



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday, 10 January 2023

**Time:** 11.00

**Location:** Engine Shed, Sand Martin House, Peterborough

#### **Members:**

Cllr A Sharp (Vice-Chair)	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr C Cane	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr M Hassall	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr M Atkins	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr S Count	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr R Robertson	Cambridge City Council
Cllr S Smith	Cambridge City Council
Cllr G Harvey	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr A Van De Weyer	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr A Iqbal	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Coles	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Miscandlon	Fenland District Council
Cllr A Hay	Fenland District Council

#### **Officers:**

Edwina Adefehinti*	Chief Officer – Legal & Governance, and Monitoring Officer
Jon Alsop*	Chief Finance Officer
Rob Emery*	Business Board S151 & Dept.S73 Combined Authority
Tim Bellamy*	Interim Head of Transport
Fliss Miller*	Interim Associate Skills Director
Steve Clarke*	Interim Associate Director Business
Reena Roojam*	Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Anne Gardiner	Governance Manager
Joanna Morley	Interim Governance Officer

\*denotes attendance via Zoom

## **1. Apologies for absence**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Dupre, Cllr Goldsack and Cllr Dew. Cllr Cane attended as a substitute for Cllr Dupre and Cllr Count as a substitute for Cllr Goldsack.

In Cllr Dupre's absence, Cllr Sharp, the Vice-Chair, took on the role of Chair for the meeting.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

## **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Action Log**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022 were approved as a correct record and the Action Log was noted.

## **4. Public Questions**

- 4.1 There were no public questions.

## **5. Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Consultation**

- 5.1 Jon Alsop introduced this agenda item which had been tabled to give the Committee, one of the main consultees, an opportunity to discuss their response to the draft budget and MTFP, and to make any recommendations to the Board.

- 5.2 During discussion the following points were noted:

- a. The link contained within the agenda papers went through to the consultation which only gave a high-level strategic view. Members complained that a subsequent link to the fine detail and the figures was hard to find and easily missed. Reports containing the required information, that had previously been to the Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November, were therefore circulated to the Committee by Governance staff and a 15-minute adjournment was taken. These papers can be found here at item 3.2: [CMIS > Meetings](#)

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At 11.37am the meeting and the live stream were resumed

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- b. So far there had been 230 responses to the consultation which was far more than had been received in previous years.
- c. The gainshare funds that the CPCA relied on were cash flat and would remain so over the period of the devolution deal. This meant that their real value reduced over time and therefore the CPCA needed to find other income sources.
- d. The introduction of a mayoral precept was an option for the Board to consider. In order to cover a £3.5 million pressure, it was expected that an annual precept of £12 for a household at Band D would be needed.
- e. There was also the potential to increase the Transport Levy. The draft Budget assumed a 2% increase but the Board might wish to reexamine this.

