external stakeholder groups to test changed perceptions against the changes set out in October 2022 are to take place in March by the newly appointed Executive Directors and Head of Policy.

7.0 Reporting on progress

7.1 Progress on improvement activity will continue to be reported to the CA Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance.

- 7.2 Independent Improvement Board (IIB) bi-monthly meetings have been scheduled for the next 12 months and improvement activity and progress will be reported to the IIB.
- 7.3 Quarterly meetings with DHULC will be held to report on the progress made on the key areas of concern set out in the Best Value Notice received in January 2023.

Significant Implications

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 At the Combined Authority Board in July £750,000 was approved to support the scope, development and delivery of work relating to improvement activity.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 There is a legal requirement to have a fully functioning Overview and Scrutiny Committee within the CA framework. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should act as an independent scrutineer for Council activities.
- 9.2 Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities provides that “Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny – authorities should ensure early and regular discussion takes place between scrutiny and the executive, especially regarding the latter’s future work programme. Authorities should, though, be mindful of their distinct roles”.
- 9.3 CFGS guidance recommends that scrutiny should happen a decent time before the decision comes to be made – not a matter of a couple of weeks. Effective CA forward planning should allow for scrutiny to be forewarned months in advance of particularly critical decisions; such forward planning also helps with fitting this form of scrutiny into the committee cycle. Again, the way that such matters are identified will need to relate closely to scrutiny’s role.

10. Public Health implications

- 10.1 No Public Health implications are directly identified within this report at this stage.

11. Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 11.1 No Environmental and Climate Change implications are identified within this report at this stage.

12. Other Significant Implications

- 12.1 The External Auditor and DLUHC have set out clearly the expected focus for improvement. It is important that the CA can demonstrate its commitment to improve and also the progress it is making on this journey so more formal interventions are not put in place; the unfreezing of future funding is dependent on this.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix A – Highlight report appendix to Combined Authority Board on 22 March 2023

13.2 Appendix B – Outcomes to be delivered at the end of 3 months (agreed at CA Board October 2022)

14. Background Papers

- October CA Board Report – Improvement Framework
- External Auditors letter June 2022
- Best Value Notice January 2023