- f. If the Board considered using the reserves to plug the bus services funding gap this would only provide a one-off short-term solution to the ongoing passenger pressure.
- g. Members queried what assurances would be given on how the money was to be spent if the Board approved a precept to raise funds.
- h. Bus services were key to delivering the CPCA's priorities and therefore it was disappointing that there was nothing in the core budget that guaranteed the £7m needed to keep the current level of service.
- i. There was £3.5m in the existing budget but going forward the costs would rise to £7m which is where the £3.5m of pressure came from. There were a number of options on how to manage this that were being put forward to the Board to consider.
- j. The Authority should not be putting residents in a position where they did not know whether buses were going to run or not. Reassurance was needed that at least current services would be maintained in order that residents could plan how they were going to get to work and education.
- k. Previous bids for bus funding had been unsuccessful so any future bids needed to be strong and ambitious enough to attract funding
- l. There was an urgency about finding some stability around funding for bus services
- m. There had been a lot of activity to try and promote the consultation. This included the page on the website, coverage in local newspapers, promotion on social media channels throughout December and into the New year and an email campaign that went out to all constituent councils and parish councils.
- n. Members queried whether the money and effort that went into the consultation was worth it given the still relatively low level of response.
- o. An inflationary cost of 5% on staffing costs for next year and 4% per annum thereafter had been included in the budget. This was in line with other Combined Authorities and was also fairly consistent with the constituent councils.
- p. Compared to the equivalent point in previous years a much higher proportion of funds was being allocated to approved expenditure (rather than projects subject to approval) which Members welcomed as it suggested that project management has picked up its pace and that there was more chance projects would be delivered. This did, however, also reflect that a number of funding streams were coming to an end.
- q. Members also welcomed that fact that there was a greater diversity to the allocation of capital with more being spent on active travel and the environment rather than the majority on large road upgrades. Again, this could also be partly attributed to the fact that the Transforming Cities Fund was coming to an end and as the deadline got closer there was more flexibility in how the money was spent.
- r. Slippage on large capital projects was a concern of all Combined Authorities as there was a lot of reliance on delivery partners including some of the constituent councils. CPCA officers therefore were actively trying to understand potential issues and how to combat them and the Internal Auditors had been commissioned to undertake a review of the capital programme to highlight potential slippages and the causes of them.
- s. Committing funds piecemeal for short periods of time to combat the funding issues with the bus services should be avoided and instead the CA should commit to spending at least the current level of funding, plus inflation, for a minimum of two years.
- t. Members were disappointed that a breakdown of the reserves balance was not included in the report.
- u. The Integrated Transport Block grant, as well as the Highways Maintenance block grant and Pothole fund, were all required to be spent as capital funding and therefore could not be used to pay for subsidised bus services.

- v. The consultations' opening statement and pictographs were commended but, as had previously been commented on by Members, the links to the budget and MTFP were hard to find and information was poorly set out. The information needed to concentrate on vision, strategy, and the prioritisation of spending.
- w. The consultation questions did not ask residents to balance decisions based on a limited pot of money but instead just asked for a level of agreement for a decision ie. Strongly agree/disagree. In addition, there were some misleading questions which could have lead people to respond positively to a precept in the belief they were protecting a specific service.

#### RESOLVED:

The Committee resolved to submit the following recommendations to the Board as their formal response to the Consultation:

#### **That:**

- 1. The CPCA Board should commit to maintaining at least the current level of spending on bus services for the next two years.**

The Board is best placed to decide how to source this funding which would be c£14m. (£7m p.a) This commitment would give some assurance to residents that they can continue to travel to work and school, and to access services, and that the CPCA had a credible, fit for purpose transport system on which residents could depend. This guarantee on funding should be given whilst longer term solutions for delivering services, such as franchising, are explored.

The Board should be mindful that in the current climate bus operators could be expected to be further supported by CPCA subsidy and therefore maintaining the current level of spending did not necessarily guarantee the same level of services.

- 2. The Board should keep a particularly close eye on the risk of slippage on capital projects and review the work of Internal Audit so that where issues are identified they can establish how best to address and overcome them.**
- 3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee review in advance the process and methodology of any future proposed MTFP consultation.** Oversight by the Committee will ensure that the questions asked are focussed and prioritise the CPCA's vision and strategy and will also allow Members to make recommendations to encourage greater engagement by the public.
- 4. If the organisation aspires to delivering more ambitious projects that will be reliant on government funding, then the budget for securing this funding needs to be increased.**
- 5. The impact on social inequalities and the Environment should be evident in all CPCA funding decisions.**
- 6. If the Board decide that a Mayoral Precept is the best option to raise funds then it should identify and guarantee what the money raised will be spent on.** E.g. It has been identified that a precept of £12 per household at Band D

council tax (with corresponding amounts for higher and lower bands) would raise the £3.5 million that it is estimated will be needed to maintain the current level of bus services.

**ACTION:**

1. The Governance officer to circulate the recommendations that arose from the meeting to Cllr Dupre, Cllr Sharp and Cllr Iqbal (representatives for each of the political groups) for any final amendments before circulation to the rest of the Committee. The recommendations to form the Committee's formal response to the budget consultation.
2. Finance Officers to circulate to the CA Board a breakdown of the reserves balance to support their decision making.

**12. Date of next meeting**

- 12.1 Monday, 23 January 2022 at 11am.

Meeting Closed: 1.09 pm